

Summative Evaluation of the Learning Initiatives Program (LIP)

Final Report

*Audit and Evaluation
Strategic Policy and Planning
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada*

October 2005

**SP-AH-684-10-05E
(également disponible en français)**

Paper

ISBN: 0-662-43358-0

Cat. No.: HS28-48/2006E

PDF

ISBN: 0-662-43359-9

Cat. No.: HS28-48/2006E-PDF

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Learning Initiatives Program (LIP), formerly the Learning Initiatives Fund (LIF), is a contribution program which was established in 1994 to encourage and support initiatives that contribute to the development of a results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable learning system in Canada. Through this program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has collaborated with key partners in the development and implementation of a wide variety of national and international initiatives in support of lifelong learning. The Program's overall goal is:

to support HRSDC's interest in promoting a lifelong learning culture in Canada and to encourage and support partnership initiatives that contribute to the development of a more results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable learning system.

The Program also has a number of objectives that relate to supporting partnerships in the area of learning; promoting innovation and relevance in the establishment of learning policies and programs; and contributing to the establishment of national learning goals, enhanced research and analysis, increased academic mobility and information dissemination.

The Learning Strategies and Support Division (LSS) of the Learning and Literacy Directorate (LLD) are responsible for program delivery, including project selection and ongoing administration of projects. The annual budget is approximately \$1 million funded out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) which is redirected to LDD from other areas of the department.

Objectives and Methodology

The Terms and Conditions (Ts and Cs) of the LIP program were to have expired at the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year. However, the HRSDC Minister, as per the Treasury Board Policy on Transfer Payments, extended the applicability of the program Ts and Cs for one year. Also in accordance with the Policy on Transfer Payments, an evaluation of the program must be completed and form part of a TB submission package for consideration by TB Ministers before the program can be renewed. In the case of LIP, a summative evaluation is required for reasons relating to the program's maturity, namely: (a) a formative evaluation was already undertaken and sufficient time has elapsed since the 1999 formative evaluation for operational, design and delivery program features to have been refined and; (b) sufficient time has elapsed since the formative evaluation to measure program outcomes.

The primary purpose of this summative evaluation was to determine the extent to which the LIP has made progress in achieving its stated expected results. In addition, it also examined evaluation issues related to program relevance and design and delivery. Given that the previous evaluation has already examined projects approved early in the program's life, these projects were not re-examined. The projects examined during this evaluation include only those approved after March 31st, 1999. LIP Research and Innovation projects related to Part II of the *Employment Insurance (EI) Act* are excluded as they form part of a larger program with different objectives than the LIP and are subject to a separate set of Terms and Conditions.

Main Findings and Conclusions

Relevance

Are the LIP goal and objectives still consistent with HRSDC mandate and priorities?

Findings indicate that the LIP goals and objectives are consistent with HRSDC's mandate and priorities. However, they are very broad, most likely as a result from wanting to ensure and reflect the program's intended innovative nature. The opportunity to refine and focus the objectives exists as the current Terms and Conditions for the LIP must be renewed.

Is there potential duplication, or gaps in activities and services with other HRSDC and/or other government initiatives?

There is no concrete evidence of duplication, or gaps in activities and services with other HRSDC and/or other government initiatives. It would appear that restrictive funding criteria of other programs would disqualify the types of projects proposed and funded through the LIP. However, as 63% of non-funded applicants secured some financial support from other funding sources, there is the potential that LIP activities duplicate those provided by other levels of government or institutions.

Results-Achievement

Has the LIP provided funding for activities that otherwise would not have occurred?

Thirty-two projects have been funded through the LIP since September 1999. The funding provided by the LIP appears to be an important factor in the development of projects aimed at contributing to lifelong learning in Canada. The findings indicate that most of these projects (61%) would not have been undertaken without funding from the LIP. For the minority that would have proceeded in the absence of funding, they would have been much smaller in scope, with reduced activities and/or fewer objectives. This would inevitably translate into lost opportunity to contribute to advancing lifelong learning in Canada. With the absence of funding, less projects would have been implemented as alternate financial support is not easily obtained.

Has there been development and broad, targeted dissemination, of LIP-funded research pertaining to learning?

Although evidence of dissemination of LIP-funded research was obtained, the data is incomplete. There are two possible sources for this data; HRSDC and project sponsors. Project sponsors are not required to track or report on the extent of dissemination after project completion and this may in fact be difficult to

implement. As well, even though HRSDC has begun the practice of posting LIP funded research to its website, tracking of downloads is not performed. Even if dissemination could be more reliably quantified, it would be of little value without comparison against the expected levels of dissemination; something which project sponsors were not required to provide.

Have established partnerships been sustained, and if not, why? There is evidence of partnership development in the delivery of LIP projects. Fifty percent (50%) of sponsors surveyed indicated that they had established partnerships to implement their LIP-funded projects. However, an overwhelming majority of these can be described as informal. Although the identity and extent of cash or in-kind contributions is required to be presented in project proposals and documented in Contribution Agreements, limiting the definition of partners to what is required as part of Grants and Contribution administration gives insufficient importance to actual partnership development. Additional effort could be expended by HRSDC in collecting primary data for the 50% of projects that have identified partners. Sustainability of partnerships were evidenced in a majority of projects (67%) that reported delivery partners however, the extent and quality of these are unknown.

In what way(s) and to what extent did LIP-funded projects contribute to the achievement of program intermediate outcomes? There is little concrete evaluative evidence indicating Lip's contribution to the development of lifelong learning policies and programs. Stakeholders have indicated that policy development is influenced by so many external factors that attribution to such a small program is unlikely. There is also no evidence of greater alignment of the learning community, government and private sector toward achievement of national lifelong learning goals. In fact, HRSDC management has indicated that the establishment of national learning goals is no longer a departmental or program priority given the lack of progress in the area in the past. There is evidence from case studies of a few areas in which accessibility and inter-provincial, as well as inter-institutional dialogue on lifelong learning has increased, however progress is small in comparison to the overall need. Given the magnitude of need, the fact that one project provided evidence (albeit limited) of increased accessibility reflects positively on the program.

Has there been incremental progress made towards the achievement of LIP's ultimate outcomes? The evaluation has not found any evidence of incremental progress made towards the achievement of ultimate outcomes.

Design and Delivery

Are areas of activity, associated responsibilities and lines of accountability within the program well defined and appropriate? Areas of activity, associated responsibilities and lines of accountability within the program are well defined and appropriate. However, both LIP staff and project sponsors noted the difficulties presented by high staff-turnover and a loss of corporate memory for the continuous administration of projects and consistency of interface with project sponsors.

Are the processes for soliciting proposals well defined and streamlined? The processes for soliciting proposals are well defined and are becoming more streamlined. Both project applicants and sponsors were generally satisfied with elements of the application and selection process reviewed in this study. A few stakeholders noted dissatisfaction with the timeframe for approvals which impact on the timeframe of the proposed deliverables.

To what extent has changes in the LIP's strategic direction affected the propensity of potential proponents to participate? Strategic direction of the LIP has been enhanced since the development of a strategic framework which more closely reflects departmental priorities. The introduction of the CFP process has also contributed to this enhancement as it has been used to better advertise LIP's strategic priorities and set the program's funding criteria. However, as the program becomes more strategic and directive there is a greater probability that organisations working in the lifelong learning field will have needs that are not being addressed by the LIP.

Are performance measures incorporated, to a reasonable extent, within funding agreements and are there adequate controls to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected and reported data? There is financial, activity and output level monitoring; however performance monitoring of results needs improvement. The data collection tools developed to date for results are based on program reporting requirements. They need to be strengthened to be more useful to on-going program delivery and monitoring.

Are there any alternate program design and/or delivery approaches that would be potentially more cost-efficient or cost-effective? The only alternate program design and delivery approach suggested was the integration of the LIP with a larger existing program within HRSDC. The rationale for this suggestion is based on improving cost-efficiency by assisting in the effective management of available funds. Consolidation of all LIP staff within one responsibility centre (LSS) was noted by HRSDC stakeholders to have facilitated the administration of the program. It is believed further consolidation could produce even greater benefits. Should such an approach be considered, stakeholders would be fully supportive to the extent that further streamlining and standardisation of project administration could be assured.

Management Response

Management believes that the summative evaluation has highlighted the important role played by the Learning Initiatives Program (LIP) in providing stakeholders with the opportunity to further the goals of adult learning and promoting a lifelong learning culture in Canada. The evaluation covered projects funded under Consolidated Revenue Funds (\$1M/year). It showed that despite a limited scope due to its funding level, the program has made inroads in recognizing and implementing learning approaches ultimately benefiting adult learners. The evaluation also identified challenges facing the program.

Relevance and Results-Achievement

As demonstrated in the summative evaluation, it is unlikely that a small program would have a major impact on national policies. However, it is believed that activities in the area of prior learning assessment and recognition have been positively influenced by the LIP and contribute to the achievement of the program's outcomes.

Management agrees with the recommendation to take the opportunity to refine the objectives of the program. The development of Terms and Conditions for a new program (Adult Learning and Literacy Program) has begun with a view to obtaining Treasury Board approval in December 2005. The new program will integrate activities from three Adult Learning and Literacy programs, including those currently funded under the LIP.

With regard to safeguarding against overlap and duplication of funds, in January 2005 the program standardized the practice of requiring potential recipients to confirm other sources of proposed funding prior to approving a contribution.

Management agrees that the dissemination of results is not always sufficiently quantified. Dissemination plans have been required from applicants since January 2005. In addition, funding recipients are required to summarize, in the final project report their dissemination efforts during the project, and to outline dissemination plans for the months following the completion of the project. These requirements also apply to future agreement holders. In addition, to support reporting of progress on performance, tools were created in Spring 2005 for distribution to agreement holders.

The LIP was not required under its Terms and Conditions to have formal partnerships; however, partnerships are important from a program perspective. In order to obtain information on partnerships, the program now (since January 2005) includes partnership forms with new applications. In addition, agreement holders are required to provide information on challenges pertaining to the creation of partnership, partnership status, and partner contributions to the project via regular reporting.

Design and Delivery

It was observed that high staff turn-over and loss of corporate memory have impacted the program. In November 2004, as a result of a reorganization within the directorate, the program was integrated into another group to address issues such as staffing and organizational structure. Additional project officers are being hired and trained. Learning plans and working tools have also been created to support them in their role.

Report mentions that processes are well defined and becoming more streamlined. However, a few stakeholders noted dissatisfaction with timeframes for approvals and reporting requirements. The proposal review and approval process follows the due diligence requirements of HRSDC.

Performance measurement is a challenge for all programs. The development of data collection tools has been strengthened and is expected to help program delivery and monitoring, as well as the management of the project for the funding recipients themselves.

Modification of the LIP program design to make it more cost-efficient is being examined as part of the development of a larger Adult Learning and Literacy Program Terms and Conditions expected to be approved by Treasury Board later this year.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) management would like to thank those individuals who participated in the evaluation of the Learning Initiatives Program.

September 2005

1. Introduction and Context

1.1 Program Description

The Learning Initiatives Program (LIP), formerly the Learning Initiatives Fund (LIF), is a contribution program which was established in 1994 to encourage and support initiatives that contribute to the development of a results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable learning system in Canada. Through this program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has collaborated with key partners in the development and implementation of a wide variety of national and international initiatives in support of lifelong learning. The Program's overall goal is:

To support HRSDC's interest in promoting a lifelong learning culture in Canada and to encourage and support partnership initiatives that contribute to the development of a more results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable learning system.

The Program also has a number of objectives that relate to supporting partnerships in the area of learning; promoting innovation and relevance in the establishment of learning policies and programs; and contributing to the establishment of national learning goals, enhanced research and analysis, increased academic mobility and information dissemination. The program's logic model in Annex A, illustrates the relationship between LIP activities, expected outputs, and expected outcomes.

The Learning Strategies and Support Division (LSS) of the Learning and Literacy Directorate (LLD) are responsible for program delivery, including project selection and ongoing administration of projects. The program is administered by three full-time equivalents at LSS' offices in HRSDC's National Headquarters office. Since September 1999, the program has approved 32 projects¹ which involve contribution agreements intended to support a broad range of stakeholders that have an interest in advancing learning in Canada. Calls for proposals were issued in 2001 and 2004. In total 8 projects have been approved through the call for proposal process and an additional 24 through strategic selection. The annual budget is approximately \$1 million funded out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) which is redirected to LDD from other areas of the department.

1.2 Evaluation Context

The Terms and Conditions of the LIP program were to have expired at the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year. However, the HRSDC Minister, as per the Treasury Board Policy on Transfer Payments, extended the applicability of the program Ts and Cs for one year. Also in accordance with the Policy on Transfer Payments, an evaluation of the program

¹ At the outset of the evaluation, one additional project was in the planning stages.

must be completed and form part of a TB submission package for consideration by TB Ministers before the program can be renewed. In the case of LIP, a summative evaluation is required for reasons relating to the program's maturity, namely: (a) a formative evaluation was already undertaken and sufficient time has elapsed since the 1999 formative evaluation for operational, design and delivery program features to have been refined and; (b) sufficient time has elapsed since the formative evaluation to measure program outcomes.

Given that the previous evaluation has already examined projects approved early in the program's life, these projects were not re-examined. The projects examined during this evaluation include only those approved after March 31st, 1999. Research and Innovation projects related to Part II of the *Employment Insurance (EI) Act* are excluded as they form part of a larger program with different objectives than the LIP and are subject to a separate set of Terms and Conditions.

The primary purpose of this summative evaluation was to determine the extent to which the LIP has made progress in achieving its stated expected results. In addition, it also examined evaluation issues related to program relevance and cost-effectiveness. The questions addressed within each of these issues were those of the highest priority and took the following aspects of the program into account:

Relevance: The question arises as to whether the program goal – ... “to encourage and support partnership initiatives that will contribute to the development of a more results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable learning system” – is still relevant in the current HRSDC policy environment and to the program stakeholders. Given the program scope and resources, the evaluation also examined potential duplication and gaps in programming activities.

Results Achievement: The measurement and attribution of short to medium-term program outcomes is challenging as program outcomes cannot easily be disentangled from other external factors. Therefore, the evaluation focussed on assessing incremental progress toward the achievement of short to medium term outcomes, and perceptions of LIP's contribution to the ultimate outcomes.

Cost-effectiveness: this issue is difficult to examine without comparison data related to the efficiency and effectiveness of similar programs. Therefore, it was examined in a limited way by focusing on program design and delivery issues raised in the formative evaluation, as well as through the identification of alternative design and delivery approaches.

The evaluation was overseen by the Audit and Evaluation Directorate, Strategic Policy Branch of HRSDC and was undertaken between September 2004 and February 2005. The client for the summative evaluation is the Learning Strategies and Support Division (LSS) of the Learning and Literacy Directorate (LDD) of HRSDC.

2. Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Description of Methodologies

An evaluation plan was developed by Consulting and Audit Canada (CAC) and approved by HRSDC to guide the evaluation. The plan had been prepared based on HRSDC's Request for Proposal (RFP) for the evaluation and a preliminary review of program and project documents which helped develop an understanding of the program and identify information needs and possible information gaps. The program, questions identified from the documents, and potential methodological problems were discussed with the responsible evaluation manager and program representatives. The plan included an evaluation matrix which clearly correlates the evaluation issues, questions, indicators, data sources and collection methods (see Annex B: Evaluation Matrix).

The data collection methodologies for undertaking this assignment combined both quantitative and qualitative techniques and analysis, including interviews, as well as reviews of documents and project files. The methodologies are described in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Review of Program and Project Documents

A document review was undertaken in order to gather information used to address the evaluation issues. The documents examined included: internal records of the program's implementation and management, documented processes and procedures; HRSDC policy documents related to the Learning Initiatives Program (LIP); and documentation from projects funded and non-funded since 1999. A profile for each funded project was developed to include information necessary to assess short term results and design and delivery issues. A summary of these profiles is presented in Annex C. The project documentation was also be used to identify partners in LIP projects.

Stakeholder Interviews, Surveys, Focus Group

The evaluation collected information from a range of stakeholders groups by means of interviews, surveys and a focus group. The data collection methods undertaken for each stakeholder group is described below.

Interviews – HRSDC Managers and Staff

Six in-person interviews were conducted with HRSDC personnel, including senior management and LIP program staff using interview protocols developed by CAC. These interviews supplemented the background program information related to LIP design and delivery gathered from program documentation. Interviews were approximately 1.5 to 2 hours in length.

Interviews – Learning Experts

Telephone interviews were conducted with 4 learning experts, identified by HRSDC. The interviews were focused on evaluation questions related to program rationale and program results achievement. The individuals selected are considered experts in the lifelong learning field. They were not consulted via one of the other methodologies used and were not past or present project directors.

Survey and Follow-up Interviews – Project Sponsors

An electronic survey was conducted with the project sponsors or directors of the projects approved since the 1999 formative evaluation to explore questions related to project delivery and results achieved. The survey questionnaire consisted of mainly closed and some open-ended questions. The survey was developed and pre-tested in English with two project sponsors and then translated into French. Since the total population of funded projects is relatively small, the survey was sent to all project sponsors. The response rate for the survey was 59%.

Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with 7 respondents to obtain more in-depth information, specifically including information on results. Interview respondents had indicated their willingness to participate in a follow-up interview in the electronic survey.

Survey - Non Funded Applicants

An electronic survey was also undertaken with the non-funded project applicants. The survey focussed on the application and proposal assessment process. It was also used to determine if the projects subsequently secured alternate funding. Questions with respect to the latter informed the issue of duplication. The survey was sent to all those non-funded project proponents:

- that replied to a LIP call for proposal;
- that passed the initial screening phase of the call for proposal process;
- for which contact information was available.

The response rate for the survey was only 32%. This represents 8 respondents out of a potential 25 which is not necessarily statistically representative. However, given the fact that the potential respondents had been refused funding, the rate is not unexpected and is considered acceptable.

Interviews – Partners

Partnership questions were explored through telephone interviews with 4 partners of LIP funded projects. Questions focused on the sustainability, type and nature of partnerships established after the funding period. Interview candidates were identified by sponsors interviewed for the evaluation. It should be noted that only 3 of the seven projects for which sponsors were interviewed had partners.

Focus Group – Learning Advocacy Groups

A two-hour focus group session was conducted with 8 representatives of learning advocacy groups to explore issues related to program rationale and results-achievement. The focus group participants were identified by HRSDC and represented various groups within the learning community (NGOs, academia, etc.). Approximately half were knowledgeable about the program, its activities and objectives and the others were not.

Case studies

Case studies of seven projects were developed to provide examples of project delivery, success, partnership and sustainability. This sample size corresponds to 25% of the 29 projects that have been completed since 1999. The case studies were randomly selected from those projects for which a survey had been conducted. The case studies were completed using the data collected by the other data collection methods, including on-site project file reviews, electronic survey findings, follow-up telephone interviews and review of the web sites of the recipient organisations. Reports for each of the 7 case studies are presented in Annex D.

2.2 Constraints and Limitations

As with most evaluations, there were constraints and limitations that have influenced the conduct of this evaluation. They were as follows:

- LIP project files are extremely voluminous and in many cases duplicative, containing numerous copies of the same reports and emails. This made the task of review arduous and more time consuming than expected. This caused delays at the outset of the evaluation.
- There is little information collected on program and project outputs/outcomes. In addition, some of the information that does exist (for example, # of partners) was found to be unreliable. To address this limitation, multiple lines of evidence were used and discrepancies in the data were noted in the report. As well, case studies were used to illustrate and/or demonstrate program outputs.
- The surveys of project sponsors and applicants were not meant to be statistically representative. The small population sizes for both groups would have warranted inclusion of all individuals and projects in the evaluation, however participation was voluntary. Nevertheless, data collected from the interview process and surveys remains useful in the support of evaluation findings. In the case of the sponsor survey, it provides non-objective opinions from a group with a vested interest in program continuation. To address these data limitations, where possible, multiple lines of evidence were used to draw conclusions.

- For the LIP, many of the expected outcomes are beyond the direct influence of the program or individual projects. Since they are expected to occur sometime after project delivery is completed, sponsors are not expected to report on these outcomes. Data on end-users of project outputs is unavailable and cost-prohibitive to collect in the context of this evaluation. Therefore, the evaluation relied on stakeholder perception of project contribution to assess intermediate and long term program outcomes.

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance

3.1.1 Relevance to HRSDC Mandate and Priorities

According to the Minister of HRSDC, “Canada's skills and learning challenge is a national priority. It's about making sure that all of our citizens are in the best possible position to reach their goals. Canada is strong when its citizens are strong.”²

In February 2000, the Expert Panel on Skills presented a report to the Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Science and Technology. This report was a catalyst for national debate on the skills and learning challenges faced by Canada and Canadians. The 2001 Speech from the Throne recognized the importance of investing aggressively in the literacy, skills and talents of Canadians. Throughout 2001, the Government of Canada sponsored a series of national roundtables, and had discussions with representatives of provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal communities, business, labour, education, and public policy and non-governmental organizations about skills and learning challenges and areas for action.

On February 12, 2002, the Government launched Canada's Innovation Strategy with the release of two papers entitled:

- *Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians, and*
- *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity.*

Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians brings together what was brought forth in the roundtable discussions. The document suggests both policy directions for the country and national goals and milestones to be reached in the future. The goals include, among other items, improving the quality of, and access to, education and learning for both children and adults.

The Learning Initiatives Program (LIP)'s goals and objectives support these Government articulated goals around learning. The LIP overall goal is to support HRSDC's interest in promoting a lifelong learning culture in Canada and to encourage and support partnership initiatives that contribute to the development of a more results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable learning system.

² http://www11.sdc.gc.ca/sl-ca/doc/hrdc_minister.shtml

The Program also has a number of objectives that relate to supporting partnerships in the area of learning; promoting innovation and relevance in the establishment of learning policies and programs; and contributing to the establishment of national learning goals, enhanced research and analysis, increased academic mobility and information dissemination. All of these objectives are consistent with the Government's objective, as articulated by former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, of building a skilled workforce and an innovative economy.

3.1.2 Duplication and Gaps

According to learning experts there are many other government and non-governmental programs that support initiatives in lifelong learning. Industry Canada and Heritage Canada were noted as federal departments with programming in this area. Provinces, having the jurisdictional authority for education, are also concerned with lifelong learning. No specific programs were identified, however it was noted that the innovative nature of the LIP means that it is not likely to be duplicative in terms of project selection. There are a lot of training dollars available in the Employment Insurance fund for example, but eligibility is somewhat different. Most importantly, other programs simply do not allow for innovation as does the LIP. Survey results from both LIP sponsors and applicants also support these findings, with a majority indicating that they were not aware of any other programs or initiatives which support similar or comparable activities or services. However, since 63% of non-funded applicants were able to secure some financial support for their proposed activities from other funding sources, it would appear that some LIP activities duplicate those provided by other levels of government or institutions.

Respondents indicated that although they believe Canada has made real progress in lifelong learning in the last decade, the number of concrete examples is limited compared to the overall need. All respondents indicated that it is an area that is generally under-funded by all levels of government. Educationally and economically disadvantaged people with low levels of education have the greatest need.

3.2 Results Achievement

3.2.1 Achievement of Short-Term Outcomes

Summary of LIP Funded Projects

Thirty-two projects have been funded through the LIP since September 1999. At the outset of the evaluation, 23 had been completed and closed. Four other projects were in the process of being closed. Two of the projects remained active, and three others had just recently been approved. Eight of the projects were selected through a call for proposal (CFP) process: 6 in 2001 and 2 in 2004. The other 24 projects were chosen through strategic selection. It should be noted that 2 projects in this latter group are

reported by HRSDC as having been funded through a CFP process. However, proposals for these projects had been submitted in response to the 2003 Part II of the *Employment Insurance Act* CFP, but were then mounted as developmental LIP projects. Since these projects were not funded through a LIP CFP process, they have been accounted for in the evaluation as having been chosen through strategic selection.

Among the eligible types of initiatives specified in the Terms and Conditions for Contributions, the majority of projects were research, analysis or studies. Table 3-1 shows the number and proportion of projects categorised by each of the four categories of eligible activities. This information, collated from the project file review, also shows that 25% of projects were categorised as “Other”. It is important to note that although the Terms and Conditions lists eligible activities, the list is not preclusive and appears to be provided as an example of possible activity type. The fairly large proportion of projects categorised as “other” is therefore commensurate with the innovative nature of the program. As well, many projects may have included development and dissemination of related information products; however, this may not have been the primary activity. For a detailed summary of projects by type, see Annex C.

Type	Number	%
Research, analysis or studies	14	44%
Conferences and/or consultations	7	22%
Development and dissemination of information/products	2	6%
Activities designed to contribute to the attainment of national goals	1	3%
Other	8	25%

There is one project that was identified as research and analysis for which the project file contains some indications that it was erroneously funded under the LIP program.³ The project was the provision of translation services which encompassed the evaluation and revision of the French language version of a web site. As well, it should be noted that the identification of project types, by LIP program officers, may not always be accurate. For example, case study #7, as presented in Annex D, describes a project entitled “Forging Links/Nouer des liens. This project involved the development of learning-related publications and the dissemination of learning research. This project would seem to clearly fit into the project type of “development and dissemination of information/products”, however the project was classified as “Other”.

The funding provided by the LIP appears to be an important factor in the development of projects aimed at contributing to lifelong learning in Canada. The survey indicated that 61% of sponsors would not have undertaken the project without funding from the LIP. The remaining (39%) indicated that in the absence of funding, the projects would have proceeded but with a smaller scope, reduced activities and/or fewer objectives. The case

³ The project number is P19900006, which was completed between 2000-01-04 / 2000-03-31 with a total HRSDC contribution of \$8,799.74.

studies further illustrate these survey findings. For four of the case studies (57%), recipients indicated that the project would not have taken place in the absence of LIP funding. For the other 3 case studies (43%), the projects would have taken place, but with a smaller scope, reduced activities and/or fewer objectives. The survey of non-funded applicants indicated that although none of the applicants pursued the full project as outlined in the funding application, 63% of non-funded projects were implemented with a smaller scope, reduced activities and/or few objectives. Projects that proceeded in the absence of LIP funding obtained alternate financial support through provincial governments, universities, municipal governments and NGOs. With the absence of funding, fewer projects would have been implemented as alternate financial support is not easily obtained.

Development and dissemination of LIP-funded research

One of the expected short-term outcomes of the LIP is the dissemination of LIP-funded research pertaining to learning by means of electronic and paper publishing and/or via other channels (consultations, conferences, forums, etc.). The survey indicated that the majority (81%) of respondents had disseminated the results of their project. The most common method of dissemination was by hardcopy and via web site. This is supported by the case studies. In all of the projects examined for the case studies, the results were disseminated in both hard copy and via web sites. Other means of dissemination used are brochures and by email. The Pan-Canadian Pathways Project, undertaken by an Alberta University, led to the results being disseminated through brochures and course calendars at various community colleges. The results of the Skills and Lifelong Learning Project, by a non-profit organisation were disseminated to approximately 500 recipients through email. Another project under by a post-secondary institute indicated that project results were disseminated via email, although no statistics on the number of email recipients were provided. (See Annex D for descriptions of these case studies.) No respondents to the survey or case studies indicated that research was disseminated by CD-Rom.

It should also be noted that for one of the projects outlined in the case studies (case study #7), the goal of the project was to produce learning-related publications, and to create new electronic and print mechanisms to disseminate learning research. In this case, the association published learning-related information in their magazine, through their newsletter, and through the creation of a web site and online forum.

Table 3-2 Extent of Dissemination of Project Results	
Means of Dissemination	Quantity (#)
Hardcopy	10,840
Website Downloads	5,216
Email	500
Brochures	500
Other: Through Conference Workshop	not specified
CD-Rom	0

It should be noted that not all respondents were able to quantify the extent of dissemination of projects results since there was no requirement for this information to be tracked after project completion. Consequently, the numbers provided in Table 3-2 above do not capture the full extent to which project results were disseminated.

3.2.2 Achievement of Intermediate-Term Outcomes

This section presents findings related to the achievement of the four expected intermediate-term outcomes identified for the LIP.

Contribution to Partnership Development

The LIP definition of a partner for funded projects is very broad. It includes all parties and organisations:

- that make a cash or in kind contribution to the project;
- named as partners in project documentation;
- that has provided a letter of support for the project.

In terms of in-kind contribution, LSS uses the definition in HRSDC's Grants and Contributions operations guide. The guide stipulates that an in-kind contribution is a non-financial added value to the project. There are many kinds of in-kind contributions, including physical assets, such as land, buildings, machinery, equipment and office space, or the provision of staff, expertise or other services. The value of all in-kind contributions needs to be actual, verifiable, and be supported by financial documentation.

At the outset of the evaluation, a master list of partners was provided to the evaluation team. The list consisted of the names of partner organisations for each project. The list was compiled from a review of all closed LIP project files. The file review conducted for evaluation purposes did not yield the same results. In fact, in 61% of the cases, the partners identified in the master list could not be verified in the project files. A third data source, LIP's Performance Indicators database, was also reviewed. The total number of partners in the database was also inconsistent with the master list as well as with the verified partners from the file review.

The sponsor survey sought to determine the extent of partnership development by typifying the nature of partnerships. Five types of partnership were defined as shown in Table 3-3. Fifty percent (50%) of sponsors surveyed indicated that they had established partnerships to implement their LIP-funded projects. Four of the seven projects outlined in the case studies involved partnerships. In addition, most sponsors had developed more than one partnership. Three of the four case study projects with partnerships had more than one partnership. The total number of partnerships for any one project ranged from a maximum of 85 to a minimum of one.

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of each type of partnership established. As shown in Table 3-3, the majority of partnerships were informal in nature. This is corroborated in the case studies. Four of the case study projects involved partners, but only one established formal partnerships. There were also associative (18) and informal (9) partnerships established by this project. The three other case study projects with partners had only informal partnerships.

Table 3-3 Total and Average Number of Partnerships Developed			
Type of Partnership	Definition	Total	Average
Informal	No direct agreements between partners but an understanding that there would be mutual consultation	133	22
Associative	Members of the partnership formed part of a larger organisation that may have belonged to a formal partnership	20	10
Formal	Two partners working together continuously, sharing resources and funds on a broad range of projects or initiatives	3	3
Contractual	Formal, legal agreements	30	30
Sponsorship	Transfer of funds from one party to another	20	20
Total number and overall average number of partnerships		206	29

Project partners came from all sectors including:

- Non profit organisation or registered non-profit charitable organisation (80%);
- Post-secondary institution (80%);
- NGO (60%);
- Education or training body (60%);
- Individual (20%);
- Business or professional organisation (20%);
- Province or Territory (including CMEC) (20%);
- International, national, provincial/territorial institutions (10%);
- Municipal body (10%).

In the intermediate term, one of the expected outcomes of the LIP is sustainability of established partnerships. In assessing the extent to which this may have occurred, the sponsor survey sought to quantify and qualify partnership sustainability. The majority (67%) of respondents indicated that some partnerships did in fact continue after project completion, but only half of these specified an approximate total number. The remaining sponsors with partners (33%) were unable to reply since their projects were not yet completed at the time of the survey. The partner profile remained much the same as during project implementation with partners most commonly identified as non-profit organisations (75%) and post-secondary institutions (75%). And again, the majority of partnerships were informal in nature with a total of 106 identified. There were 15 sponsorship and 16 contractual type partnerships established.

A few of the activities undertaken by partners after project termination were briefly described in the sponsor survey and include:

- ongoing collaborative discussions;
- involvement in partner association PLAR related activities;
- information sharing and networking;
- implementation of another HRSDC funded project.⁴

As described in case study #3 in Annex D, fifteen informal partnerships have continued since the completion of the Pan-Canadian Pathways Project. These partners are involved with the Alberta university on a subsequent project (the Pan-Canadian Gateways Project) that builds on the results of the Pathways project. The activities of the Gateways project are similar to the Pathways project, but look at Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition for both formal and informal learning.

Sustainable partnerships are also a result of a project described in case study #4 in Annex D. This project was described as Part I of a two part initiative. Part I of the project, which received LIP funding, consisted of identifying partners and developing a research framework for a subsequent Part II. Formal partnerships were developed as an output of this project. These partnerships will continue, at least through the completion of Part II of the project. The activities of the partners, to be undertaken in Part II, consists of taking the framework developed in this project and using it to assess their services to clients in order to enhance access and employability.

Partnerships in the project “Building Capacity in Communities – PLA Centres as a Catalyst for Change” (see case study #6 in Annex D) have also continued following the completion of the project. According to one interview for this project, the Centre and a Nova Scotia PLA are currently working together on another project, although the nature of this project was not described. As well, a partnership with a funded post-secondary institution continues which is described as informal and consultative in nature.

⁴ The partners developed the Pan-Canadian Gateways project which was also funded by HRSDC.

Development of Lifelong Learning Policies and Programs

Most evaluation methods yielded no concrete evidence showing a direct LIP contribution to the development of lifelong learning policies and programs. A majority of sponsor survey respondents (77%) indicated that in the long term, their project had contributed to the enhancement of lifelong learning policies and programs. However, none were able to provide any concrete evidence or examples. Comments received in the survey only indicated that there was congruence between project objectives and this expected program outcome. Findings from the focus group and learning expert interviews did not yield any evidence either. Two of the seven case studies did, however, provide some evidence of having contributed to enhanced lifelong learning opportunities. One of these projects resulted in block transfer credits to “ladder” college students into certain university programs thereby improving accessibility and mobility. The other project, aimed at improving prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), has resulted in greater dialogue amongst provincial ministries and post-secondary institutions on the subject.

Alignment of Stakeholders towards Achievement of National Lifelong Learning Goals

There is no evidence of greater alignment of the learning community, government and private sector toward achievement of national lifelong learning goals. One learning expert has commented there is perhaps better alignment in terms of understanding the nature of the problem, but Canada is no closer to agreeing on what policy remedies may/must be. There were 59% of sponsor survey respondents who indicated that their project contributed to a greater alignment, however, no evidence was provided. There was no consensus among focus group participants on what is meant by national learning goals; therefore they were not able to provide any supporting comments or evidence.

Accessibility and/or Mobility Related to Lifelong Learning

Focus group participants indicated their perception that there is little increase in levels of accessibility related to lifelong learning. There is perhaps evidence in very targeted areas which amounts to very little overall. An example given was the use of innovative on-line delivery of University courses. There may be a few examples, but participants indicated that the trends in programming have generally run the other way. There seemed to be a lot being done in adult education and access through the 1980's but these succumbed to budget pressure in formal learning institutions. Another trend to take into consideration is the change in community colleges. They are becoming more like university, which inevitably means less attention to access. This is partially related to levels of funding and restrictions. Increasingly, colleges are required to deliver more programs that are cost-recoverable. There is no incentive for them to invest in adults. The culture has become one focussed on sustainability of the institution because the funding has been pulled away so dramatically.

One of the case studies presented some indication that accessibility to lifelong learning may have been increased as a result of this project. As described in case study #3 in Annex D, an Alberta University undertook a project aimed at producing pathways to undergraduate degree completion for practitioners in the Human Services field. As a result of this project, 36 college diploma programs were assessed for block credit transfer of 60 credits (2 years) towards a Human Services major of the Bachelor of Professional Arts program of an Alberta University. This has increased access for college participants to enter the University's program. However, the extent to which students have taken advantage of this is unknown.

In terms of mobility, some examples of progress were noted, but none attributable to the LIP. For instance, there are now memorandums of understanding between most of the occupational and regulatory bodies across Canada. There are also some formal teaching institutions that have articulation agreements with comparable institutions. It was noted however, that developing these agreements continues to be a challenge, noting that it is much easier to establish agreements with American institutions than with other Canadian institutions.

3.2.3 Achievement of Long-Term Outcomes

There are three ultimate outcomes stated in the Learning Initiatives Program's logic model that pertain to broad societal level changes. They are stated as follows:

- enhanced collaboration and co-operation among the learning communities to address learning priorities in Canada;
- enhanced learning policy and program development and implementation; and
- an enhanced set of consensual learning goals in Canada.

The evaluation has not identified any evidence of incremental progress made towards the achievement of these outcomes. In addition, stakeholders have noted that it is not likely the LIP, in and of itself, would have any impact at this level, noting relatively small size compared to the ambitious expected outcomes.

3.3 Design and Delivery

3.3.1 Efficient use of human resources

The perception of LIP management and staff was sought in order to assess whether areas of activity, associated responsibilities and lines of accountability within the program were well defined and appropriate. There is clearly a shared understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities. This is partly due to the small number of management and staff that work closely on the LIP. This has also meant that there is little room for any overlap in responsibilities.

At the outset of the evaluation, the LIP group consisted of a Director, Manager, two Program Consultants and a Program Analyst. Under normal circumstances, it is believed that the division of work would be appropriate. However the program has been plagued by frequent staff turnover which puts an additional strain on remaining staff who, themselves, are relatively new to the program. In addition, the innovative nature of LIP is felt to present administrative challenges to program personnel. Interviewees noted that the policy nature of the projects is challenging for program administration especially in terms of performance monitoring. Although the LIP has a relatively small budget and number of projects compared to other HRSDC programs, every project is very different and there is an associated learning curve with each project in terms of its administration. It is felt that some of these difficulties are partly addressed by the consultative and co-operative relationship between the policy and program staff.

3.3.2 Project Selection

The project selection process was examined in order to determine whether the manner for soliciting proposals is well defined and streamlined. There are presently two means by which projects are selected for the LIP. There is a call for proposal (CFP) process and what is referred to as strategic selection. Eligible activities include: research and analysis; consultations and conferences; and other policy development-related activities. Program limitations include: funding may not exceed \$300,000 per year; capital costs are ineligible; the program cannot contribute more than 75% of actual project-related expenses; and the project must be of a finite duration. Organisations that are eligible for funding include: non-profit organisations and registered non-profit charitable organisations; business and professional organisations; education and training bodies; provinces and territories; international, national provincial/territorial institutions; municipalities' post-secondary institutions, individuals; and those crown corporations that are not mainly funded through appropriations.

In both types of selection process, successful project proposals must be based on the strategic framework which identifies current objectives and priorities. In the case of strategic selection of proposals, initiatives are developed in collaboration with sponsors outside of the CFP process under the following conditions:

- only the potential sponsor has the capacity to carry out the targeted strategic activities and/or;
- the prospective sponsor is the national body responsible and/or;
- the prospective sponsor indisputably holds highest level of national expertise in the subject matter and/or;
- a high priority has been assigned to implementation of a bilateral initiative with a provincial government.

Proposals for these initiatives are prepared by sponsors and undergo a review process including an internal policy and operational review and HRDC review by subject matter experts.

The CFP process was first introduced in 2001 and was also used in 2004. In both cases, relevant project application materials were posted on HRDC Grants and Contributions web site which is accessible to the general public. Potential applicants are also notified of the RFP by mail. The mailing list for this purpose has been collated from individuals and organisations that have made prior contact with the Learning Strategies and Support Division (LSS). Incoming proposals undergo a tiered review process including internal policy and operational review, a review by external subject matter experts, and a final HRDC committee review. The most highly ranked proposals are submitted to Minister for approval.

Although the extent to which the selection processes are used in a judicious manner was not examined as part of the evaluation, there are two cases that are worth noting. As indicated in section 3.2.1, two projects⁵ that were mounted as developmental LIP projects had been originally submitted as proposals for the 2003 Part II CFP. Although they were deemed very good project proposals as noted by HRSDC staff, they did not meet all of the Part II CFP criteria and were therefore funded through LIP. Since these projects were not funded through a LIP CFP process, they should be accounted for as having been chosen through strategic selection and as such should have been reviewed against the conditions for strategic selection noted above. The extent to which these projects met these conditions is unknown.

In assessing the project selection process, both sponsors and applicants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with several aspects of the proposal process. Project sponsors and partners generally agreed on the following:

LIP design elements	Sponsors	Applicants
The eligibility criteria set forth were clear	77%	83%
The application process was clear	89%	100%
The proposal assessment process was adequately described	76%	75%
The call for proposal documentation was clear	90%	100%
The selection process was completed in at timely fashion	56%	83%
The selection process was fair and equitable	89%	83%

⁵ Projects #LIP2003001 and #LIP2003003.

Case study interviews and comments received through the surveys suggest that there is an opportunity to improve the application and selection process. Although the CFP process was generally considered to be clear and transparent, the follow-up after selection was described by some sponsors as slow and labour intensive noting in particular the introduction of new conditions which were not part of the proposal process and new forms to be completed which is part of the agreement negotiation.

3.3.3 Strategic Direction vs. Participation

Strategic direction of the LIP has been enhanced since the development of a strategic framework which more closely reflects departmental priorities. The introduction of the CFP process has also contributed to this enhancement as it has been used to better advertise LIP’s strategic priorities and set the program’s funding criteria. These changes are reflected in the trends in number and percentage of proposals funded vs. received.

As shown in Table 3-5, both the number of proposals received and the percentage of proposals funded had increased before the introduction of the first RFP process in 2001. Program staff has indicated the 2004 RFP was in fact much more specific in terms of eligible project types which accounts for the lower number of proposals received in that year. With more methodological and concise RFPs, potential applicants have been better able to self-select. As well, the narrower strategic focus has limited the number of potential proponents who can participate. In the opinion of program staff, the LIP is no longer a “catch-all” of innovative projects. The program has gone from being very responsive with only broad topical objectives to guide project selection to more directive with the introduction of strategic priorities and a RFP process.

Year/Type of Application	Number of Proposals	Number of funded projects	Number of non-funded applicants	Percentage of proposals funded
1999	10	4	6	40%
2000	13	11	2	85%
2001	23	3	20	13%
2001/RFP	69	6	63	9%
2002	31	0	31	0%
2003	26	3	23	13%
2004/RFP	11	2	9	18%
Totals	248	31	217	12.5%

⁶ The related data from the 2003 RFP is not included since funding was from EI part II which is beyond the scope of this evaluation. As previously noted, 2 proposals submitted for the 2003 EI part II RFP were subsequently funded through LIP.

In order to assess the relative magnitude of unmet needs, the number of rejected applicants would normally be examined. However, in this case, its use is cautioned. There are two predominant categories of reasons for which applications are rejected. One is related to the limited availability of resources for the program and the other is the quality of applications. What is not known in the case of applications submitted outside of the RFP process is the quality of the proposed projects. Clearly if the proposed project was completely outside of the scope of lifelong learning and did not receive funding, this does not constitute an unmet need. However, assessments of these proposals are not documented in any detail. Therefore, unmet need can only be estimated using data from the RFP proposal assessment process in which the various assessment stages are documented.

Table 3-6			
Crosswalk of 2001 and 2004 Proposal Assessment Process			
RFP 2001	# of Applicants	RFP 2004	# of Applicants
Total Number of Applicants	69	Total Number of Applicants	11
Rejected at Step 1: Incoming Application Package Checklist	9		
*Rejected at Step 2: Basic Program Requirements Checklist	22	*Rejected at Stage 1: Initial Screening Form	5
Rejected at Step 3: Detailed Assessment Checklist	9	Rejected at Stage 2: Operational Assessment	3
Rejected at Step 4: Review Committee Assessment	22	Rejected at Stage 3: Review Committee	1
Number of funded projects	6	Number of funded projects	2
* This Step/Stage includes among other criteria, basic eligibility criteria such as applicant eligibility, alignment with program and specific CFP objectives.			

Table 3-6 above, shows the number of proposals rejected at each assessment stage of the 2001 and 2004 RFP processes. In total, there are 23 projects which were rejected at the last stage of the review. This represents a 74% estimated level of unmet need. It is important to note that as the program becomes more strategic and directive the greater the probability that organisations working in the lifelong learning field will have needs that are not being addressed by the LIP.

3.3.4 Performance Monitoring

While there is financial and activity monitoring conducted for LIP projects⁷ and a basic database for capturing some output level data, the evaluation found no evidence that a comprehensive performance monitoring system has been developed to track the achievement of outcome level results.

The system's database contains mostly quantitative data (# of reports produced) and a few rating scales which are inadequate for assessing or monitoring achievement of outcomes. In addition, some project files do contain what is called a performance tracking form. The form includes all of the same data fields as the database with the addition of questions and comments fields that attempt to address outcome level achievement. The tracking forms were to be completed by the responsible project officer. However, in most instances, these are not adequately completed in order to conduct any valuable analysis. In sum, the data collection tools need to be strengthened in order to be more useful to on-going program delivery and reporting of results. It should be noted that LIP management recognises the weaknesses of the performance tracking system.

3.3.5 Alternate program design and/or delivery approaches

Program stakeholders were asked if there were changes in program design that would significantly improve program efficiency or effectiveness. The only alternate program design and delivery approach suggested was the integration of the LIP with a larger existing program within HRSDC. The rationale for this suggestion is based in improving cost-efficiency. There is a minimum level of infrastructure necessary for the delivery of any program and the conduct of RFPs. However, the program budget is not commensurate with the minimum level of infrastructure in place. It was suggested that integration would present several benefits, one of which would be access to a larger pool of staff which would minimise any effects of staff turnover on project monitoring. One of the most common complaints noted from sponsors is the difficulty and burden of dealing with continual staff-turnover.

⁷ See Audit of the Learning Initiatives Program (LIP), Internal Audit Services, HRSDC, September 2004.

4. Key Conclusions

4.1 Relevance

- The Learning Initiatives Program (LIP) goals and objectives are consistent with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)'s mandate and priorities. However, they are very broad, most likely as a result from wanting to ensure and reflect the program's intended innovative nature. The opportunity to refine and focus the objectives exists as the current Terms and Conditions for the LIP must be renewed.
- There is no concrete evidence of duplication, or gaps in activities and services with other HRSDC and/or other government initiatives. It would appear that restrictive funding criteria of other HRSDC programs would disqualify the types of projects proposed and funded through the LIP. However, as 63% of non-funded applicants secured some financial support from other funding sources, there is the potential that LIP activities duplicate those provided by other levels of government or institutions.

4.2 Results-Achievement

Achievement of Short-Term Outcomes

- Thirty-two projects have been funded through the LIP since September 1999. The funding provided by the LIP appears to be an important factor in the development of projects aimed at contributing to lifelong learning in Canada. The findings indicate that most of these projects (69%) would not have been undertaken without funding from the LIP. For the minority that would have proceeded in the absence of funding, they would most likely have been much smaller in scope, with reduced activities and/or fewer objectives. This would inevitably translate into lost opportunity to contribute to advancing lifelong learning in Canada. With the absence of funding, fewer projects would have been implemented as alternate financial support is not easily obtained. Thus, to a large extent, LIP has provided funding for activities that otherwise would not have occurred.
- Although evidence of dissemination of LIP-funded research was obtained, the data is incomplete. There are two possible sources for this data; HRSDC and project sponsors. Project sponsors are not required to track or report on the extent of dissemination after project completion and this may in fact be difficult to implement. As well, even though HRSDC has begun the practice of posting LIP funded research to its website, tracking of downloads is not performed. Even if dissemination could be more reliably quantified, it would be of little value without comparison with expected levels of dissemination, which project sponsors were not required to provide.

Achievement of Intermediate-Term Outcomes

- There is evidence of partnership development in the delivery of LIP projects. Fifty percent (50%) of sponsors surveyed indicated that they had established partnerships to implement their LIP-funded projects. However, an overwhelming majority of these can be described as informal. Although the identity and extent of cash or in-kind contributions is required to be presented in project proposals and documented in Contribution Agreements, limiting the definition of partners to what is required as part of Grants and Contribution administration gives insufficient importance to actual partnership development. Additional effort could be expended by HRSDC in collecting primary data for the limited number of projects that have identified partners. Sustainability of partnerships were evidenced in a majority of projects that reported delivery partners however, the extent and quality of these are unknown.
- There is no evidence to indicate a LIP contribution to the development of lifelong learning policies and programs. Stakeholders have indicated that policy development is influenced by so many external factors that attribution to such a small program is unlikely.
- There is no evidence of greater alignment of the learning community, government and private sector toward achievement of national lifelong learning goals. In fact, HRSDC management has indicated that the establishment of national learning goals is no longer a departmental or program priority given the lack of progress in the area in the past.
- There is anecdotal evidence of a few areas in which accessibility has been increased, however progress is small in comparison to the overall need. Given the magnitude of need, the fact that there is at least one project which provides evidence (albeit limited) of increased mobility reflects positively on the program. In terms of mobility, some examples of progress were noted, but none attributable to the LIP.

Achievement of Long-Term Outcomes

- The evaluation has not found any evidence of incremental progress made towards the achievement of ultimate outcomes.

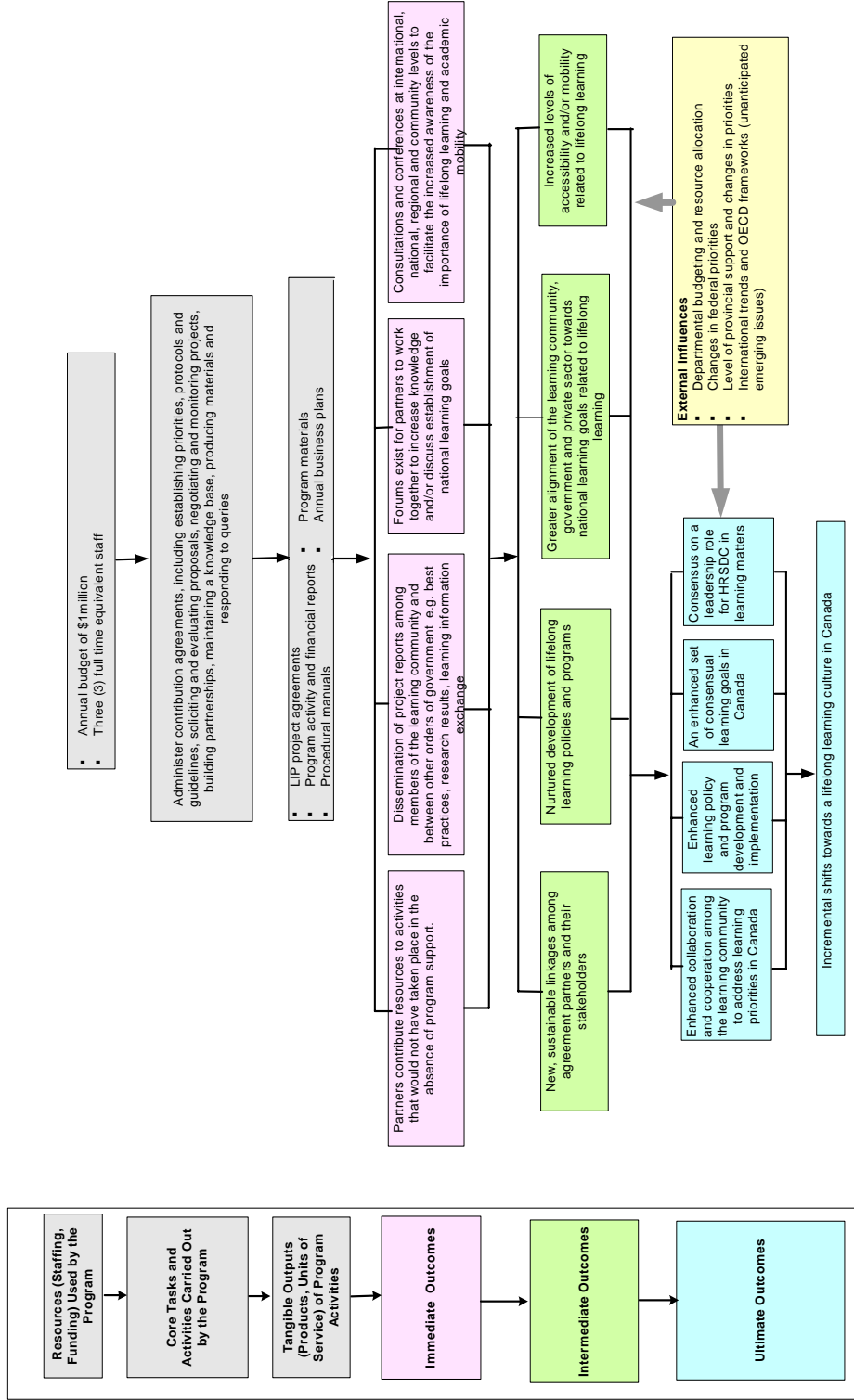
4.3 Design and Delivery

- Areas of activity, associated responsibilities and lines of accountability within the program are well defined and appropriate. However, both LIP staff and project sponsors noted the difficulties presented by high staff-turnover and a loss of corporate memory for the continuous administration of projects and consistency of interface with project sponsors.

- The processes for soliciting proposals are well defined and are becoming more streamlined. Both project applicants and sponsors were generally satisfied with elements of the application and selection process reviewed in this study. A few stakeholders noted dissatisfaction with the timeframe for approvals which impact on the timeframe of the proposed deliverables. There were also many comments regarding general administration as it related to reporting requirements, however, it is believed that these findings are endemic to the department.
- Strategic direction of the LIP has been enhanced since the development of a strategic framework which more closely reflects departmental priorities. The introduction of the CFP process has also contributed to this enhancement as it has been used to better advertise LIP's strategic priorities and set the program's funding criteria. However, as the program becomes more strategic and directive there is a greater probability that organisations working in the lifelong learning field will have needs that are not being addressed by the LIP.
- There is financial, activity and output level monitoring; however performance monitoring of results needs improvement. The data collection tools developed to date are inadequate and rarely used as intended or designed.
- The only alternate program design and delivery approach suggested was the integration of the LIP with a larger existing program within HRSDC. The rationale for this suggestion is based on improving cost-efficiency by assisting in the effective management of available funds. Consolidation of all LIP staff within one responsibility centre (LSS) was noted by HRSDC stakeholders to have facilitated the administration of the program. It is believed further consolidation could produce even greater benefits. Should such an approach be considered, stakeholders would be fully supportive to the extent that further streamlining and standardisation of project administration could be assured.

Annex A: Logic Model⁸

High-Level Program Logic: Learning Initiatives Program



⁸ See A Framework for the Evaluation of the Learning Initiatives Program, presented by CS/RESORS Consulting, LTD & Grant Thornton, June 14, 2004.

Annex B: Summative Evaluation Matrix

Summative Evaluation Matrix			
Evaluation Issues/Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Collection Methods
<p>Relevance Issue #1: Are the LIP goal and objectives still consistent with HRSDC mandate and priorities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congruence of program goal and objectives with federal policy framework on lifelong learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Documents • 6 HRSDC Managers & Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary Analysis • Face-To-Face Interview
<p>Relevance Issue #2: Are sponsors and communities of interest knowledgeable and supportive of the program goal and objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which sponsors and communities of interest are knowledgeable of the program and its goals and objectives • Extent to which sponsors and communities of interest have a shared understanding of program goals and objectives • Level of satisfaction of sponsors and communities of interest with the extent to which the program's goal and objectives address identified needs for support of innovations in lifelong learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsors • 5 Learning Experts • Representatives Of 10 Learning Advocacy Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone Interview • Telephone Interview • 2 Hour Focus Group Session
<p>Relevance Issue #3: Is there potential duplication, or gaps in activities and services with other HRSDC and/or other government initiatives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of any duplicative activities or services funded by the federal, provincial/ territorial and/or municipal governments • Extent of duplication of identified activities and services • Presence of under-funded or unfunded areas of need in lifelong learning • Level and type of identified need from applicants (e.g., proposals) and communities of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsors • 5 Learning Experts • Representatives Of 10 Learning Advocacy Groups • Project Files 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone Interview • Telephone Interview • 2 Hour Focus Group Session • Document Review
<p>ST Results Achievement Issue #1: Has the LIP provided funding for activities that otherwise would not have occurred?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # and type of projects supported • Proportion of project types supported (conference, research, etc.) • Percentage of non-funded projects that have obtained alternate funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Files • Non-Funded Project Proponents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary Analysis • E-Survey Of Non-Funded Project Proponents

Summative Evaluation Matrix (continued)			
Evaluation Issues/Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Collection Methods
<p>ST Results Achievement Issue #2: Has there been development and broad, targeted dissemination, of LIP-funded research pertaining to learning, by means of electronic and paper publishing and/or via other channels (consultations, conferences, forums)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and extent of differentiated means of dissemination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Files Sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary Analysis E-Survey And Follow-Up Telephone Interviews 10 Project Case Studies 2 Hour Focus Group Session
<p>IT Results Achievement Issue #1: In what way(s) and to what extent did LIP-funded projects achieve their stated objectives and contribute to the achievement of program intermediate outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congruence of reported project results with original proposal objectives. Congruence of reported project results with program objectives. stakeholder perception of changes in lifelong learning policies and programs stakeholder perception of greater alignment of learning community, government, private sector toward achievement of national lifelong learning goals stakeholder perception of increased levels of accessibility and/or mobility related to lifelong learning stakeholder perception of LIP contribution to incremental changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Files Sponsors 5 Learning Experts Representatives Of 10 Learning Advocacy Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary Analysis E-Survey And Follow-Up Telephone Interviews 10 Project Case Studies Telephone Interviews 2 Hour Focus Group Session
<p>IT Results Achievement Issue #2: Have established partnerships been sustained, and if not, why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of partnerships established for LIP projects Diversity of partners Type of partnerships maintained or established after the funding period Contributions by and activities undertaken by partners after project termination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Files Sponsors Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary Analysis E-Survey And Follow-Up Telephone Interviews E-Survey And Follow-Up Telephone Interviews

Summative Evaluation Matrix (continued)			
Evaluation Issues/Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Collection Methods
<p>LT Results Achievement Issue #1: Has there been incremental progress made towards the achievement of LIP's ultimate outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder perception of changes in national policy and program development and implementation Stakeholder perception of national learning goals Stakeholder perception of LIP contribution to incremental progress towards achievement of program ultimate outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Learning Experts Representatives of 10 Learning Advocacy Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone Interview 2 Hour Focus Group Session
<p>Design and Delivery Issue #1: Are areas of activity, associated responsibilities and lines of accountability within the program well defined and appropriate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of HRSDC and program management and staff of the state of available resources, reporting relationships and accountabilities, systems, and administrative support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIP Management Documents 6 HRSDC Managers & Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary Analysis Face-To-Face Interview
<p>Design and Delivery Issue #2 Are the processes for soliciting proposals well defined and streamlined?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of adequate documentation on the funding process and the setting of criteria for the project approval process Reported level of satisfaction of sponsors (past and present) with the level of program funding available, proposal process and reporting requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIP Management Documents Sponsors Non-Funded project proponents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary Analysis E-Survey And Follow-Up Telephone Interview 10 Project Case Studies
<p>Design and Delivery Issue #3 Are the funding criteria and related processes reflective of the capabilities of potential proponents to participate, and commensurate with the size of the program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and type of organisations, individuals, etc. contacted to submit proposals vs. received Trends in solicited and unsolicited proposals by number and type Trends in percentage of proposals funded vs. received Relative magnitude of unmet needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIP Management Documents Project Files Non-Funded Project Proponents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary Analysis Documentary Analysis E-Survey of Non-Funded Project Proponents
<p>Design and Delivery Issue #4 Are performance measures incorporated, to a reasonable extent, within funding agreements and are there adequate controls to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected and reported data?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which performance monitoring systems were developed that enable the effectiveness of each project to be assessed Coverage & quality of performance data reported Gaps in performance data that must be filled to effectively monitor and manage future initiatives Extent to which performance data is adequate to meet accountability requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIP Management Documents, E.G., Contribution Agreements, Audits HRSDC Managers & Staff Project Files/Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary Analysis Face-To-Face Interviews 10 Project Case Studies

Summative Evaluation Matrix (continued)			
Evaluation Issues/Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Collection Methods
<p>Design and Delivery Issue #5: In what way(s) and to what extent did the LIP-funded research projects inform subsequent LIP strategic directions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which identified project research findings provided guidance for new areas of research • Correlation with changes in LIP funding criteria in terms of timing and subsequent research direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Files/Reports • Lip Management Documents, e.g., Call For Proposals • 6 HRSDC Managers & Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary Analysis • Documentary Analysis • Face-To-Face Interview
<p>Design and Delivery Issue #6: Are there any alternate program design and/or delivery approaches that would be potentially more cost-efficient or cost-effective?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range and nature of program design & delivery alternatives • Extent of stakeholder support for proposed alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 HRSDC Managers & Staff • Sponsors • Summative Evaluation Findings • Representatives of 10 Learning Advocacy Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-To-Face Interview • E-Survey And Follow-Up Telephone Interview • Meta-Analysis of Findings • 2 Hour Focus Group Session

Annex C: Project Profile Summary

Thirty-two projects have been funded through Learning Initiatives since September 1999. Of the 32 projects, 23 have been completed and closed. Four other projects are in the process of being closed. Two of the projects remain active, and three others have just recently been approved. Ten of the projects were selected through a call for proposal process: 6 in 2001, 2 in 2003⁹ and 2 in 2004. The other 22 projects were chosen through strategic selection.

This section of the report presents a summary of the projects funded according to the various eligible project types.

Research, Analysis or Studies

Since 1999, Learning Initiatives has funded 14 projects classified as “Research and Analysis”. The breakdown of these 14 projects is as follows:

Research, analysis or studies on:	Number
Best practices	2
National and international experience	4
Indicators and monitoring mechanisms	4
The feasibility of adopting specific approaches	3
Other	1
Total	14

Best practices:

As identified above, there were two research projects that looked at best practices. For one of these projects the geographic scope was identified as national, for the other the geographic scope was indicated to be provincial. These two research projects included research into distance education delivery of post-secondary courses and programs in remote Aboriginal communities, and research into models of community-based Prior Learning Assessment Centres in Canada.

National and international experience:

Of the four research projects on national and international experience, three of the projects were classified as national in scope, and one was classified as provincial. The goals of these projects included:

- to rigorously evaluate the quantitative and qualitative long-term impact of completing a learning portfolio;

⁹ As previously indicated, two projects originally submitted as proposals for the 2003 Part II CFP were funded through LIP. These projects were classified as selected through a RFP process; however they were not funded through the LIP RFP.

- to review the adequacy of learning opportunities for adults and to improve the organization's knowledge of participation and access to learning by adults, through systematic, cross-country comparisons;
- to mine the data emanating from a survey focusing on variations in job-related learning in the changing world of work; and
- to research and demonstrate the direct and indirect costs to individuals, institutions, employers and the country when learning and learning credentials are not recognized.

Indicators and monitoring mechanisms:

All four of the research projects on indicators and monitoring mechanisms were identified as national in scope. These projects included research to:

- develop a set of national programs and policies for use by post-secondary institutions and other learning organizations including employers, labour and community groups to systematically assess their services to clients in order to enhance access and employability;
- to support data development and the collection of comprehensive program and institutional information for Canadian community colleges;
- to support data development and the collection of comprehensive program and institutional information for Canadian universities; and
- review and analysis of the use and development of post-secondary education, performance indicators, as well as program and policy measures that promote the participation of under-represented youth.

Feasibility of adopting specific approaches:

All three of the research projects on the feasibility of adopting specific approaches were identified as national in scope. These projects included research to:

- develop a Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) research framework for an implementation plan which focuses on increased access to learning and labour force participation levels of unemployed and underemployed youth and young adults;
- further development of a Human Services model for customizing Block Credit transfer, course transfer and PLAR, in order to produce new, innovative and flexible pathways to undergraduate degree completion for practitioners in the Human Services field; and
- identify current practices of lifelong learning and essential skills for employability; examine programs that would address the defined needs; and define and develop programs to meet the needs.

Other:

One project was identified as “research and analysis”, and funded under the LIP program, that does not fit into any of the above categories. This project encompassed the evaluation and revision of a French language version of a website. The file for this project contains some indications that this project was erroneously funded under the LIP program.

Conferences and/or Consultations

Since 1999, the LIP has funded seven projects classified as “Conferences and/or Consultations”. The breakdown of these seven projects is as follows:

Conferences and/or consultations to:	Number
Facilitate information exchange	2
Increase awareness	3
Mobilize action around learning goals and their attainment	2
Total	7

Facilitate information exchange:

Both of the conference and/or consultations projects categorized as facilitating information exchange were identified as national in scope. The goal of one of these projects was to hold a conference on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The other project funded a “think tank” bringing together participants from across Canada to explore improvements to student financial assistance and policy options.

Increase awareness:

Two of the projects to increase awareness were classified as national in scope. The other project was classified as provincial in scope. The activities funded under these three projects were:

- to develop and disseminate two reports to provincial/territorial education ministers (for use in development of policies and programs) informing them of best practices and the current post-secondary education environment as it relates to PLAR;
- to hold a conference to discuss governance of the education system, accountability, evaluation and outputs; and
- to create a province-wide consortium to increase the capacity and awareness of PLAR in the province.

Mobilize action around learning goals and their attainment:

Both of the projects in this category were national in scope. The aim of one of the projects was to conduct a series of roundtables to seek the views of stakeholders on issues relating to the Government’s Skill and Learning Agenda. The goal of the roundtables was to discuss current and future challenges, to identify opportunities for action, and to gain commitment to next steps. The second project supported three consultations

bringing together stakeholders to discuss pan-Canadian issues in education and to offer ideas and suggestions for an action plan to address the issues.

Development and dissemination of information/products

There were two projects categorized with a project type of “development and dissemination of information products”. One project was aimed at producing learning-related publications, creating new electronic and print mechanisms to disseminate learning research, and creating on-line forums. The other project identified as “online learners website resources” made available online learner resources and encouraged online discussion within the learning community.

It should be noted that projects categorized under the other types often included the development and dissemination of related information products.

Activities that contributed to the attainment of national goals

There was only one project that was identified with a project type of “activities and projects which contribute to the attainment of national goals”. This project established a national committee to develop a bilingual academic record and transcript guide. The guide was to assist in providing transcript information in a standard manner that would facilitate and enhance the national transferability of learning in Canada.

Other Activities

Eight projects were categorised as “other”. Three of these can be described as policy development-related activities and were all national in scope. These projects were:

- to develop a public policy statement for the Canadian Year of, and the Decade of, Lifelong Learning including objectives and potential initiatives for the year and the decade, and a proposed organizational structure to develop and implement the activities;
- to respond to needs for information analysis and best practices on issues relating to accessibility, and to promote accessibility through concerted action and information exchange; and
- to enhance Francophone adult learning in universities across Canada and contribute to the development of policies and practices related to French university training and adult learning in Canada.

The remaining five others included projects to:

- develop a replicable life-long learning centre that supports individuals with low literacy skills and/or low income, and/or experiencing multiple barriers who have different learning/training needs;
- undertake work on two recommendations, supported by the Steering Committee for the Postsecondary Expectations Project, to:

- develop common definitions for terms and develop typologies for describing the array of learning occurring; and
- in conjunction with appropriate federal ministries and agencies, develop a comprehensive policy framework for adult learning and adult education in the context of lifelong learning;
- create and pilot test a Learner Support Centre to identify ‘at risk’ students, to direct and support these students’ involvement in intervention strategies, and to evaluate outcomes;
- provide encouragement and support for a PLA centre to seek partnerships and/or provide advice and consultation services to enable other organizations in Canada to adapt and apply the collaborative, community-based, multi-sectoral development model it created and utilized provincially.
- to assist stakeholders in developing policies and programs in the area of financial assistance targeted at post-secondary students, through a survey to enhance a website providing scholarship and other financial award information.

Annex D: Case Studies

CASE STUDY #1

Project Title:	Preparing for the Future of Canada’s lifelong Learning Sector in the area of Higher Level Essential Skills for Employability
Recipient:	Educational and training body
Type of Recipient:	Non profit organisation
Project Start & End Date:	2002-05-24 to 2003-03-31
Project Type:	Research & Analysis
Project Financing:	Total project value: \$190,431.46 HRSDC contribution: \$124,056.01

Project Description: This project consisted of:

- identifying current practices of lifelong learning in Canada and key higher-level essential skills for employability;
- conducting research that examines the programs that would address the defined needs; and
- presenting the project findings in a final report.

SHORT TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Incrementality: The sponsor would not have undertaken this project without Learning Initiatives Program (LIP) funding. They did seek funding support from other organizations, specifically from another federal government department.

Partners: Two formal partners were identified, both of which were categorized as formal (in-kind). In addition 17 other “partnerships” were identified, through the survey, as informal (9) or associative (8).

Dissemination of results: Results from this project were distributed in both hard copy form (approximately 1000 copies), and also through their website (approximately 1500 downloads).

The final report and literature review were to be printed in hard copy and distributed to all stakeholders. The summary of the roundtable sessions were to be distributed to the steering committee, roundtable participants, and HRSDC. The final report and a results presentation slideshow are on the sponsor’s website.

INTERMEDIATE TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Sustainable linkages: Eight informal partnerships with non-profit organizations have continued after the project.

Project results vs. program outcomes: Originally this project was intended to include the development of curriculum to meet the essential skills needs identified. This portion of the project was not completed. However, the project sponsor indicated that the project has led to the enhancement of lifelong learning policies and programs because several university and college continuing education units are now using the findings to develop new approaches to course offerings. This claim could not be verified.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Project reporting: The project progressed in clearly defined phases, each of which was reported formally upon completion to HRSDC. Performance monitoring requirements were specified in the contribution agreement for this project. Claims submitted for payment included summaries of activities. Quarterly progress reports were submitted throughout the project.

CASE STUDY #2

Project Title:	Skills and Lifelong Learning Project
Recipient:	Policy group
Type of Recipient:	Non profit organisation
Project Start & End Date:	2001-06-15 to 2002-04-30
Project Type:	Consultations & Conferences
Project Financing:	Total project value: \$409,438.92 HRSDC contribution: \$300,000.00

Project Description: The project involved conducting a series of roundtables across Canada to seek the views of key stakeholders on issues relating to the Government's Skill and Learning Agenda. The roundtables involved consultations on skills and lifelong learning, and identified best practices. Seven regional sessions were held, followed by a national workshop.

SHORT TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Incrementality: The sponsor indicated that they would not have undertaken the project without Learning Initiatives Program (LIP) funding. They did not seek funding support from other sources.

Partners: There were no partners used for the implementation of this project.

Dissemination of results: Project results (presentations and reports) were distributed to the participants of the roundtables and stakeholders. Hardcopy results were reportedly disseminated to approximately 400 people, and electronic dissemination through email was to 500 recipients. As well, according to the sponsor, the results of the project were disseminated through their website. The final report is currently available on the organisation's website. The presentations and regional reports were apparently available at one time on the organisation's website, however, these documents are no longer on the site. The results of the project were also published in the organisation's publication. In addition to the above, one newspaper editorial was published about this project.

INTERMEDIATE TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Sustainable linkages: There were no partners used for the implementation of this project. However, subsequent linkages were formed since this project led to the Public Policy Forum working, through HRDC, with other organizations such as Privy Council Office (PCO), on the foundation of a "Council" (an initiative to take all best practices on learning and make them available under one umbrella). In addition, other projects are thought to have stemmed from this project; however no direct linkages can be traced back to this project. Finally, the project is said to have forged partnerships between sectors and organisations that would not otherwise have happened. Bringing together individuals from different organisations to participate in the workshops resulted in linkages between these organisations.

Project results vs. program outcomes: The organisation has suggested that the project led to: the enhancement of lifelong learning policies and programs; and to greater alignment of learning community, government, private sector toward achievement of national lifelong learning goals. However, no direct evidence of these outcomes could be provided.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Project reporting: The organisation was required to provide progress reports to HRSDC during the course of the project. Reporting requirements were specified in the contribution agreement for this project. As well the reporting requirements were explained verbally by Learning Initiatives Program staff. Payment of any claims submitted was dependent upon the receipt of a summary of activities conducted during the period, and a progress report on the work completed. Final payment under the agreement was to be made only following receipt of a final activity report stating activities undertaken and the extent to which project objectives were fulfilled.

CASE STUDY #3

Project Title:	The Pan-Canadian Pathways Project
Recipient:	University
Type of Recipient:	Post-secondary institution
Project Start & End Date:	2002-05-31 to 2003-03-31
Project Type:	Research and Analysis
Project Financing:	Total project value: \$396,750.00 HRSDC contribution: \$295,000.00

Project Description: This project involved the further development of a Human Services model for customizing Block Credit transfer, course transfer and Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR), in order to produce new, innovative and flexible pathways to undergraduate degree completion for practitioners in the Human Services field.

Project activities included:

- A quantitative study of the status of the current Block Credit Transfer (BCT), course transfer and college PLAR transfer,
- development of a website,
- development of protocols for approaching participants from college-based human services programs across Canada,
- acquiring information and conducting follow-up,
- undertaking initiatives for new pathways,
- articulation of agreements between college programs and other professional bodies across Canada to recognize each others' existing PLAR outcomes;
- dissemination of information about new pathways to colleges.

SHORT TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Incrementality: According to the University, the Pan-Canadian Pathways Project would have proceeded without the Learning Initiatives Program (LIP) funding, however the project would have proceeded with a smaller scope, reduced activities and/or fewer objectives. Funding was also sought from other sources.

Partners: Thirty-seven organizations were identified as “partners” for this project. The nature of the project required the involvement of other post-secondary institutions in identifying pathways between the institutions and developing agreements with these institutions. These are the partners listed by the University. Individuals on the project’s steering committee or acting in an advisory role were also identified as “partners”. These

partnerships were all listed as “informal”; however the agreements that were the outputs of the project establish formal partnerships.

The partner organizations included participating colleges across the country. The University had worked with some of these partners prior to the start of this project, but not with all of them. As well, they continue to work with some of these partners since the completion of the project.

Dissemination of results: Some of the outputs of the project are available on the website developed for the project. The list of the 2-year diplomas, from various post-secondary institutions, assessed for the block credit transfers is on the website. Charts and graphs have also been developed, however they are only available to “members” on the website. The results of the project are also disseminated through brochures and course calendars of other institutions. For example, a New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) indicated that it advertises the block credit transfers in their course calendar.

INTERMEDIATE TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Sustainable linkages: Fifteen informal partnerships have continued since the completion of the Pathways project. Work continues to be done with these partners on the Pan-Canadian Gateways Project, also funded by HRSDC, which builds on the Pathways work and looks at Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition for both formal and informal learning. As well, the University has reported that they are revising and developing policies and processes on prior learning assessment and block transfer credits. While they admit that this work would have taken place even without the Pathways project, the impacts of the Pathways project will influence how this work is completed.

Project results vs. program outcomes: A total of thirty-six 2-year diploma programs were assessed for a Block Credit Transfer of 60 credits (2 years) towards the Human Services major of the Bachelor of Professional Arts program with the University. This has led to increased levels of accessibility and mobility relating to lifelong learning, since students are “laddering” from college to university as a result of the block transfer credits. The project facilitates student credit transfers, thereby increasing access to the University programs. As well, students in remote communities, such as the north, are able to participate in university programs (distance education) without leaving their communities.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Project reporting: The University was required to provide progress reports to HRSDC during the course of the project. Performance reporting requirements were specified in the contribution agreement for this project. The recipient submitted quarterly progress and financial reports.

CASE STUDY #4

Project Title:	Beyond PLAR: Creating a Hospitable, Learning-Friendly Environment for All Adult Learners
Recipient:	Post-secondary Technical Institute (FNTI)
Type of Recipient:	Post secondary institution
Project Start & End Date:	2003-06-12 to 2004-01-16
Project Type:	Research and analysis
Project Financing:	Total project value: \$74,600.00 HRSDC contribution: \$44,964.91

Project Description: This project was described as Part I of a two part initiative aimed at developing a set of national programs and policies for use by post-secondary institutions and other learning organizations including employers, labor and community groups to systematically assess their services to clients in order to enhance access and employability. Part I of the project consisted of identifying partners and developing a research framework to be used in Part II.

SHORT TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Incrementality: The post-secondary institution has indicated that the project would have proceeded in the absence of Learning Initiatives Program (LIP) funding, but with a smaller scope, reduced activities and/or fewer objectives. They did seek funding support from other sources.

Partners: The sponsor indicated that there were 15 partners involved in this project. However, the 15 partners identified by FNTI are an outcome of this project, as opposed to partners in implementing this project. One of the goals of this project was to identify partners for Part II of the initiative. These 15 partnerships established in this project, are contractual in nature and include universities and colleges, a provincial government, an Ontario town, a union and a rural, community-based employment assistance service in Ontario.

Dissemination of results: Project results (report, research paper, and consultation minutes) were distributed via website, in hardcopy and through email. However, although the project is referenced on the sponsor's website, a preliminary review of the site did not reveal any of the results of Part I.

INTERMEDIATE TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Sustainable linkages: As mentioned above, 15 partnerships have been put into place as a result of this project, for Part II of the initiative which involves implementation of the research framework developed under this project. The 15 partners will conduct a self-evaluation using the eight best practice principles to assess services to adult learners. The sponsor has also indicated that they expect a number of the partners for Part II will

undertake an initiative to broaden the implementation of the work and will make recommendations about sustainability.

Project results vs. program outcomes: This project has not led to identified program outcomes. The sponsor believes that Part II of the initiative, which flows from this project, will lead to increased levels of accessibility relating to lifelong learning. However, this was not an outcome of this project.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Project reporting: The sponsor was required to provide progress reports to HRSDC during the course of the project. The reporting requirements were specified in the contribution agreement for this project. Reports required were quarterly financial and progress reports. The sponsor submitted a report half-way through the project, and a summary report at the end of the project that was an exhaustive description of the project, plus a plan for the work to be undertaken in Part II.

CASE STUDY #5

Project Title:	Responsiveness PLAR- 1) An inventory of Practices and Policies, 2) a Prov/Terr. Perspective
Recipient:	Council
Type of Recipient:	Provinces and Territories
Project Start & End Date:	2003-01-06 to 2004-03-31
Project Type:	Consultations & Conferences
Project Financing:	Total project value: \$380,560.00 HRSDC contribution: \$268,744.20

Project Description: This was a two-part project to inform provincial and territorial ministers of best practices and the current post-secondary education environment as it relates to Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). The goal was to disseminate two reports to provincial/territorial education ministers for use in the development of policies and programs of related jurisdictions. The two reports were:

- an inventory of practices and policies from across Canada as it relates to PLAR, and
- an analysis and assessment of jurisdictional practices with a focus on best practices and interesting models, and the applicability of international best practices for Canadian institutions.

SHORT TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Incrementality: The funded council indicated that they would not have undertaken the project without Learning Initiatives Program (LIP) funding. They did not seek funding support from other sources.

Partners: There were no partners used for the implementation of this project.

Dissemination of results: Two reports have been developed as a result of this project. These two documents have been distributed to member jurisdictions. As well, the first report is available on the Council's website. The second report has not yet gone through the final approval stage. When it has received final approval, it too will be available on the Council's website.

INTERMEDIATE TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Sustainable linkages: There were no partners used for the implementation of this project. However, the Council has indicated that as a result of the project which pulled together prior learning assessors from different institutions and education ministries, different institutions are now talking to each other and comparing their programs.

Project results vs. program outcomes: The Council has suggested that the project led to: the enhancement of lifelong learning policies and programs; greater alignment of learning community, government, private sector toward achievement of national lifelong learning goals; and to increased levels of accessibility and/or mobility related to lifelong learning. It could be argued that bringing together different postsecondary institutions to examine PLAR and the dissemination of the best practices document could contribute to greater alignment toward achievement of lifelong learning goals. However, no direct evidence of these outcomes could be provided.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Project reporting: The Council was required to provide progress reports to HRSDC during the course of the project. According to the Council they were required to submit quarterly reports consisting of financial data and whether or not there were variations on the forecast flow sheet. Also required was a written progress report and whether or not the project was on schedule. Reporting requirements were provided in writing but not as part of the contribution agreement. A “Reports and Monitoring” clause was included in the contribution agreement stating that progress reports could be requested and an inspection of operations could be performed, if requested. HRDC participation on the Steering Committee, as an observer, was also specified, and all draft project reports were provided to HRDC throughout the project and at the end of the project when reports were finalized.

CASE STUDY #6

Project Title:	Building Capacity in Communities – PLA Centres as a Catalyst for Change
Recipient:	Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Centre
Type of Recipient:	Provincial/territorial bodies
Project Start & End Date:	2000-10-12 to 2001-03-31
Project Type:	Research and Analysis
Project Financing:	Total project value: \$143,200.00 HRSDC contribution: \$60,000.00

Project Description: This was a project to study other models of community-based Prior Learning Assessment Centres in Canada and set out guidelines and best practices in developing community-based PLA centres. The main objective was to provide a conceptual framework and an operational model appropriate to a community's needs in developing a community-based PLA centre.

SHORT TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Incrementality: The PLA indicated that they would not have undertaken the project without LIP funding. They did not seek funding support from other sources.

Partners: One informal partner was involved in this project, a Nova Scotia Prior Learning Assessment Centre. This PLA was involved as a member of the steering committee and individuals from that Centre were interviewed for the project. The funded PLA had worked, informally, with the Nova Scotia PLA prior to this project. At that time, these were the only two PLAs in Canada, and as such, they consulted with each other frequently.

Dissemination of results: Project results (reports and presentations) were distributed to Canadian PLAR groups, steering committee members and individuals interviewed by the funded PLA Centre. As well, the results were disseminated electronically through a website. The research paper "Community-based PLA Centres as a Catalyst for Change" is currently available on the website of the Centre for Education and Work at <http://www.cewca.org/cats.html>. The results of the project were also disseminated through a key-note speech given at the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment annual conference in 2001. A copy of this presentation is currently available on the Centre for Education and Work website, at the URL listed above.

INTERMEDIATE TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Sustainable linkages: When the funded PLA ceased to exist in 2001, the professional staff from that centre formed a new, not-for-profit organization. Linkages remain between the new organization and the Nova Scotia PLA. They are currently working together on another project. As well, linkages continue to exist between the new body and a post-secondary institution, although in an informal, consultative form.

As well, the new organisation has been approached by a provincial Labor Force Development Board that has expressed interest in the project and has also talked about the possibility of other activities and initiatives.

Project results vs. program outcomes: The individual interviewed about this project indicated that the project contributed to the enhancement of lifelong learning policies and programs. The concept of the project was to develop a framework that could be used to develop other community-based prior learning assessment centres. An attempt was made using the results of the project to develop a centre in Saskatchewan. However, it was not successful. Some interest has been expressed by an Ontario city, but there is no direct evidence that the results of the project have led to the creation of other centres in Canada.

According to the survey completed for this project, the research from this project was to enable the further support and development of a national system of PLA Centres. According to the new body, HRSDC continues to explore this option as part of lifelong learning.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Project reporting: Performance monitoring requirements and performance reporting requirements were not specified in the contribution agreement. However, the reporting mechanisms for this project were reportedly very involved, according to interview statements. Based on the survey completed, the PLA Centre was required to provide progress reports to HRSDC during the course of the project. Summaries of steering committee meetings and brief updates on the research and report writing were required.

CASE STUDY #7

Project Title:	Forging Links/Nouer des liens
Recipient:	Educational association
Type of Recipient:	Non profit organizations
Project Start & End Date:	2000-06-01 to 2001-03-31
Project Type:	Other – Produce Publications
Project Financing:	Total project value: \$302,337.13 HRSDC contribution: \$89,137.13

Project Description: This project was to:

- produce learning-related publications,
- to create new electronic and print mechanisms to disseminate learning research, and
- create on-line forums.

SHORT TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Incrementality: The association indicated that they would have undertaken the project without Learning Initiatives Program (LIP) funding, however the project would have proceeded with a smaller scope, reduced activities and/or fewer objectives. Funding support was sought from other sources including the private sector, provincial government and foundations.

Partners: There were no partners used for the implementation of this project.

Dissemination of results: Project results consisted of reports, magazine publications, newsletters, online forums, and a website. Two magazine publications were produced, with each distributed to approximately 3,500 individuals or organizations. Two editions of the association's newsletter were produced and disseminated to approximately 550 individuals and organizations. An online forum was set up entitled "The GATS and the Education Sector" (GATS is an acronym for General Agreement on Trade in Services.). Finally, a website was developed. No statistics were provided on the number of contributors to the online forum, or the number of visits to the website.

INTERMEDIATE TERM RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

Sustainable linkages: No sustainable linkages among partners were identified resulting from this project. However, through the creation of new electronic and print mechanisms to disseminate learning research, and the creation of online forums, the association has enhanced its capacity to support linkages with the education community and broader public.

The results of this project lead to subsequent activities by the association to develop a web based knowledge transfer vehicle "Focus On", which includes themes on Literacy, and on Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Project results vs. program outcomes: Although the association indicated that the project led to the enhancement of lifelong learning policies and programs, and to greater alignment of learning community, government, private sector toward achievement of national lifelong learning goals, no direct evidence of this is available.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Project reporting: Performance monitoring requirements and performance reporting requirements were not specified in the contribution agreement. However, an on-site monitoring visit was performed for this project. As well, according to the association, they were required to provide progress reports to HRSDC. These reports included a description of the milestones achieved, as well as financial statements.