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EVALUATION STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM (CAP)

Final Report

Audit and Evaluation Branch

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Canada 

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NOTE:

Minor editorial changes were made to this report in order to prepare the document for posting to the Internet (including removal of standard Appendices such as list of interviewees and questionnaires). Readers wishing to receive a copy of the original version of this report should contact the Audit and Evaluation Branch at Industry Canada.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Industry Canada’s *Connecting Canadians* Initiative aims to make Canada the most Internet-connected nation in the world. *Connecting Canadians* encompasses many programs and services designed for public schools and libraries, First Nations schools, the voluntary sector, rural and remote communities, small businesses and recent graduates, all to encourage Canadians’ use of the Internet.

The Community Access Program (CAP) is a cornerstone of the *Connecting Canadians* Initiative. It is primarily concerned with the provision of affordable public Internet access to Canadians, as well as the skills necessary to use the Internet effectively. This is accomplished through the use of public locations across Canada (e.g., schools, libraries) as “on-ramps” to the Information Highway, and sources of computer support and training. The program is particularly focused on closing the “digital divide” — the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICT) and to their use of the Internet.

Canada’s connectedness goals are achieved through a focus on activities, programs and policies related to the three pillars of a networked nation: Infrastructure, Use and Content. CAP is an important component of the first pillar — Infrastructure: Canadians connected to each other and to the world in a way that is affordable and accessible.

The formal objectives of CAP are to:

- Create affordable public access to the Internet;
- Promote public awareness of the benefits and opportunities of using information and communications technologies (ICT);
- Help citizens become better informed through the exchange of ideas and coach individuals in the use of information technologies;
- Support online delivery of government programs and services;
- Facilitate business activities such as electronic commerce;
- Foster online Canadian content; and
- Support e-learning.

CAP first began in 1994, with a focus on rural and remote communities with populations of less than 50,000. Following a successful pilot, it was expanded to include urban communities in December

1999. Industry Canada's goal was to have 10,000 sites established in Canada by March 2001. As of March 2002, approximately 9,200 CAP sites had been established, although 1,200 of them have since closed so the actual number of active CAP sites is currently approximately 8,000. Most sites (98 per cent) are organized into CAP networks, or groupings of CAP sites that share a common interest and purpose and are committed to work together in pursuit of common objectives with other partners.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES

The overall objective of the present evaluation study was to provide input to guide decision-making on the upcoming renewal and extension of funding for CAP and, more broadly, on the development of the next generation of the *Connecting Canadians* Initiative. CAP is currently in the process of developing policy and program options to more effectively meet the needs of Canadians still lacking Internet infrastructure/skills in the changing ICT environment. In preparation for the possible renewal of CAP, the findings and recommendations of previous evaluations and reviews as well as the principles/requirements of the program's results-based management and accountability framework (RMAF) must also be considered.

The primary focus of the evaluation was on digital divide CAP sites (both Urban and Rural). A number of issues were examined in this evaluation, including questions related to: the continued relevance of CAP; program delivery and implementation; the success of the program; and the cost-effectiveness of CAP and lessons learned.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the CAP evaluation study consisted of the following components:

- ▶ interviews with 30 key informants – including 10 representatives of Industry Canada, Information Highway Applications Branch (IHAB) and Operations Sector at both national and regional offices, eight provincial/territorial government officials and partners, and 12 CAP network coordinators;
- ▶ telephone survey of 503 CAP site representatives; and
- ▶ incorporation of key results from an online survey of 7,004 CAP site users, conducted by IHAB.

To the extent possible within the available budget and time frame, the evaluation methodology incorporated multiple methods and data from different primary and secondary sources in order to ensure that the findings were valid and captured key points of view on the Community Access Program (i.e., federal government CAP management, provincial/territorial government CAP partners, CAP site representatives and users, and CAP network coordinators). Key informants were carefully selected to ensure that they were knowledgeable and could provide an informed view on the program, though it was beyond the scope of the evaluation to consult independent key informants with no vested interest in the program. Moreover, the site survey findings (n=503) are reliable – results are accurate within ± 4.2 percentage points, 19 times out of

20. The fact that the findings from different lines of evidence were quite consistent lends support to the validity of the evaluation results.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Continued Relevance

On balance, the present evaluation findings indicate that CAP is a unique program that continues to be needed and relevant because there is still a digital divide in Canada and CAP has been having success at bridging this gap in public Internet access and capability. There is a consensus that the formal program objectives continue to be relevant, with some qualifications. First, the basic objectives of raising public awareness of ICT and helping to provide affordable public Internet access are now less relevant (for some segments of the population) than they were at the outset of the program because much progress has been made in many communities. Still, there do appear to be significant outstanding needs for many digital divide areas and groups (e.g., underprivileged Canadians with comparatively low incomes and little education, those living in rural, remote and northern areas). Second, it may not be realistic, nor is funding adequate, for the program to fully achieve some of the broader objectives on its own, in particular, fostering online Canadian content and facilitating business activities such as e-commerce (though this latter objective may become more prominent particularly if CAP moves forward in areas/sites where users have higher-level skills). In addition, it must be acknowledged that it is not reasonable to hold the program solely accountable for achieving all of its formal objectives because individual citizens as well as program partners in province/territories and communities clearly have key roles to play.

The continuing need for the program – to address the “have-not” areas and groups in the digital divide – is supported by a number of findings:

- Key informants believe that there is a continuing need for CAP, particularly to close the remaining digital divide in Canada by reaching segments of the population that have not “bought into” the benefits of ICT and by providing affordable Internet access to citizens who do not have it.
- Supporting this view, results of the Statistics Canada Household Internet User Survey (HIUS) indicate that in 2002, 62 per cent of Canadian households had at least one regular Internet user who accessed it from any location, though just 51 per cent accessed the Internet from home. Home Internet access is much less common for Canadians with lower incomes – for 25 per cent of those in the lowest income quartile compared to 78 per cent in the highest quartile – and in certain regions of the country (e.g., less than 40 per cent in some Atlantic provinces). In related findings, results from the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) indicate that the greatest barriers to using the Internet among non-users (who had not used the Internet over the previous 12 months) were cost and lack of computer/Internet access.

- Most site representatives (74 per cent) perceive that their sites are used to a large extent by people without Internet access at home.
- In the online user survey, 49 per cent of respondents indicate that they do not own a computer (and 23 per cent do not expect to soon) and the majority (78 per cent) indicate that they use the CAP site because it is free or inexpensive – in line with the program objective to provide affordable public Internet access. Although some duplication is suggested by the finding that some of these respondents also have Internet access at home (40 per cent), from friends (31 per cent), at work (29 per cent), school (21 per cent) or other sources (20 per cent), access at work or school cannot be regarded as equivalent to access at home or a CAP site because there would presumably be much less opportunity to pursue personal interests, communications, learning, etc. at the former locations. Moreover, the online survey would more likely have captured the views of motivated CAP users who are comfortable operating a computer, not those of citizens in the digital divide who lack basic computer skills.

B. Delivery and Implementation

For the most part, CAP is being delivered as intended, is reaching its intended target groups (e.g., people without Internet access at home) and generally serving the digital divide. Still, there are groups that need to be better reached, including persons with disabilities, First Nations and northern communities, the homeless and underprivileged, and hard-to-reach senior citizens and new immigrants. French-speaking Canadians also appear to be underrepresented among CAP users. Most sites have some services/equipment in place, such as wheelchair ramps, to help ensure that they are accessible to persons with disabilities but there is still a need for improvement.

Visitors to CAP sites are using them for a range of purposes in line with the program's objectives (e.g., e-mail, learning and training, job searches, accessing government services and information), and many CAP sites have been innovative in delivering these services. For instance, there are mobile CAP sites that utilize laptops to reach users who might have difficulty getting to a site and CAP sites have been used to facilitate the efficient, integrated delivery of a range of social services. In addition, CAP networks are praised as an innovative and cost-effective delivery model that contributes to community capacity, though one drawback of this approach is that regional IC/CAP representatives do not always have direct communications with CAP sites because they deal directly with the network coordinators. Effective partnerships have also been established – federal-provincial/territorial partnerships as well as site-level partnerships with government, private and community organizations.

C. Success

CAP is perceived to have had considerable success at contributing to its objectives, providing a range of benefits for users and communities, and reducing the digital divide (though there is still more to do in this regard). For example, major perceived benefits include increased knowledge about, comfort with and use of the Internet and ICT; exchange of information and ideas among citizens; social/cultural development and better integration of users into the community (e.g., through opportunities to meet or communicate); and even some improvement in the economic situation of users (e.g., development of job skills, assistance with job search, selling locally produced goods over the Internet). Users are very satisfied with all aspects of the service at the sites, with the exception of the speed of Internet connection. Key informants believe that program progress and success are facilitated by strong community support for CAP sites, partnerships and networks but impeded by some lack of funding (e.g., to keep up to date with changing technology, meet specialized needs and pay staff at the sites) and a shortage of human resources at sites, in particular, volunteers. Volunteer burnout is widely regarded as a key challenge for CAP sites.

The program is viewed as having incremental impacts – one-third of site representatives claim that their site would cease to exist if there were no CAP funding (in particular, for Atlantic, Quebec and digital divide sites), and one-half believe that they would need to offer fewer services if the CAP funding ended. From the perspective of site sustainability, however, this finding may warrant further attention from CAP as the program refines its priorities.

D. Cost-Effectiveness and Alternatives

Although a thorough cost-effectiveness analysis was well beyond the scope of this evaluation, the available evidence does indicate that CAP is widely viewed as a cost-effective program, providing numerous benefits for a small investment in sites (an average of approximately \$4,412 per site). With the federal funding, many sites have been able to leverage considerable financial and in-kind resources from other sources/partners (e.g., local and provincial/territorial government). The CAP network model – which allows bulk buying of equipment and sharing of best practices – also contributes to cost-effective delivery, as does the heavy reliance on volunteers at sites (though this benefit is diminished as volunteers burn out and need to be replaced and retrained). Moreover, approximately 60 per cent of the sites surveyed have taken at least some steps to support their sustainability, in particular, searching for alternate funding sources. Still, many sites suggest that more or longer-term funding would be beneficial (e.g., for new or upgraded computer equipment and high speed Internet connection) and, as noted above, not having some CAP funding would apparently have adverse consequences for approximately 80 per cent of sites (i.e., having to offer fewer services or close the site).

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are made to Industry Canada:

1. Refine and refocus the program's strategic priorities (e.g., through a strategic planning exercise).
 - Place the most emphasis on digital divide sites, serving communities most in need and addressing remaining gaps in Internet access in Canada. In these areas, continue to raise public awareness, provide affordable public access to the Internet, and coach community members in the use of information and communications technology (ICT).
 - At digital divide sites where users have sufficient capability, focus on higher-level applications such as supporting e-learning and online delivery of government programs and services, facilitating e-commerce, and applying higher-end technology.
2. Improve the marketing of the program and its benefits/potential applications.
 - Promote CAP to other government departments (e.g., to facilitate on-line delivery of government services at more CAP sites).
 - Promote CAP to "hard to reach" and "have not" target groups, such as First Nations and northern communities, the homeless and underprivileged, persons with disabilities, seniors and new immigrants. Focus promotional efforts on people/communities who may not yet fully understand the benefits of ICT (e.g., underprivileged people who tend to be preoccupied with very basic needs such as food and shelter).
3. Continue to improve the accessibility of sites for persons with disabilities. For example:
 - Conduct a proper assessment of these users' needs to ensure that all features of sites are accessible (e.g., provide not only a ramp for wheelchairs, but also desks that are a suitable height for wheelchairs).
 - Offer equipment/technology suitable for these users, e.g., the option of a track ball rather than a mouse.
4. Continue to utilize CAP partnerships and networks, and provide opportunities for network coordinators to share lessons learned and best practices (e.g., through mentoring activities, websites or workshops).
5. If feasible, provide multi-year funding for a renewed CAP and for CAP sites.

6. Assess the feasibility of increasing the funding amount to selected CAP sites (e.g., to strengthen/expand particularly busy or innovative sites; to assist sites with special needs and fewer opportunities to raise funds). This may involve the re-allocation of funds from sites that are more self-reliant to those with more need for IC funding. More funding would enable sites to:
 - Purchase new computers.
 - Upgrade existing computers and provide high speed Internet (broadband) connection.
 - Improve the accessibility of the site, if needed.
 - Pay for qualified staff – which would also help to overcome the problem of volunteer burnout/lack of volunteers.
 - Remain fully operational with a range of needed services.

7. Establish (or review existing) service standards for CAP sites (e.g., minimum number of qualified staff, services offered, hours of operation) to ensure that levels of service are reasonably consistent across the country and compatible with evolving program priorities, while allowing some flexibility for sites to adapt to the needs of their users and community.
 - In order to incorporate this flexibility and responsiveness to individual community needs, assess the feasibility of utilizing a tiered system of CAP sites offering different levels/types of service along a continuum, depending on the needs and capabilities of users. For instance: (1) basic Internet access, training and services for communities with little or no exposure to ICT; (2) intermediate services; through to (3) high-level services and application of advanced technology at sites with good Internet connectivity and more experienced users. If applicable for a given community, offer different levels of service at the same site.

8. Keep the database of CAP sites up-to-date and accurate so that the data can support program management, performance measurement and periodic evaluations.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

a) Background

Industry Canada's *Connecting Canadians* Initiative aims to make Canada the most Internet-connected nation in the world. *Connecting Canadians* encompasses many programs and services designed for public schools and libraries, First Nations schools, the voluntary sector, rural and remote communities, small businesses and recent graduates, all to encourage Canadians' use of the Internet.

The Community Access Program (CAP) is a cornerstone of the *Connecting Canadians* Initiative. It is primarily concerned with the provision of affordable public Internet access to Canadians, as well as the skills necessary to use the Internet effectively. This is accomplished through the use of public locations across Canada (e.g., schools, libraries) as "on-ramps" to the Information Highway, and sources of computer support and training. The program is particularly focused on closing the "digital divide" — the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICT) and to their use of the Internet.

Canada's connectedness goals are achieved through a focus on activities, programs and policies related to the three pillars of a networked nation: Infrastructure, Use and Content. CAP is an important component of the first pillar — Infrastructure: Canadians connected to each other and to the world in a way that is affordable and accessible.

b) Program Objectives

The formal objectives of CAP are to:

- Create affordable public access to the Internet;
- Promote public awareness of the benefits and opportunities of using information and communications technologies (ICT);
- Help citizens become better informed through the exchange of ideas and coach individuals in the use of information technologies;
- Support online delivery of government programs and services;

- Facilitate business activities such as electronic commerce;
- Foster online Canadian content; and
- Support e-learning.

c) History and Components of the Program

CAP first began in 1994, with a focus on rural and remote communities with populations less than 50,000, as part of the federal government's action plan to support jobs and growth in rural Canada. Following a successful pilot, it was expanded to include urban communities in December 1999, in order to help provide more widespread Internet access to Canadians, especially low income, disadvantaged and young Canadians including persons with low literacy and with disabilities, new Canadians, Aboriginal persons, and women and seniors. Industry Canada's goal was to have 10,000 sites established in Canada by March 2001. As of March 2002, approximately 9,200 CAP sites had been established, although 1,200 of them have since closed so the actual number of active CAP sites is currently approximately 8,000.

Another component of CAP is the CAP Youth Initiative which encourages youth to get involved at CAP sites in teaching individual organizations and small businesses about the Internet and related information technologies, as well as how to use them more effectively. This provides youth with job experience that may help them when they enter the workforce. This initiative is funded from Human Resources Development Canada's Youth Employment Strategy.

Until 2001, Francocommunautés virtuelles (FV) was connected to CAP. FV strives to address Francophone needs, in particular through expanding French-language Internet content, connecting Francophone and Acadian communities, and fostering the use of information and communications technologies among French-speaking Canadians.

The last competition for Rural CAP took place on May 31, 2000; the final adjudication for Urban sites took place in February 2001; and FV stopped funding projects in 2001-02 but resumed funding new projects in 2002-03.¹ Industry Canada is no longer soliciting nor considering new applications, although the CAP Youth Initiative continues with funding from Human Resources Development Canada's Youth Employment Strategy.

¹ The 1998 Budget provided \$1M/year for three years for "Francocommunautés virtuelles". The intent was to encourage Francophone communities across Canada to take full advantage of ICT in French. The pilot program was under the terms and conditions of CAP. Funding and program authority ended March 31, 2001. In 2001-02, no projects were funded under FV. In 2002-03, FV received funding through Canadian Heritage. Thirty-six projects were funded and managed by IC. In March 2003, as part of the implementation framework for the five-year Action Plan for Official Languages, the Prime Minister announced an additional investment of \$13 million over five years to continue the program's activities. The next competition is planned for the fall of 2003.

d) Delivery of CAP

CAP is managed in two different ways, depending on whether agreements have been negotiated with the respective provincial/territorial government. In memoranda of agreement (MOA) provinces/territories (Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Yukon) the arrangement is as follows:

- Industry Canada transfers the funding to the provinces/territories, and the recipients manage and administer the funds, and are accountable to Industry Canada for the distribution of these funds according to the terms and conditions of the contribution agreement;
- Industry Canada and the provinces/territories work closely together to accelerate community access to the Information Highway through cooperative and complementary actions;
- The administration of the program is decentralized to the provincial/territorial level; and
- The governments share the CAP co-funding portion of the program in most cases on a 50:50 basis, thereby doubling the money available for CAP spending in that province or territory.

In non-MOA provinces and territories, the administration of CAP is jointly shared by Industry Canada National Headquarters (NHQ) and Industry Canada Regional Offices.

Regarding the application process which established CAP sites, community-based not-for-profit organizations such as educational institutions, public libraries, community centres, chambers of commerce, economic development corporations as well as provincial, territorial and local governments submitted proposals on behalf of their community. Up to 2001, proposals were selected through a competitive process based on the merits of the proposals. Steps in the application/funding process were as follows:

- Community organizations, schools, libraries or municipalities, or a consortium of these, submitted proposals for funding to the Regional Offices, except for Ontario applicants who submitted their proposals to National Headquarters (NHQ);
- Recommendations on what sites to support were made by independent CAP Review Committees located within each province/territory and a National Advisory Committee with final decisions by the Minister of Industry;
- Contracts were let to the winning communities by NHQ;
- Progress reports and invoices were submitted to the Regional Offices, with the exception of Ontario where such documents were submitted to NHQ; and
- Invoices were signed by the authorized regional officer and then submitted to Finance at NHQ which issued the payments.

For 2003-04, existing CAP sites were invited to apply for sustaining funding. All existing sites were eligible to submit an application, but in some cases, networks were reconfigured this year and sites were shifted from one network to another.

Sites are encouraged to find additional support (financial and in-kind) via partnership contributions with other governments, organizations and businesses in the community.

e) CAP Networks

Most sites (98 per cent) are organized into CAP networks, or groupings of CAP sites that share a common interest and purpose and are committed to work together in pursuit of common objectives with other partners. Networked sites may share virtual and physical space as well as assets which, in many instances, leads to joint management of technical, financial and human resources. A network may share an information service provider, Internet routers, proxy and e-mail servers, modems and related software and equipment for local content development and training. Shared resources and bulk purchase of bandwidth can reduce costs and contribute to the viability and longevity of sites within the network. These networks of public access sites make more efficient use of resources and have a better chance at sustaining themselves than single public access sites. Moreover, CAP networks are believed to provide greater benefits for people in the involved community (ies) because the sites reflect a common purpose and collaborate in identifying and addressing local training, learning and economic development needs. Partners in networks include Library Boards, School Boards, Boards of Trade, Economic Development Boards, Municipalities, Community Free-Nets, other community-based not-for-profit organizations, and various provincial departments and agencies.

The CAP network model has been shown to have a number of benefits². The key benefits include: the development of human capital; the fuller integration of citizens into society and greater social cohesion; and community capacity building through the creation of a critical mass of knowledge over time on how to integrate ICT into community social and economic development programs/services, the development of a base of volunteers who help to build social capital, and the fact that CAP infrastructure can serve as a catalyst compelling community-based organizations to review and rationalize their existing ICT infrastructure in order to reduce costs and better serve the community. The CAP network business model can therefore be seen as a driver for the social and economic benefits that are achieved through the program.

² SECOR (2003). *Social and Economic Impacts of Community Access Program Networks*. Report prepared for the Community Access Program, Industry Canada.

1.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES

The overall objective of the present evaluation study was to provide input to guide decision-making on the upcoming renewal and extension of funding for CAP and, more broadly, on the development of the next generation of the *Connecting Canadians* Initiative. CAP is currently in the process of developing policy and program options to more effectively meet the needs of Canadians still lacking Internet infrastructure/skills in the changing ICT environment. In preparation for the possible renewal of CAP, the findings and recommendations of previous evaluations and reviews as well as the principles/requirements of the program's results-based management and accountability framework (RMAF) must also be considered.

In developing the issues to be examined in the present evaluation study, a draft list of issues was prepared based on those identified in the CAP RMAF (February 2003) and then modified based on a review of key past evaluations/reviews (see Appendix A). This list of issues was refined once more after receiving feedback from members of the Steering Committee³ for this evaluation.

The primary focus of the evaluation was on "digital divide" CAP sites (both Urban and Rural). In general terms, the evaluation examined issues related to program design and delivery, results and lessons learned. The specific evaluation issues/questions are listed in Table 1.1.

³ The Steering Committee for this evaluation was composed of nine members representing Industry Canada (Community Access Program, Information Highway Applications Branch, Corporations Canada, Quebec Regional Office, Policy and Corporate Services, and Audit and Evaluation Branch), the Ontario Ministry of Culture (Heritage and Libraries Branch), Finance Canada (Industry and Knowledge Economy Section), and Treasury Board Secretariat.

TABLE 1.1 CAP Evaluation Issues and Questions

Continued Relevance
1. Are the goals and objectives of CAP still relevant? Are these realistic?
› How have the objectives of CAP changed over time? Why? Are further refinements needed?
› Has funding been adequate to achieve goals/objectives?
› What are the factors that have helped/hindered CAP achieve its objectives?
2. How have the needs of CAP communities changed over time?
› Has there been a demand to deliver higher skill training?
3. Is there a need for a program:
› To promote universal public Internet access and close the “digital divide” in urban and rural Canada?
› To support services offered through the public sites and networks that better inform citizens through the exchange of ideas and information, create greater public awareness of the benefits and opportunities of using information technologies and services, help individuals to more effectively use the services available through Information Highway technologies, and create opportunity for economic and social benefits for the community by using information technologies?
› To support online delivery of government programs and services?
› To facilitate business activities such as electronic commerce?
› To support e-learning?
Delivery and Implementation
4. To what extent has the program been reaching its intended audience?
› What is the profile of CAP users?
› What potential user groups may not be using CAP?
5. What is the profile of CAP sites/networks?
› What types of services are offered? Core services? Additional value-added services? Agreements to provide online government services?
› What are the hours of operation?
› How are the sites staffed?
› What fees are charged?
› To what degree is service across the country delivered in a consistent fashion? Have common service standards for CAP sites been developed?
6. What is the level of accessibility of CAP sites/networks?
› Are CAP sites accessible to persons with disabilities?
7. To what extent have CAP sites been used for business/ commercial purposes?
› To what extent have CAP sites been used to access government services?
› To what extent have CAP sites been used for learning or training purposes?
› To what extent have job/business opportunities been found over the Internet?
8. What models of delivery are being introduced at CAP sites (e.g., networking with other sites, providing new types of services, delivering services in new ways)?
› What innovative models have been introduced or piloted? What prompted this?
› What are their strengths and weaknesses?
9. How were partnerships established with provinces? What factors prompted provinces to participate in CAP?
› What have been the impacts of provincial partnerships?

10. What types of partnerships have been established at the site level?
› How have partnerships been developed with respect to the three tiers of Urban CAP?
› What have partnerships contributed to CAP sites?
› How effective have these partnerships been?
Success
11. What are the factors that are associated with viable CAP sites?
12. What are the impacts and benefits of having access to CAP sites and services for the unemployed, students, seniors, youth, Francophone, new immigrants, individuals and families without the means to acquire home Internet access?
› What development has occurred?
13. What are the impacts of CAP for the community (e.g., exchange of information and ideas, use of Internet or information technology, development of human capital, integration of individuals into society/the community, other social and economic benefits)?
› To what degree have CAP networks contributed to increased community capacity (e.g., creation of knowledge on using ICT, building a volunteer base, improving existing ICT)?
› What impacts has the involvement of youth and volunteers had on the CAP sites and the community?
14. What would you say are the major strengths of CAP? What lessons have been learned?
Cost-Effectiveness and Alternatives
15. What is the financial status of CAP sites/networks?
› What was the total value in dollars of donations of in-kind resources?
› What are the sources of funding?
› What are total operating costs?
16. Are results being achieved in the most cost-effective manner?
› What is the extent of leveraging of other funds/contributions?
› How can cost-effectiveness be improved?
› How has the network model contributed to cost-effectiveness?
17. Does the program make a unique contribution?
› What are the unique elements of CAP?
› Who are CAP's competitors?
› To what extent does CAP complement other initiatives?
18. To what extent will CAP sites be sustainable over time?
› What are the key factors associated with sustainability of sites?
› Have CAP sites developed feasible sustainability strategies?
› To what extent have CAP sites found alternate funding sources (e.g., through addition of new services, agreements with governments)?
19. What alternatives to CAP exist?
› What would be the impact if CAP did not exist?
20. What improvements can be suggested for the CAP program overall? Specifically for Urban CAP sites? Rural CAP sites? FV?

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present the methodology, findings and conclusions of the evaluation study of the Community Access Program. The methodology is described in Chapter Two, and the data collection instruments as well as a list of the key informants who were interviewed are appended. In Chapter Three the evaluation findings are presented, organized by the major evaluation issues. Finally, the evaluation conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter Four.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 OVERVIEW AND LIMITATIONS

The methodology for the CAP evaluation study is described in this chapter. In addition to the description provided here, the methodological approach was guided by a matrix of evaluation issues and associated indicators and data sources (see Appendix B), which was adapted from guidelines provided in the February 2003 results-based management and accountability framework (RMAF) for the program.

The methodology consisted of the following components:

- interviews with 30 key informants – including 10 representatives of Industry Canada, Information Highway Applications Branch (IHAB) and Operations Sector at both national and regional offices, eight provincial/territorial government officials and partners, and 12 CAP network coordinators;
- telephone survey of 503 CAP site representatives; and
- incorporation of key results from an online survey of 7,004 CAP site users, conducted by IHAB.

To the extent possible within the available budget and time frame, the evaluation methodology incorporated multiple methods and data from different primary and secondary sources in order to ensure that the findings were valid and captured key points of view on the Community Access Program (i.e., federal government CAP management, provincial/territorial government CAP partners, CAP site representatives and users, and CAP network coordinators). Key informants were carefully selected to ensure that they were knowledgeable and could provide an informed view on the program. Moreover, the site survey findings (n=503) are reliable – results are accurate within ± 4.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The evaluation was somewhat limited, however, in that the scope of work could not accommodate additional methods that may have yielded useful supplementary evidence – for instance, consultations with independent experts with no vested interest in the program, a survey of communities with no CAP sites (as a comparison group), or a review and analysis of program administrative data. Consequently, the evidence available to address important evaluation issues (e.g., incremental impacts of the program, the cost-effectiveness of CAP) was based entirely on the perceptions of interview and survey respondents – all with some relationship to the program — as opposed to a more rigorous analysis of “hard” data. Nevertheless, the fact that the findings from different lines of evidence were quite consistent lends support to the validity of the evaluation results.

2.2 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

We conducted a total of 30 interviews with key informants. Interviews were conducted by telephone in the interviewee's preferred official language. Key informants were assured that the interview responses would be reported in summary form only, and their names would never be associated with their responses in any evaluation reports. The interviews were an average of 60 minutes in duration.

The key informants (see Appendix C) were identified with the assistance of the Steering Committee. Program representatives sent an advance note to the key informants in order to inform them of the upcoming interview to be conducted by EKOS Research and to reassure them of the credibility and importance of the evaluation.

The following types of key informants were included in these English and French interviews:

- Industry Canada, IHAB and Operations Sector representatives at national headquarters and regional offices (n=10);
- English and French provincial/territorial partners (n=8); and
- English and French CAP network coordinators (n=12).

The key informant interview guides (see Appendix D) consisted mostly of open-ended questions to address the evaluation issues. A separate guide was developed for each of the three major groups of key informants so that each interviewee was presented only with questions relevant to his/her relationship to the program.

All key informants were sent (by e-mail or fax) a copy of the appropriate interview guide before their appointment so that they could prepare for their interview. In asking key informants about their views, observations and experiences with CAP, we prompted them to provide concrete examples corroborating the statements they made.

Summary notes of the interviews were prepared and utilized internally to assist with the analysis and reporting for the evaluation.

2.3 CAP SITE SURVEY

We conducted a telephone survey of 503 CAP site representatives. In order to select a survey sample, we were provided with an electronic listing of 6,068 CAP (Urban) and CAP (Rural) sites. We first selected a random sample of 2,499 sites for which CAP staff provided contact names and phone numbers. CAP staff members also made introductory phone calls (informing potential respondents of the upcoming survey) to as many of these sites as possible. We then randomly selected site representatives from this sample until 503 interviews were completed. The response rate (i.e., number of completions divided by the number in the functional sample) was 30.2 per cent.

A profile of the survey sample (n=503) in comparison to the population of sites from which we drew the random sample (N=6,068) is presented in Table 2.1. In order to bring the regional and urban/rural proportions in the sample in line with the proportions in the population, a weighting procedure was applied to ensure the accuracy of the survey results. These weighted survey results are presented in Chapter Three (the weighting changed the results by only 1 or 2 percentage points). For this sample size, the survey results are accurate within ± 4.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

A regional comparison of the survey sample and broader population of CAP sites by urban/rural and digital divide is presented in Table 2.2. As noted, for the results represented in the next chapter, the survey data were weighted so that the regional and urban/rural proportions in the sample reflect those that exist in the population.

TABLE 2.1 Profile of Survey Sample

	Population (N=6,068)	Sample (n=503)
Region (%)		
Atlantic	10.5	20.5
Quebec	18.0	11.5
Ontario	28.3	29.0
Prairies/NWT/Nunavut	28.0	26.8
BC/Yukon	15.1	12.1
Urban/Rural (%)		
Rural	51.7	58.3
Urban	48.3	41.7
Digital Divide (DD)⁴ (%)		
Non-DD	28.4*	25.2
DD	71.6	74.8
Facility Type⁵ (%)		
Municipal Library	31.7**	33.4
School/College/University	28.1	22.7
Government Office/Community Centre	13.0	16.9
Other	27.1	27.0

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003 (n=503). Unweighted data.

* Percentages based on N=6,051 because 17 sites were not coded.

** Percentages based on N=5,954 because 114 sites were not coded.

⁴ Sites were categorized as “digital divide” (DD) or not, based on IHAB’s 4-point rating of sites, as follows: Non-DD sites were those rated 1 or 2, and DD sites were those coded 3 or 4 in the database of sites provided by IHAB. In rating CAP sites with respect to DD, IHAB utilized “aggregated need” as a measure of the population affected by the digital divide in Statistics Canada Census Sub-Divisions (CSDs) in rural areas and Census Tracts (CTs) in urban areas. Responses to a General Social Survey question, “In the past 12 months, did you use the Internet?”, were used to identify target groups that use the Internet less than the general population: seniors, Aboriginal people, Francophones, people with low incomes, those with limited education and those living in rural areas. The aggregated need calculations focused on determining the percentage of the population in each CSD and CT that belong to these target groups and utilized weights to reflect the difference between each group’s Internet use and that of the general population. The data were taken from the 2001 Census.

⁵ Sites were categorized as being situated in one of 15 different types of facilities, in the database provided by IHAB. In order to permit some analysis of the survey results (with a limited sample of 503 respondents) by facility type, these 15 categories were collapsed into four groups as follows:

1. Municipal Library = “Municipal Library” (category was not changed in this case).
2. School/College/University = “School” and “College/University”.
3. Government Office/Community Centre = “Government Office”, “Youth Centre”, “Francophone Centre”, “Family Resources/Social Services”, “Community Centre”, “Arts/Culture Centre”, and “Aboriginal Friendship Centre”.
4. Other = “Medical/Health Centre”, “Business/Commercial”, “Rural”, “Urban” and “Other”.

TABLE 2.2 Regional Profile of Survey Sample by Urban/Rural and Digital Divide

	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies/NWT/ Nunavut	BC/Yukon	Total
Urban/Rural (%)						
Rural	84.5 (82.3)	32.8 (46.0)	47.3 (34.5)	66.7 (66.7)	45.9 (41.4)	58.3 (51.7)
Urban	15.5 (17.7)	67.2 (54.0)	52.7 (65.5)	33.3 (33.3)	54.1 (58.6)	41.7 (48.3)
Digital Divide (DD)* (%)						
Non-DD	12.6 (16.1)	12.1 (10.9)	31.5 (45.4)	27.4 (19.2)	39.3 (43.1)	25.2 (28.4)
DD	87.4 (83.9)	87.9 (89.1)	68.5 (54.6)	72.6 (80.8)	60.7 (56.9)	74.8 (71.6)
Total	20.5 (10.5)	11.5 (18.0)	29.0 (28.3)	26.8 (28.0)	12.1 (15.1)	100 (100)

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003 (n=503). Unweighted data.

Percentages in the population (N=6,068) are presented in parentheses.

*Percentages in the population based on N=6,051 because 17 sites were not coded.

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix E) consisted primarily of closed questions with responses indicated on seven-point rating scales, though a few open-ended questions were included to allow respondents to explain their answers in greater detail (e.g., suggestions for improving CAP). The instrument was programmed for administration by our computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. As with all of our surveys, the instrument was designed in accord with accepted principles to ensure reliable and valid measurement of respondents' views and observations (e.g., clear, non-biased question wording, proper question flow and skip logic). The questionnaire was translated into French and all respondents were interviewed in their preferred official language. The survey interview was an average of 21 minutes in duration.

In conducting the survey, we utilized call-backs to minimize bias. Names/phone numbers were randomly selected and at least seven call-backs (a total of eight phone calls) were made to each site representative. Appointments were made at the convenience of the respondent. If respondents wished to verify the legitimacy of the survey or if they preferred to call the survey team back to make an appointment, they were offered the 1-800 phone number of our Ottawa survey centre. Daily records were kept of calls attempted, successful contacts, appointments made and interviews completed.

Thoroughly documented data files were prepared for the survey results, including variable and value labels. The responses to open-ended questions were coded into new categories. The data analysis consisted of the computation of univariate descriptive statistics for all survey questions (i.e., frequency distribution of responses, average response and number of respondents for each question) as well as some cross-tabulations in which the results were broken down by region, urban/rural, "digital divide" and facility type.

2.4 INTEGRATION OF RESULTS OF CAP USER SURVEY

To supplement the data being collected for this evaluation, Information Highway Applications Branch provided EKOS Research with preliminary results from an online survey of users of CAP sites in all regions of the country. Survey data were available for 7,004 CAP site users (91 per cent of the sample for this survey).⁶ This survey information was collected between June 27 and July 28, 2003. Key user survey findings are presented in Chapter Three along with the other evidence for the evaluation.

2.5 ANALYSIS

Following the collection and analysis of the interview and survey data, we summarized and integrated the evidence from these sources and organized the integrated findings by the evaluation issues. In addition, as noted, we incorporated key findings of the online CAP user survey, conducted by IHAB. The evidence from different sources was triangulated to corroborate notable findings or reconcile any inconsistent results to the extent possible. The integrated evaluation findings are presented in Chapter Three.

⁶ By the time the present report was completed, data on 7,222 users were available from the online survey. This slightly larger sample had no significant effect on the online survey results (e.g., some results changed by only one percentage point).

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 CONTINUED RELEVANCE

a) Relevance of Program Objectives

Overall, the CAP objectives are regarded as still relevant by key informants because, for example, the program helps to provide affordable access to the Internet/ICT for all citizens so they can participate fully in the social and economic development of the country.

On average, key informants rate the CAP objectives as being moderately (though not extremely) relevant in the following order of priority:

- to provide information technology training for individuals;
- to raise public awareness of the advantages and opportunities associated with using information technologies and services;
- to support learning and research online;
- to contribute to better informed citizens as a result of exchanging ideas and information;
- to support the delivery of government programs and services online;
- to facilitate electronic commerce and other business activities; and
- to encourage Canadian content online.

Although the objectives are viewed as being relevant, key informants note that it may not be realistic for CAP alone to fully achieve all of them (e.g., facilitating e-commerce, encouraging Canadian content online). As one respondent put it, the social objectives are more realistic for CAP than the economic objectives. Some key informants note, however, that facilitating e-commerce may become more relevant for CAP. In addition, raising public awareness of ICT and providing affordable Internet access are now less relevant in many communities across the country because much has been accomplished since CAP began in 1994.

The vast majority of CAP site representatives also indicate that the program objectives continue to be relevant. They believe that there is a need for government to support sites that:

- increase public awareness of the benefits of ICT (98 per cent agree);

- help individuals more effectively use services available through ICT (97 per cent);
- create opportunity for economic and social benefits for the community using ICT (96 per cent);
- support online delivery of government programs/services (96 per cent);
- support e-learning (95 per cent);
- encourage exchange of ideas/information between citizens (93 per cent); and
- facilitate business activities such as e-commerce (74 per cent) — particularly in Atlantic Canada (88 per cent) and Ontario (81 per cent).

Key Informants observe that the relevance and priority of CAP objectives varies depending on a variety of factors in the community, specifically:

- degree of Internet connectivity (i.e., basic Internet access is a more relevant objective where connectivity is poor);
- urban versus rural/remote site (i.e., basic access tends to be more relevant in rural/remote areas); and
- degree of community's "ownership" of site (i.e., CAP is generally given more priority when major community stakeholders are involved).

Some regional representatives note that the objectives and priority of CAP objectives have shifted over the life of the program to better reflect the shifts occurring at the federal level. Provincial and territorial partners and network coordinators did not identify major changes to program objectives, nor did they have any suggestions for change.

Key informants most commonly identify lack of funding as the key factor preventing CAP from achieving its objectives. They feel that the lack of funding limits the attention that can be realistically given to each objective. Some key informants suggest that the funding should be focused on fewer objectives, or that the objectives should be clearly prioritized to allow CAP to focus its resources. Another factor that hinders CAP from achieving its objectives is the lack of human resources at sites (due to limited funding).

b) Need for Program

According to key informants, CAP continues to be needed though the specific needs of communities change over time due to factors such as the level of the community's Internet connectivity. In communities that have limited connectivity the emphasis tends to be on basic computer skills (e.g., how to use e-mail), but as communities establish connectivity and broadband (high speed Internet), the emphasis expands to higher skills training (e.g., e-commerce and using digital camera technology). Although provincial and territorial representatives commonly cite the need for CAP sites to diversify and offer more higher-end services, some key informants within this group do not feel that CAP should be the venue for these higher level needs. Overall, key informants feel that CAP's priority should continue to be closing the digital divide, which includes establishing affordable Internet access in remote areas and reaching segments

of the population that have not “bought into” the benefits of the Internet or simply do not have access to a computer. For these groups, CAP is probably the only outlet available to connect them to the Information Highway.

The online user survey provides further evidence that CAP sites continue to be needed by users:

- 49 per cent of users do not own a computer, and 23 per cent do not expect to soon;
- their primary reason for using the CAP site is that it is free or inexpensive (78 per cent); and
- they rate the CAP site as very important (69 per cent) or somewhat important (26 per cent).

Note that some users indicate that they currently have Internet access through other sources too – at home (40 per cent), from friends (31 per cent), at work (29 per cent), school (21 per cent) or other sources (20 per cent) – which suggests that there may be some duplication of the services at the CAP site and hence less need for these users. In the absence of more details further explaining these results, however, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about overlap. For example, it is unlikely that people with some Internet access at work or school have much (if any) opportunity to pursue their own personal interests, communications, learning, etc. In addition, it is important to note that the online survey would more likely have captured the views of motivated CAP users who are comfortable operating a computer, not those of citizens without computer capability.

Site representatives believe that CAP continues to be needed and relevant for their community. The majority of representatives agree that there is a continuing need to promote universal public Internet access in Canada (97 per cent) and that there is still a gap in access to online services between urban and rural Canada (76 per cent). Agreement on this latter point is stronger in rural than urban areas (82 per cent *versus* 70 per cent). Also, lending further support to the need for the program, 74 per cent of site representatives say that their site is used to a large extent by persons without Internet access at home.

Beyond the evaluation findings reported above, the issue of whether or not there is a need for a program such as CAP should be considered in the broader context of how accessible the Internet is to Canadians. Results from the Household Internet Use Survey (HIUS)⁷ indicate that in 2002, just over half (51 per cent) of Canadian households had at least one regular Internet user who accessed it from home, 62 per cent of households had a user who accessed the Internet from *any* location, and 38 per cent of households did *not* access the Internet. Results over the 1998-2002 period indicate that Internet access has been increasing but at a diminishing rate. In 1998, the proportion of Canadian households with at least one regular Internet user with access from home was 23 per cent, which rose to 29 per cent in 1999, 40 per cent in 2000, and 49 per cent in 2001.

⁷ Most figures drawn or based on data provided in Canadian Statistics on the Statistics Canada website, <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/cultur.htm#int>. Complete HIUS results indicate that in 2002 Canadian households had somebody who accessed the Internet from any location (62 per cent), from home (51 per cent), work (34 per cent), school (23 per cent), a library (eight per cent) or other locations (10 per cent).

Internet access from home varies greatly by income and location. HIUS results indicate that the incidence of home Internet access is over three times as great in the highest income quartile (78 per cent) as the lowest (25 per cent). Moreover, this gap has increased over the last three years, from 20 percentage points in 2000 to 27 percentage points in 2002, though it has declined overall since 1998 (38 points). Similarly, there was wide variation in home Internet access by province, from 58 per cent in British Columbia to 37-39 per cent in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, this gap has widened since 2000, when it was about 15 percentage points. As well, the gap is great between rural and urban households (43 *versus* 31 per cent in 2000⁸).

Why do almost half of Canadian households *not* have home access to the Internet? If the reason were mere lack of interest, then there would be little justification for implementing a program to increase Internet access. Results from the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS)⁹ indicate, however, that the greatest barrier to using the Internet among non-users (who have not used the Internet over the last 12 months) was in fact cost, with lack of computer/Internet access being the second most frequently cited reason. Over a quarter of non-users said they were interested in using the Internet, with the degree of interest falling steeply with age, from 49 per cent of 15-25 year olds to only eight per cent of 65-74 year olds.

Almost three-quarters of Canadians feel it is at least somewhat important for everyone to have access to the Internet (GSS, 2000). Among those who had an opinion about who should remove barriers to Internet access, the largest percentages indicated that it should be the responsibility of individuals (45 per cent) and the federal government (42 per cent). These findings generally support the continuing need for a federal role in facilitating affordable public Internet access and bridging the digital divide that still exists in the country, though individual citizens clearly hold much of the responsibility for learning how to use the Internet.

3.2 DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

a) Program Reach

The user survey results suggest that CAP has been reaching its intended audience and serving the digital divide, including:

- people who have not previously accessed the Internet (25 per cent of users);
- females (56 per cent);
- seniors (10 per cent are 55-64 and five per cent are 65 or older);
- youth (six per cent are 14 or younger and 23 per cent are 15-24);

⁸ G. Sciadas, *Unveiling the Digital Divide*, Research Paper, Connectedness Series, Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 56F00004MIE – No. 7, October, 2002.

⁹ Heather Dryburg, *Changing our Ways: Why and how Canadians use the Internet*, Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 56F0006XIE.

- those with low education (41 per cent have only high school or less education);
- people not employed (19 per cent are unemployed, 18 per cent are students, and 10 per cent retired);
- those with low income (56 per cent have an annual income of less than \$30,000);
- people who speak French (22 per cent) or another language other than English (12 per cent);
- visible minorities (14 per cent);
- persons with a disability (nine per cent); and
- Aboriginal persons (seven per cent).

A comparison of the above group percentages from the user survey to the overall proportions in the Canadian population indicates that CAP is reaching its target audience quite effectively, though Francophones are somewhat underrepresented:

- 22 per cent of CAP users are French-speaking (compared to 31 per cent of Canadians as indicated by the 2001 Census);
- 14 per cent of users are visible minorities (compared to 13 per cent of Canadians as indicated by the 2001 Census);
- nine per cent of users are people with disabilities (compared to 12 per cent of Canadians as indicated by Statistics Canada's 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey); and
- seven per cent of users are Aboriginal persons (compared to only three per cent of Canadians as indicated by the 2001 Census) – though program management estimates that the vast majority of Aboriginal people responding to the user survey (over 80 per cent) live in urban areas, suggesting that there is a remaining need for CAP to reach Aboriginal persons in rural/remote areas.

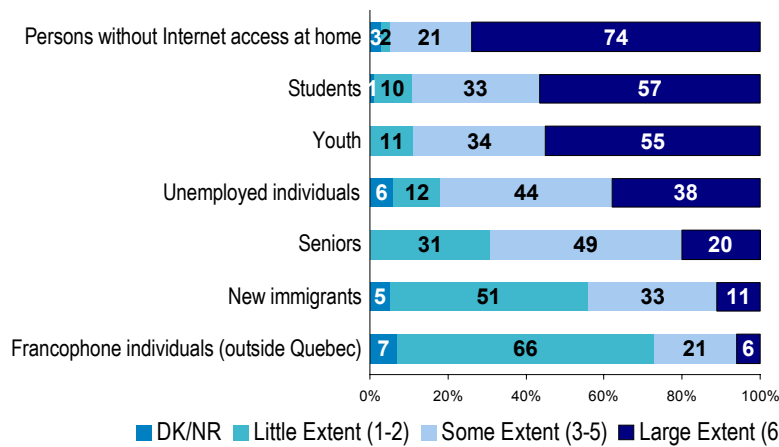
Similarly, as illustrated in Exhibit 3.1, site representatives indicate that users of CAP sites include a diversity of citizens as well as those who are part of the digital divide:

- persons without Internet access at home (74 per cent say the site is used to a large extent) – in particular, in Ontario (80 per cent) but less so in Atlantic Canada (60 per cent);
- students (57 per cent) – at more rural (64 per cent) than urban sites (49 per cent) and particularly at educational facilities (73 per cent) and libraries (68 per cent);
- youth (55 per cent) – at more rural (62 per cent) than urban sites (47 per cent) and particularly in Atlantic Canada (69 per cent) and at libraries and educational facilities (66 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively);

- unemployed individuals (38 per cent) – at more urban (47 per cent) than rural sites (30 per cent);
- seniors (20 per cent) – particularly in Ontario (29 per cent);
- new immigrants (11 per cent) – at more urban (18 per cent) than rural sites (four per cent) and more so in Ontario (16 per cent) but less so in Atlantic Canada (four per cent); and
- Francophones outside Quebec (six per cent) – particularly in Atlantic Canada (13 per cent).

EXHIBIT 3.1 Program Reach: Users of CAP Sites

“To what extent do the following types of people use your site?”



EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=503

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003

According to key informants some segments of CAP’s intended audience are reached better than others. Overall key informants observe that users represent all age groups (from youth to seniors), those in remote communities, the economically underprivileged, and individuals who do not have access to computers. They also note the prevalence of unexpected users, such as tourists.

Key informants identify the following groups that could be better reached by CAP:

- people with mental and physical disabilities;
- First Nations and northern communities;
- homeless people;
- underprivileged people; and
- “hard to reach” seniors and new immigrants.

b) Profile of Sites

A regional breakdown of the sites included in the telephone survey is presented in Table 3.1. A few differences by urban/rural, digital divide and facility type are noteworthy:

- **Urban/Rural:** Rural CAP sites are most common in Atlantic Canada (83 per cent) and the Prairies/NWT/Nunavut (65 per cent) whereas urban sites are particularly common in Quebec (69 per cent).
- **Digital Divide:** DD sites are more common in Quebec and Atlantic Canada (88 per cent and 87 per cent, respectively) while non-DD sites are most prevalent in BC/Yukon (40 per cent).
- **Facility Type:** Sites at municipal libraries are most common in Ontario (51 per cent) and the Prairies/NWT/Nunavut (40 per cent); those at educational settings are most common in BC/Yukon (42 per cent) and Atlantic Canada (39 per cent); sites at government offices/community centres are notably less prevalent in Ontario (six per cent); and sites at “other” locations (e.g., medical/health centres, business/commercial locations) are by far most common in Quebec (52 per cent).

TABLE 3.1 Profile of CAP Sites Surveyed by Region

	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies/NWT/ Nunavut	BC/Yukon	Total
Urban/Rural (%)						
Rural	83	31	45	65	44	52
Urban	17	69	55	35	56	48
Digital Divide (DD) (%)						
Non-DD	13	12	32	28	40	27
DD	87	88	68	72	60	73
Facility Type (%)						
Municipal Library	20	13	51	40	15	32
School/College/University	39	9	11	20	42	21
Government Office/Community Centre	18	26	6	22	23	18
Other	22	52	32	18	21	29
Total (%)	10	18	28	28	15	100

Survey of CAP sites, 2003 (n=503)

Findings on the number of paid employees¹⁰ and volunteers at CAP sites are presented in Table 3.2. Overall, it is most common for sites to have three or more paid employees (43 per cent of sites), in particular, in Ontario (56 per cent). However, having no paid staff is quite common in Quebec (43 per cent of sites) and having just one paid employee is more prevalent in Atlantic Canada (43 per cent). The average

¹⁰ It is important to note that CAP funding typically covers only a portion of the overall costs of operating a CAP site (e.g., costs to pay employees and provide services), and sites rely on other sources of funding as well. Survey findings on the financial status of CAP sites are presented in Section 3.4.

number of paid employees per site, overall, is six. Excluding the sites that have no paid staff, the overall average becomes seven paid employees. Overall, paid employees devote an average of 13 hours per week on CAP, though this is relatively high in Atlantic Canada (average of 20 hours per week).

Turning to the volunteer staff at CAP sites, it is most typical for sites to have *no* volunteers (54 per cent), particularly in Ontario (61 per cent) and the Prairies/NWT/Nunavut (60 per cent). However, a substantial proportion of sites have three or more volunteers (25 per cent overall), and this is most common in Quebec (44 per cent) and Atlantic Canada (35 per cent). The overall average number of volunteers per site is three (including sites with no volunteers) and six (excluding sites with no volunteers). Volunteers work an average of five hours per week at the CAP site, though this is comparatively high in Atlantic Canada (eight hours per week) and low in the Prairies/NWT/Nunavut (three hours per week).

TABLE 3.2 Number of Paid Employees and Volunteers Per CAP Site By Region

	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies/NWT/ Nunavut	BC/Yukon	Total
Number of Paid Employees (%)						
None	19	43	12	14	25	21
1	43	22	18	23	15	22
2	17	2	11	18	12	12
3 or more	21	33	56	43	46	43
Don't Know/No Response (DK/NR)	2	-	4	2	3	2
Average Number	2	2	8	5	10	6
Number of Volunteers (%)						
None	41	45	61	60	48	54
1	11	3	8	12	11	9
2	12	7	10	11	15	10
3 or more	35	44	19	16	25	25
Don't Know/No Response (DK/NR)	1	-	3	2	2	2
Average Number	2	3	2	4	2	3

Survey of CAP sites, 2003 (n=503)

As illustrated in Exhibit 3.2, the core services provided at sites (i.e., the services for which CAP originally supported the site) include: public access to the Internet (84 per cent), particularly in Quebec (93 per cent) and at libraries (89 per cent) but less so in the Prairies (75 per cent); public access to computer equipment (61 per cent), particularly in Quebec (74 per cent); and public exposure to ICT (45 per cent). A range of additional services are also offered at CAP sites, in particular: specialized training (37 per cent), though less so in the Prairies (23 per cent); general training/assistance (33 per cent), more so at rural (37 per cent) than urban sites (28 per cent); and employment assistance (24 per cent), particularly in Quebec (36 per cent). It is also worth noting that offering games (12 per cent of sites overall) is particularly common in Quebec (36 per cent).

Overall, 32 per cent of CAP sites charge user fees (see Exhibit 3.3). This is most common in Quebec (69 per cent of sites), Atlantic Canada (44 per cent), at rural sites (36 per cent) and DD sites (36 per

cent). (Data on the exact amount of user fees were not collected because this was beyond the scope of the present survey.)

EXHIBIT 3.2 Services Provided at CAP Sites

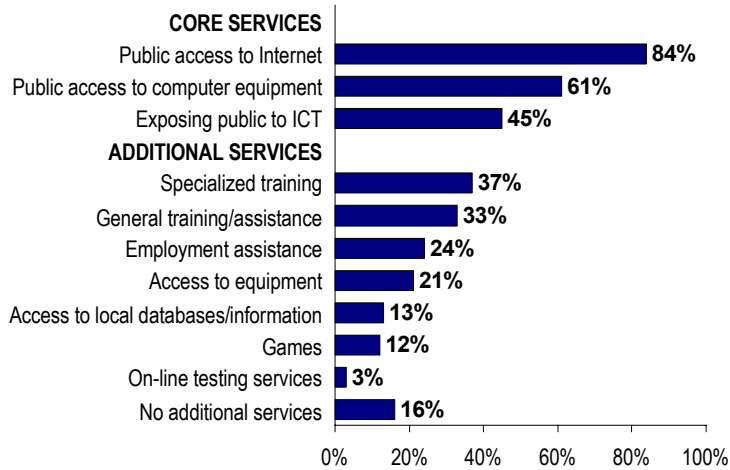
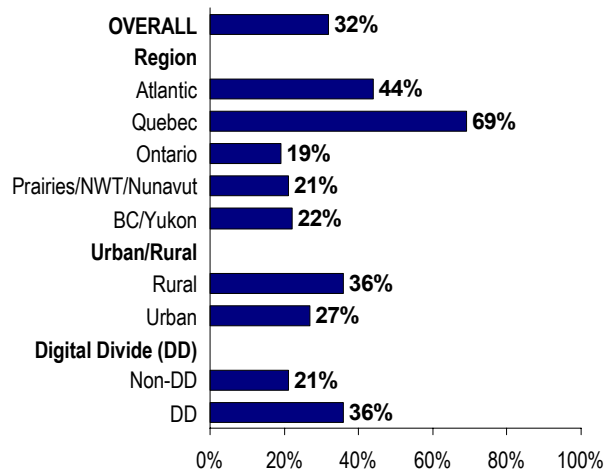


EXHIBIT 3.3 User Fees Charged at CAP Sites

“Do you charge the public a fee for use of the services at your site?”



EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=496

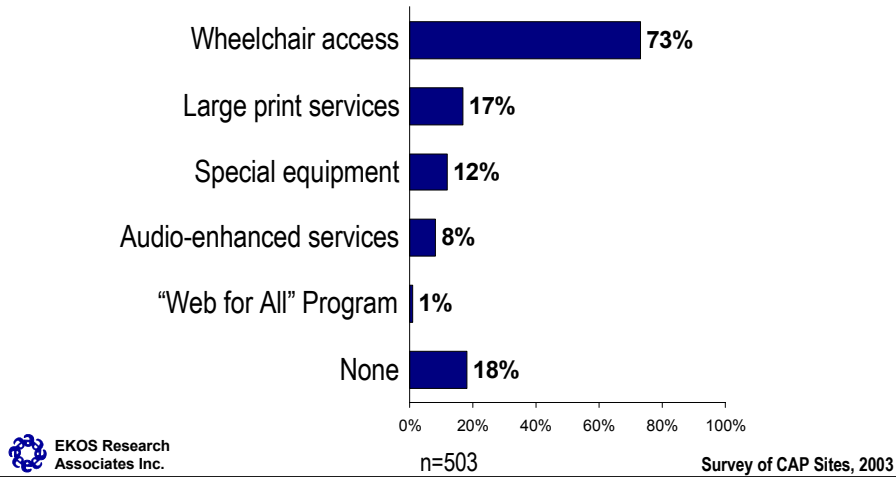
Survey of CAP Sites, 2003

c) Accessibility of Sites

Most sites (82 per cent) have some services or equipment in place to make their site accessible to persons with disabilities (see Exhibit 3.4). In particular, sites provide wheelchair access (73 per cent), more so in the Prairies (83 per cent) and BC (82 per cent) than Quebec (50 per cent); and large print services for the visually impaired (17 per cent), in particular, in Ontario (26 per cent) and at libraries (27 per cent).

EXHIBIT 3.4 Accessibility of CAP Sites

“What services or equipment do you have in place to make your site accessible to persons with disabilities?”



Key informants agree that accessibility needs to be a consideration when establishing the location of CAP sites. In general, CAP sites are situated in accessible, public locations such as community centres and public libraries. Although most key informants report that many of the CAP sites are accessible to persons with physical disabilities, mentioning the presence of wheelchair ramps, large monitors, etc., the issue of accessibility for physically and mentally challenged individuals still needs to be further addressed. For example, although many CAP sites claim that they are accessible to persons in wheelchairs because the CAP site has wheelchair ramps, often the site itself does not conform to their other needs, such as having an appropriate desk for the wheelchair. Key informants also report that some CAP sites are specialized for individuals with certain disabilities. Some examples of innovative technology include speech enabled software (i.e., Web-for-All) and screen readers, and the use of a track ball instead of a mouse. Key informants also mention that there should be a greater focus on increasing accessibility for individuals with low literacy levels. For example, software designed for the visually impaired, i.e., speech enabled software, has proven very useful for individuals with low literacy levels.

d) Use of Sites

The online user survey indicates that CAP sites are utilized frequently; 78 per cent of visitors who responded use the Internet at the CAP site at least once per week and 45 per cent plan to do so more often in the future.

Moreover, this survey suggests that respondents are using the CAP site for a range of relevant purposes, including for:

- e-mail (78 per cent) and learning/training purposes – learning (55 per cent), personal development/interests (55 per cent) and finding health information (34 per cent);
- accessing government services/information – finding federal government information (46 per cent) and information from other levels of government (34 per cent); and
- business/commercial purposes and exploring job opportunities – working (e.g., word processing and Internet research) (38 per cent), searching for work/business opportunities (36 per cent), purchasing products/services (13 per cent), moving a business on-line (four per cent), and forming a partnership/business alliance (four per cent).

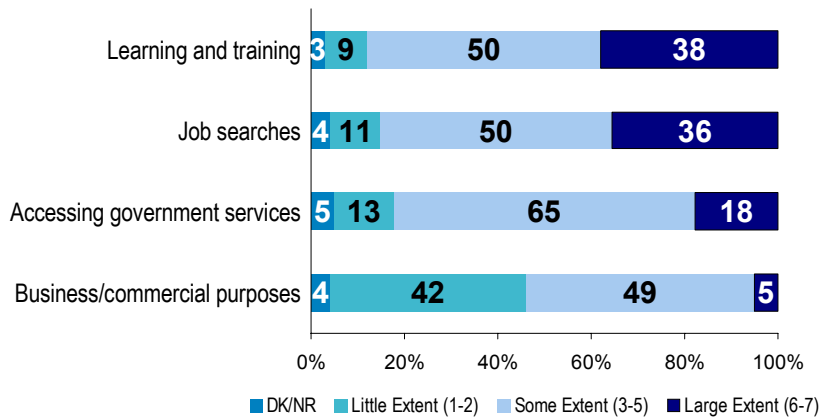
In the telephone survey, site representatives also perceive that visitors use their CAP sites for a range of purposes compatible with the program's objectives:

- learning and training (38 per cent say the site is used to a large extent) – at more urban (45 per cent) than rural sites (31 per cent) and more so at educational facilities (48 per cent) and in Quebec (56 per cent) than the Prairies (27 per cent);
- job searches (36 per cent) – at more urban (44 per cent) than rural sites (28 per cent) and less so in the Prairies (27 per cent);
- accessing government services (18 per cent); and
- business/commercial purposes (five per cent) – though moderate use (49 per cent overall) is more common at rural sites (59 per cent), in Atlantic Canada (59 per cent) and at libraries (61 per cent), but less common at urban sites (39 per cent) and in Quebec (31 per cent).

In addition, 90 per cent of these survey respondents indicate that their site is also used for other purposes, in particular, e-mail/communications (72 per cent), general research (39 per cent), games/entertainment (23 per cent), education/homework (21 per cent) and word processing (13 per cent).

EXHIBIT 3.5 Purposes for Using CAP Sites

“To what extent do your visitors use the services for ...?”



EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=503

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003

e) Delivery Models

The network model is the most commonly mentioned innovative delivery model by key informants (even though CAP networks are now so common, involving 98 per cent of sites). Generally there are two types of networks: the first is organized by geographic communities and the second by communities of interest (e.g., communities of libraries, First Nations, francophone organizations). Key informants in general speak very favourably of this delivery model attesting to its cost-effectiveness through the sharing of sustainability plans, information and resources. The networks also contribute to community capacity by establishing a governance system based on information technology. Key informants involved with the network model also mention some of its drawbacks, however. For example, the CAP regional representatives often do not have direct communication with the CAP sites since they communicate with the network.

Other examples of innovative delivery models include:

- use of mobile CAP sites and a site on ferry;
- sites at kiosks in parks or at the Salvation Army (to reach the homeless);
- site targeted at people with substance abuse problems;
- option to rent computer (for a fee) and take off site, especially in rural areas;
- higher-level coordination (beyond network coordinator) — e.g., coordination of all francophone Ontario sites and a network of all sites in an Atlantic province, which facilitates the sharing of best practices;

- use of CAP site for more efficient, integrated delivery of a range of social services;
- tutoring at CAP site using a sliding cost scale — with fees adjusted to users' ability to pay;
- option for troubled youth to take a college exam online at CAP site; and
- repair of used equipment to provide affordable computers for people.

Mobile CAP sites (i.e., with the use of laptops) in particular are lauded since this delivery model allows for the information technology to be brought to segments of the population that find it difficult to get to a CAP site. Some examples are persons with severe physical challenges, the elderly who are limited in their movement, and the homeless. Key informants also report using laptops in the promotion of CAP sites.

f) Partnerships

Key informants view federal-provincial/territorial partnerships positively. Provincial/territorial partners report having better relations with Industry Canada staff associated with CAP as well as other departmental programs due to their involvement with CAP. Similarly, IC partners observe that they enjoy better relations with a range of provincial/regional officials through their involvement and networking for CAP. In addition, project development tends to be facilitated when federal and provincial/territorial governments share a common vision and voice. Site-level partnerships are also effective, specifically partnerships with public, private and community organizations (e.g., schools, libraries, provincial/territorial and municipal government, and local businesses). Such organizations often donate space, services (e.g., repairing monitors) and staff time (e.g., bank staff is given an incentive to volunteer at CAP site).

3.3 SUCCESS

a) User Satisfaction and Impacts

Results from the online survey indicate that users are satisfied with all aspects of service at CAP sites except the speed of Internet connection:

- location (94 per cent of users rate this as very good or good);
- cost (93 per cent);
- available assistance (90 per cent);
- availability of computers (83 per cent);
- hours of operation (81 per cent);
- level of training (74 per cent);
- amount of training available (73 per cent); and

- speed of Internet connection (16 per cent);

These users have also derived personal benefits from their use of a CAP site:

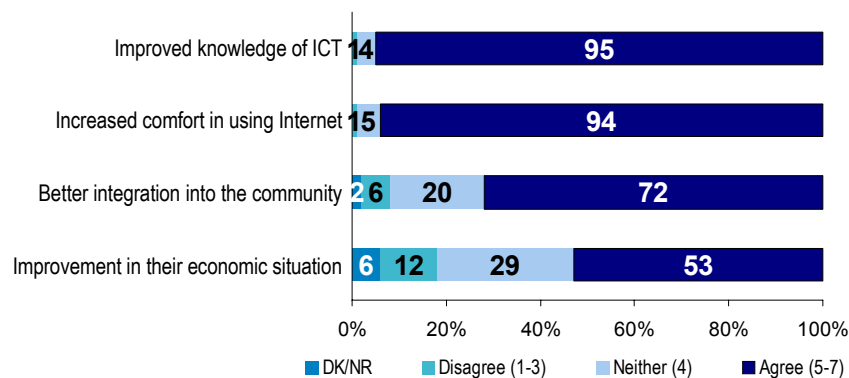
- becoming more informed about issues of interest (58 per cent);
- improving job skills (36 per cent); and
- getting a new job (16 per cent).

Consistent with these results, the site representatives who were surveyed perceive that visitors to their sites gain a number of benefits (see Exhibit 3.6):

- improved knowledge of ICT (95 per cent agree);
- increased comfort in using the Internet (94 per cent);
- better integration into the community (72 per cent) – though somewhat less so in the Prairies (62 per cent);
- improvement in their economic situation (53 per cent) – but notably less so in Quebec (34 per cent); and
- other benefits (49 per cent) – including personal/social benefits, communications/contact and skill development.

EXHIBIT 3.6 Benefits for Users of CAP Sites

“To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about the potential benefits for all those using your CAP site? Visiting your site leads to...”



EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=492

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003

b) Community Impacts

Key informants perceive that CAP sites have had a positive impact at the community level. CAP sites contribute to social development by providing virtual and physical meeting places (e.g., groups get together to take workshops and individuals connect with people from other regions and countries through e-mail, chat rooms, etc.). They contribute to cultural development by providing access to cultural information and individuals from different regions and countries. They also contribute to economic development at the community level by providing individuals with access to job searches, skill development workshops (e.g., preparation of résumés on the computer) and learning opportunities (e.g., long distance courses as well as workshops conducted at the CAP site). Local businesses also benefit through entrepreneurial opportunities and e-commerce (e.g., selling locally produced goods), and through higher skills training, which may improve business efficiency.

In addition, key informants and site representatives (69 per cent) believe that CAP networks have contributed to enhancing community capacity. For instance, community members learn how to mobilize resources and learn that they can master ICT. Also, CAP sites in communities that have a sense of ownership of the site tend to be more viable. Youth involvement has been a strength. CAP sites are particularly beneficial to youth who become involved with the sites as users, volunteers and through job opportunities created for youth in some communities. However, some key informants report resentment by older volunteers, who unlike youth, do not qualify for HRDC funding. Problems associated with volunteer burnout and the limited pool of volunteers are a widespread and growing concern across all CAP sites in all regions.

Similar to the views expressed by key informants, users who were consulted in the online survey perceive that CAP sites contribute to development in their community in a number of ways:

- social development – by supporting the use of the Internet or IT (81 per cent), exchange of information and ideas (67 per cent), making new contacts (56 per cent) and meeting neighbours (39 per cent); and
- community economic development – by supporting new skill development (73 per cent), new employment (52 per cent) and new business employment (33 per cent).

Consistent with these findings, the site survey indicates that most site representatives (75 per cent) perceive CAP to have had a very positive impact on their community overall and they note a number of positive benefits (see Exhibit 3.7).

In the view of site representatives, the primary benefits to the community include:

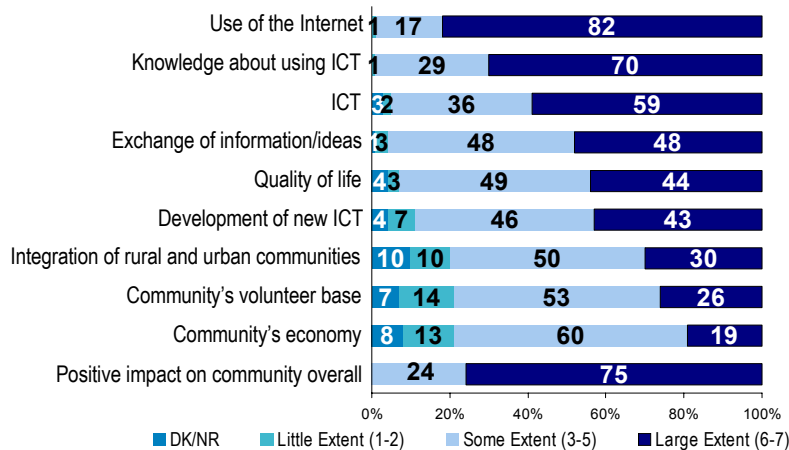
- greater use of the Internet (82 per cent say to a large extent) – for more DD (85 per cent) than non-DD sites (73 per cent);
- enhanced knowledge about using ICT (70 per cent) – in particular, at libraries (77 per cent) and more so in Ontario (80 per cent) than the Prairies (58 per cent); and
- improvement in ICT (59 per cent).

Other perceived benefits are:

- exchange of information and ideas among community members (48 per cent) – more so in Quebec (68 per cent) than the Prairies (27 per cent);
- quality of life (44 per cent) – again, more so in Quebec (55 per cent) than in the Prairies (35 per cent);
- development of new ICT (43 per cent) – for more DD (48 per cent) than non-DD sites (31 per cent) and more so in Quebec (73 per cent) than in BC (29 per cent) or the Prairies (36 per cent);
- integration of rural and urban communities (30 per cent) – for more rural (36 per cent) than urban sites (24 per cent);
- enhanced volunteer base (26 per cent) – for more DD (29 per cent) than non-DD sites (20 per cent) and more so in Atlantic Canada (38 per cent) and Quebec (36 per cent) but less so in the Prairies (19 per cent) and at libraries (16 per cent); and
- improved community economy (19 per cent) – for more rural (22 per cent) than urban sites (15 per cent).

EXHIBIT 3.7 Benefits for Community

“Please indicate the extent to which the following have benefited from CAP in your community.”



c) Achievement of Program Objectives

Generally, key informants feel that CAP has played a significant role in reducing the digital divide in Canada. However, they are still concerned that there is a continued need to keep the focus primarily on groups or individuals who remain “have-nots” in the digital divide. The priority should remain on providing affordable Internet access to remote communities, in particular First Nations communities, underprivileged individuals such as the homeless or low-income families, and individuals with specialized needs (i.e., individuals with low literacy levels and with physical and mental challenges). In addition, even in communities with basic access to the Internet, there is a perceived need to stay up to date with new technology. In this sense, “the digital divide is a moving target”.

Key informants perceive that CAP has achieved its objectives to at least some extent, but that the emphasis given to particular objectives changes over time due to varying factors, such as the improvement of Internet connectivity and the increase of users’ level of experience and comfort with computers.

On average, key informants rate CAP as having had at least a moderate impact in contributing to its objectives in the following order of priority:

- individuals receiving information technology training;
- increased public awareness of the advantages and opportunities associated with using information technologies and services;
- increased online learning and research;
- better informed citizens as a result of exchanging ideas and information;
- online delivery of government programs and services;
- increased Canadian online content; and
- facilitation of electronic commerce and other business activities.

These perceived impacts represent some key immediate and intermediate outcomes in the CAP logic model (presented in the 2003 RMAF), suggesting that progress is being made along the “chain of results” toward the ultimate outcomes of universal, quality access to the Internet and economic/social benefits to communities and Canada.

In the view of key informants, factors that facilitate program progress and success include strong community support for the CAP site, partnerships and networks. The key factor hindering progress is insufficient funding, specifically for keeping up with changing and specialized technology for individuals with specialized needs. Shortage of human resources is another concern (e.g., lack of volunteers to provide training for site users). As noted, volunteer burnout is a problem that is prevalent across all regions.

d) Incremental Impacts

As illustrated in Exhibits 3.8 and 3.9, most site representatives perceive that CAP is having an incremental impact:

- 33 per cent indicate that their site would cease to function without CAP – more so in Atlantic Canada and Quebec (43 per cent in each case) and at DD sites (37 per cent), but less so in Ontario (26 per cent) and at non-DD sites (22 per cent) and libraries (25 per cent); and
- 52 per cent indicate that they would have to offer reduced services without CAP – in particular, in Ontario (60 per cent) and at libraries (61 per cent).

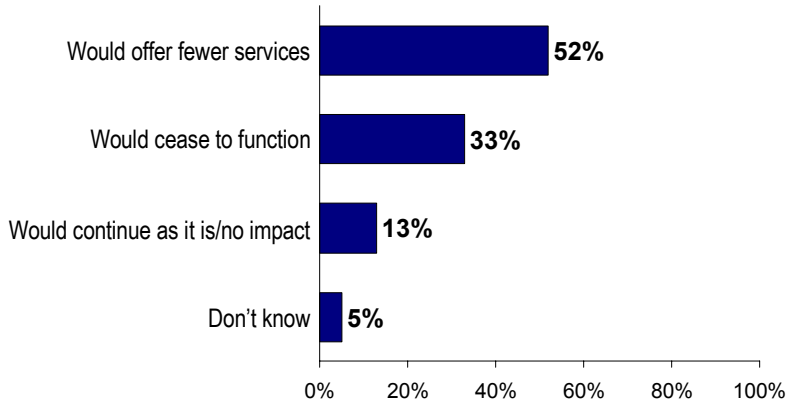
Correcting for the fact that some respondents selected both impacts, a total of 81 per cent of site representatives indicate that their site would either close or offer fewer services without CAP. For a minority (13 per cent), however, the termination of CAP funding would have no impact on their site; it would continue as is.

While these results suggest that the program is having an incremental impact, they may also be cause for concern from the perspective of site sustainability because one-third of sites would apparently close without CAP funding. Those sites that are not self-reliant should be a particular focus for future CAP funding if the program intends to keep the sites operational.

Among the site representatives who claim that their site would cease to function without program funding, it is most common for them to have 25 per cent or less of their costs funded by CAP (24 per cent) or 100 per cent of their costs funded (19 per cent), though one-third of these respondents do not know what proportion of their costs is funded by CAP.

EXHIBIT 3.8 Incremental Impacts (a)

“If CAP did *not* exist, what would the impact be on your site?”



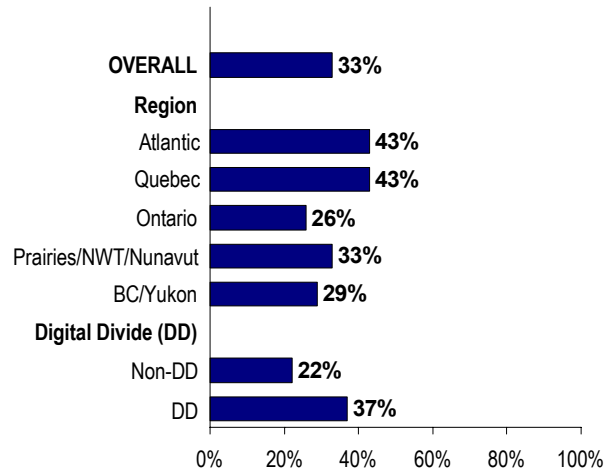
EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=503

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003

EXHIBIT 3.9 Incremental Impacts (b)

“If CAP did *not* exist... site would cease to function.”



EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=503

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003

3.4 COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND ALTERNATIVES

a) Financial Status of CAP Sites

A few details related to the financial status of CAP sites were collected in the telephone survey of site representatives. As indicated in Exhibit 3.10, it is most common for CAP funding to cover up to 25 per cent of a site's cost (for 25 per cent of sites) or 100 per cent of the costs (for 14 per cent of sites). Note, however, that fully 38 per cent of site representatives could not respond to this survey question. This may be due to the fact that, for many sites, it is the network coordinator who would know financial information, not the site representative.

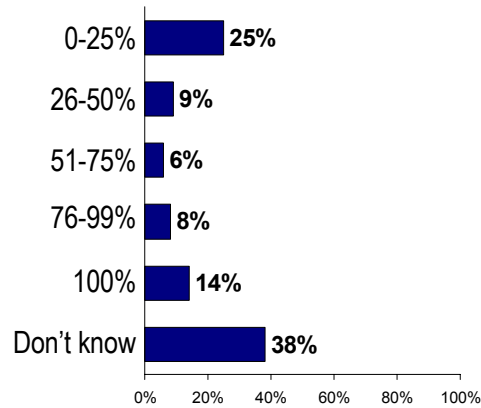
Additional sources of funding (besides CAP/Industry Canada) are listed in Exhibit 3.11. The most common other sources are:

- local government (36 per cent) – which is most often a source for sites at libraries (62 per cent) but least often for those at educational facilities (14 per cent) and in Atlantic Canada (only five per cent); and
- provincial/territorial government (30 per cent) – more so for library sites (40 per cent), non-DD (40 per cent) and urban sites (35 per cent) but less so for DD (26 per cent) and rural sites (25 per cent).

One-third of site representatives say that they receive non-financial or in-kind contributions from these or other sources (e.g., volunteer time, donation of work space or hardware, provincial government help desk, technical support). On average, they estimate that the total dollar value of these contributions would be \$21,114, which ranges from a high of \$43,830 in Atlantic Canada to a low of \$13,387 in the Prairies (though 44 per cent of these respondents could not provide an answer). Removing from the calculation respondents who estimated the value to be zero, the overall average value of these contributions becomes \$22,322, ranging from \$45,895 in Atlantic Canada to \$14,588 in the Prairies.

EXHIBIT 3.10 Financial Status of CAP Sites (a)

“Approximately what proportion of your overall costs is funded by CAP?”



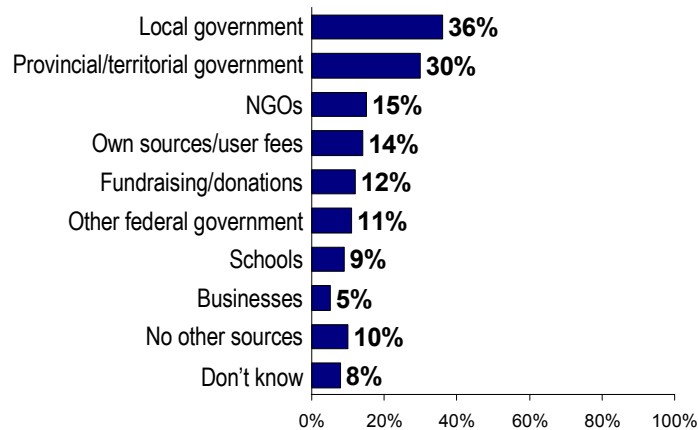
EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=503

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003

EXHIBIT 3.11 Financial Status of CAP Sites (b)

“What are your other sources of funding besides Industry Canada?”



EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=430

Survey of CAP Sites, 2003

b) Sustainability of CAP Sites

Although the key informants provide examples of sustainability and alternate funding arrangements, most feel that it is impossible for all CAP sites to survive without at least some funding from Industry Canada. Some examples of alternate funding and sustainability plans include: setting up CAP sites in publicly supported facilities such as libraries and schools or through partnerships with local businesses that support public access. In addition, CAP sites rely heavily on volunteers and other financial and in-kind contributions.

Key factors associated with viability and sustainability of CAP sites include good leadership and entrepreneurial skills and having a site “champion”. The more viable CAP sites usually have strong community stakeholder commitment, buy-in and support, as well as a strong community infrastructure (e.g., sites situated in libraries that can maintain them). CAP sites integrated with existing organizations/services also tend to be successful.

The telephone survey also indicates that sites are taking steps to support their sustainability. A majority of sites (61 per cent) have taken some measures to become self-reliant after CAP ceases. Finding alternative funding sources (e.g., from different levels of government, NGOs, the private sector, and generating funds through user fees for site services) is the predominant means (36 per cent of sites), and a lack of funding is cited as the major impediment to becoming self-reliant (by 42 per cent of site representatives).

Factors perceived to help make a CAP site self-reliant are as follows:

- funding (40 per cent of site representatives);
- qualified personnel (e.g., to provide good service and attract/retain users) (29 per cent);
- repeat users/demand (18 per cent);
- networking and support (13 per cent);
- accessibility of site (10 per cent);
- up-to-date equipment (10 per cent); and
- municipal and provincial government support (six per cent).

c) Cost-Effectiveness of Program

Overall, key informants believe CAP is a cost-effective program because a number of benefits have been achieved for a small investment in each CAP site (an average of approximately \$4,412 per site). Moreover, as noted earlier, most CAP sites are successful in leveraging financial and in-kind resources. Networks also contribute greatly to the cost-effectiveness of sites through bulk buying (e.g., computers), sharing lessons learned and best practices, and forming partnerships/alliances (i.e., with provincial/territorial

governments, municipal governments, private sector). Although the use of volunteers greatly contributes to cost-effectiveness, this benefit is reduced as volunteers burn out and need to be replaced (and retrained).

d) Unique Contribution of Program

Key informants find CAP's community focus and its extensive reach – with thousands of sites across the country — to be key unique contributions. The general consensus is that CAP does not have any major competitors since CAP services, unlike those of Internet cafés and formal computer training institutions, are either free or have minimal and affordable fees.

Additional unique contributions of CAP include providing Internet access over a wide area and in non-traditional spaces. In order to reach some of its hard-to-reach target groups, CAP sites have been set up in a wide range of locations such as the Centre for Disability, restaurants and bus stops. Prior to this program, First Nations people never had affordable access to ICT.

Like the key informants, site representatives perceive that CAP makes a unique contribution: 50 per cent indicate that there are *no* similar services available in their community. They observe that some similar services are available at libraries (19 per cent), other CAP sites (14 per cent), schools/colleges (nine per cent) and community centers (11 per cent).

The key differences they notice between CAP and other services are:

- hours of operation (i.e., some CAP sites have more and some fewer hours of operation than other services);
- CAP sites have lower fees;
- variable quality of personnel (i.e., some CAP sites have better, more helpful/skilled personnel and some have worse personnel than other services);
- CAP sites offer a broader range of services; and
- target clientele (i.e., CAP and other services serve different types of clients).

e) Program Strengths, Weaknesses and Lessons Learned

Key informants believe that the major strengths of the program are its contribution to reducing the digital divide and the community development component. On the other hand, they most often mention the heavy dependence on volunteers and volunteer burnout as major weaknesses of the program. Other commonly mentioned weaknesses involve the funding – either insufficient funding or the perception that the funds are not provided to sites in a timely fashion.

Some of the most frequently mentioned lessons that have been learned include the benefits of the network model and other partnership initiatives (either with other governments or at the community level with local businesses); and the fact that CAP sites often adjust to the unique needs of their community. A third lesson learned involves human resources, including the need for human interaction at CAP sites in order to bridge the digital divide and specifically the importance of volunteers. In the words of one key informant: “technology without people does not go far”.

f) Suggested Improvements

Key informants feel that there is a lack of an overall vision of what CAP should currently be aiming for, and suggest that the program may need to be re-focused at this stage. Key informants suggest that CAP could have been more strategic in selecting sites (rather than merely establishing a large number of sites) and that more attention now needs to be given to the promotion of CAP sites (including promoting CAP to other federal departments). The emphasis should continue to be on the digital divide and “have-nots” at this stage, which would include conducting periodic needs assessments to determine the profile of this group.

One of the key digital divide groups is First Nations people whose unique needs should be assessed and given careful consideration. For example, it is suggested that First Nations CAP sites need to be strategically placed within the community to ensure that sites are in locations that are most comfortable for users (e.g., in some communities it may be more comfortable for people to visit a site at a FN school than one at a public library).

The key suggestion regarding the delivery of CAP involves the need for a set of minimum service standards across CAP sites (e.g., hours of operation). Key informants also suggest developing standard training material to be used by CAP sites (e.g., handouts on how to access a hotmail account, material on Internet search or a collection of links that are located on a CAP site that people can refer to and that would be applicable to all sites). Some key informants also suggest establishing a tiered system of CAP sites across all regions based on factors such as level of connectivity and users’ familiarity with the Internet (i.e., from basic sites that provide Internet access to more specialized sites that provide training in higher skills, such as using digital cameras).

The key suggestion regarding the operations of CAP is to improve the program database of CAP sites and contacts – ensuring that the information is up-to-date and complete – in order to support program management, evaluation and performance measurement.

Key informants also make suggestions regarding technology standards, such as introducing wireless hot spots and ensuring that certain devices be present at all CAP site computers, such as track balls and large monitors for individuals with physical challenges.

The primary area in need of improvement indicated by the online user survey is the speed of Internet connection: 48 per cent of users rate the speed of connection as very bad or bad, and only 16 per cent rate this as very good or good.

Site representatives also suggest higher speed connection as well as other ways that their site could be improved:

- upgrades to existing computers (24 per cent) – more so at rural (29 per cent) than urban sites (19 per cent);
- addition of new computers (22 per cent) – more so at non-DD (29 per cent) than DD sites (20 per cent) and particularly in Ontario (30 per cent) and at libraries (28 per cent);
- more human resources (19 per cent) — including more full-time staff (eight per cent), part-time staff (six per cent) and volunteers (five per cent);
- better training (16 per cent);
- higher speed connection (10 per cent) – including higher bandwidth service (six per cent) and higher band rate modems (four per cent);
- more office space (10 per cent) in particular, in Atlantic Canada (17 per cent);
- better advertising (nine per cent); and
- more funding (nine per cent).

Note that 14 per cent of site representatives feel that *no* improvements are needed to their site, particularly in the Prairies (21 per cent) but less so in Atlantic Canada and BC (seven per cent in each case).

With respect to improvements to CAP overall, site representatives have the following suggestions:

- provide long-term and more funding (28 per cent);
- improve communications/networking among CAP sites (17 per cent);
- improve marketing of CAP (10 per cent) – particularly in Atlantic Canada (17 per cent) and at educational facilities (17 per cent);
- improve training (nine per cent) – more so in Atlantic Canada (15 per cent) than BC (three per cent) or Quebec (five per cent);
- provide funding to sites more quickly (seven per cent) – more so in Quebec (12 per cent), at DD sites (nine per cent) and government offices/community centres (14 per cent) than in Ontario (four per cent), at non-DD sites (three per cent) and libraries (two per cent); and
- *no* improvements suggested (22 per cent) – particularly in the Prairies (29 per cent).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

a) Continued Relevance

On balance, the present evaluation findings indicate that CAP is a unique program that continues to be needed and relevant because there is still a digital divide in Canada and CAP has been having success at bridging this gap in public Internet access and capability. There is a consensus that the formal program objectives continue to be relevant, with some qualifications. First, the basic objectives of raising public awareness of ICT and helping to provide affordable public Internet access are now less relevant (for some segments of the population) than they were at the outset of the program because much progress has been made in many communities. Still, there do appear to be significant outstanding needs for many digital divide areas and groups (e.g., underprivileged Canadians with comparatively low incomes and little education, those living in rural, remote and northern areas). Second, it may not be realistic, nor is funding adequate, for the program to fully achieve some of the broader objectives on its own, in particular, fostering online Canadian content and facilitating business activities such as e-commerce (though this latter objective may become more prominent particularly if CAP moves forward in areas/sites where users have higher-level skills). In addition, it must be acknowledged that it is not reasonable to hold the program solely accountable for achieving all of its formal objectives because individual citizens as well as program partners in province/territories and communities clearly have key roles to play.

The continuing need for the program – to address the “have-not” areas and groups in the digital divide – is supported by a number of findings:

- Key informants believe that there is a continuing need for CAP, particularly to close the remaining digital divide in Canada by reaching segments of the population that have not “bought into” the benefits of ICT and by providing affordable Internet access to citizens who do not have it.
- Supporting this view, results of the Statistics Canada Household Internet User Survey (HIUS) indicate that in 2002, 62 per cent of Canadian households had at least one regular Internet user who accessed it from any location, though just 51 per cent accessed the Internet from home. Home Internet access is much less common for Canadians with lower incomes – for 25 per cent of those in the lowest income quartile compared to 78 per cent in the highest quartile – and in certain regions of the country (e.g., less than 40 per cent in some Atlantic provinces). In related findings, results from the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) indicate that the greatest barriers to using the Internet among non-users (who had not used the Internet over the previous 12 months) were cost and lack of computer/Internet access.

- Most site representatives (74 per cent) perceive that their sites are used to a large extent by people without Internet access at home.
- In the online user survey, 49 per cent of respondents indicate that they do not own a computer (and 23 per cent do not expect to soon) and the majority (78 per cent) indicate that they use the CAP site because it is free or inexpensive – in line with the program objective to provide affordable public Internet access. Although some duplication is suggested by the finding that some of these respondents also have Internet access at home (40 per cent), from friends (31 per cent), at work (29 per cent), school (21 per cent) or other sources (20 per cent), access at work or school cannot be regarded as equivalent to access at home or a CAP site because there would presumably be much less opportunity to pursue personal interests, communications, learning, etc. at the former locations. Moreover, the online survey would more likely have captured the views of motivated CAP users who are comfortable operating a computer, not those of citizens in the digital divide who lack basic computer skills.

b) Delivery and Implementation

For the most part, CAP is being delivered as intended, is reaching its intended target groups (e.g., people without Internet access at home) and generally serving the digital divide. Still, there are groups that need to be better reached, including persons with disabilities, First nations and northern communities, the homeless and underprivileged, and hard-to-reach senior citizens and new immigrants. French-speaking Canadians also appear to be underrepresented among CAP users. Most sites have some services/equipment in place, such as wheelchair ramps, to help ensure that they are accessible to persons with disabilities but there is still a need for improvement.

Visitors to CAP sites are using them for a range of purposes in line with the program's objectives (e.g., e-mail, learning and training, job searches, accessing government services and information), and many CAP sites have been innovative in delivering these services. For instance, there are mobile CAP sites that utilize laptops to reach users who might have difficulty getting to a site and CAP sites have been used to facilitate the efficient, integrated delivery of a range of social services. In addition, CAP networks are praised as an innovative and cost-effective delivery model that contributes to community capacity, though one drawback of this approach is that regional IC/CAP representatives do not always have direct communications with CAP sites because they deal directly with the network coordinators. Effective partnerships have also been established – federal-provincial/territorial partnerships as well as site-level partnerships with government, private and community organizations.

c) Success

CAP is perceived to have had considerable success at contributing to its objectives, providing a range of benefits for users and communities, and reducing the digital divide (though there is still more to do in this regard). For example, major perceived benefits include increased knowledge about, comfort with and use of the Internet and ICT; exchange of information and ideas among citizens; social/cultural development and better integration of users into the community (e.g., through opportunities to meet or communicate); and even some improvement in the economic situation of users (e.g., development of job skills, assistance with job search, selling locally produced goods over the Internet). Users are very satisfied with all aspects of the service at the sites, with the exception of the speed of Internet connection. Key informants believe that program progress and success are facilitated by strong community support for CAP sites, partnerships and networks but impeded by some lack of funding (e.g., to keep up to date with changing technology, meet specialized needs and pay staff at the sites) and a shortage of human resources at sites, in particular, volunteers. Volunteer burnout is widely regarded as a key challenge for CAP sites.

The program is viewed as having incremental impacts – one-third of site representatives claim that their site would cease to exist if there were no CAP funding (in particular, for Atlantic, Quebec and digital divide sites), and one-half believe that they would need to offer fewer services if the CAP funding ended. From the perspective of site sustainability, however, this finding may warrant further attention from CAP as the program refines its priorities.

d) Cost-Effectiveness and Alternatives

Although a thorough cost-effectiveness analysis was well beyond the scope of this evaluation, the available evidence does indicate that CAP is widely viewed as a cost-effective program, providing numerous benefits for a small investment in sites (an average of approximately \$4,412 per site). With the federal funding, many sites have been able to leverage considerable financial and in-kind resources from other sources/partners (e.g., local and provincial/territorial government). The CAP network model – which allows bulk buying of equipment and sharing of best practices – also contributes to cost-effective delivery, as does the heavy reliance on volunteers at sites (though this benefit is diminished as volunteers burn out and need to be replaced and retrained). Moreover, approximately 60 per cent of the sites surveyed have taken at least some steps to support their sustainability, in particular, searching for alternate funding sources. Still, many sites suggest that more or longer-term funding would be beneficial (e.g., for new or upgraded computer equipment and high speed Internet connection) and, as noted above, not having some CAP funding would apparently have adverse consequences for approximately 80 per cent of sites (i.e., having to offer fewer services or close the site).

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are made to Industry Canada:

1. Refine and refocus the program's strategic priorities (e.g., through a strategic planning exercise).
 - Place the most emphasis on digital divide sites, serving communities most in need and addressing remaining gaps in Internet access in Canada. In these areas, continue to raise public awareness, provide affordable public access to the Internet, and coach community members in the use of information and communications technology (ICT).
 - At digital divide sites where users have sufficient capability, focus on higher-level applications such as supporting e-learning and online delivery of government programs and services, facilitating e-commerce, and applying higher-end technology.
2. Improve the marketing of the program and its benefits/potential applications.
 - Promote CAP to other government departments (e.g., to facilitate on-line delivery of government services at more CAP sites).
 - Promote CAP to "hard to reach" and "have not" target groups, such as First Nations and northern communities, the homeless and underprivileged, persons with disabilities, seniors and new immigrants. Focus promotional efforts on people/communities who may not yet fully understand the benefits of ICT (e.g., underprivileged people who tend to be preoccupied with very basic needs such as food and shelter).
3. Continue to improve the accessibility of sites for persons with disabilities. For example:
 - Conduct a proper assessment of these users' needs to ensure that all features of sites are accessible (e.g., provide not only a ramp for wheelchairs, but also desks that are a suitable height for wheelchairs).
 - Offer equipment/technology suitable for these users, e.g., the option of a track ball rather than a mouse.
4. Continue to utilize CAP partnerships and networks, and provide opportunities for network coordinators to share lessons learned and best practices (e.g., through mentoring activities, websites or workshops).
5. If feasible, provide multi-year funding for a renewed CAP and for CAP sites.

6. Assess the feasibility of increasing the funding amount to selected CAP sites (e.g., to strengthen/expand particularly busy or innovative sites; to assist sites with special needs and fewer opportunities to raise funds). This may involve the re-allocation of funds from sites that are more self-reliant to those with more need for IC funding. More funding would enable sites to:
 - Purchase new computers.
 - Upgrade existing computers and provide high speed Internet (broadband) connection.
 - Improve the accessibility of the site, if needed.
 - Pay for qualified staff – which would also help to overcome the problem of volunteer burnout/lack of volunteers.
 - Remain fully operational with a range of needed services.

7. Establish (or review existing) service standards for CAP sites (e.g., minimum number of qualified staff, services offered, hours of operation) to ensure that levels of service are reasonably consistent across the country and compatible with evolving program priorities, while allowing some flexibility for sites to adapt to the needs of their users and community.
 - In order to incorporate this flexibility and responsiveness to individual community needs, assess the feasibility of utilizing a tiered system of CAP sites offering different levels/types of service along a continuum, depending on the needs and capabilities of users. For instance: (1) basic Internet access, training and services for communities with little or no exposure to ICT; (2) intermediate services; through to (3) high-level services and application of advanced technology at sites with good Internet connectivity and more experienced users. If applicable for a given community, offer different levels of service at the same site.

8. Keep the database of CAP sites up-to-date and accurate so that the data can support program management, performance measurement and periodic evaluations.