Internal Audit and Risk Management Services

Implementation Review: Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)

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Implementation Review: Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)

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Internal Audit and Risk Management Services

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Internal Audit and Risk Management Services' Plan for 2000-2001 included an implementation review of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), a contribution program funded under the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative.

As the cornerstone of the Government's Homelessness Strategy, SCPI is designed to assist communities in:

- working with various orders of government and other stakeholders,
- developing community plans that identify needs and gaps regarding services to homeless people, and
- implementing comprehensive local strategies that address the immediate and long terms needs of homeless people.

The objective of this review was to assess the current management framework of the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative and identify issues and risks in implementation of the program.

This review occurred in the early stages of program implementation, and incorporated procedures designed to provide conclusions with a moderate level of assurance.

Based on the work performed, we conclude that the risks and issues in implementing the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative are being appropriately managed. This assurance is given subject to resolution of the issues noted in this report and implementation of priorities for management action identified in the draft Business Plan for the National Secretariat on Homelessness.

The period covered by this review (January 2000-January 2001) represents the early stages of implementation of a new and untested program model. At the end of the first year of implementation, a strong foundation for program delivery had been established including organizational infrastructure, operational tools and processes, and partnerships. As would be expected in this context, there was a general recognition by program officials, supported by our review findings, that there were a number of implementation issues/risk areas and that these required attention:

- establishing administrative procedures that would appropriately balance due diligence and accountability with responsive service delivery;

- developing the appropriate administrative tools and expertise to manage risks in capital construction projects;

- finalizing a performance measurement strategy, including clear definition of outcome measures and accountabilities;

- ensuring community plans strongly demonstrate a "continuum of supports" approach;

- strengthening delivery capacity through skills development and appropriate resourcing;

- enhancing coordination and integration of all Government of Canada programs addressing homelessness issues.

In January 2001, the National Secretariat on Homelessness had completed a draft Business Plan for the remainder of the initiative, which commits to the following priorities for action (see recommendation #1):

a) providing feedback to communities on planning trends & achievement of key homelessness objectives;

b) facilitating discussion among all SCPI communities on planning practices;

c) examining and addressing barriers that may exist between different federal programs;

d) developing and strengthening relationships among government departments involved in homelessness issues and determining ways to improve service delivery coordination;

e) working with communities to understand and assess how well their chosen model has worked for them, and to develop an overall assessment of governance approaches;

f) engaging other governments and community partners in developing accountability measures and finalized performance measurement and evaluation frameworks;

g) developing additional information tools to support the work of communities, as well as developing mechanisms for information sharing and establishing a process of continuous dialogue;

h) further development and implementation of the communications strategy.

Based on the work performed as part of this review, the following are recommendations to address the issues identified:

1. The NSH should finalize its business plan for 2001-2003, and report periodically on progress against the priority commitments identified throughout this report and listed in the executive summary.

2. The NSH should provide direction on where experts outside HRDC need to be involved to appropriately administer and monitor the administration of capital construction projects.

3. As part of the planning process for the remainder of the program, the NSH should do a workload analysis of the resources required to deliver SCPI under various delivery models and ensure an appropriate resource allocation model is in place and used.

4. The NSH should, in consultation with regional staff, develop skills profiles and coordinate information on training needs and related opportunities for skills development.

The detailed action plan under appendix B addresses the review recommendations and action priorities of the NSH draft Business Plan. Furthermore, at the time of completing this review, the NSH had initiated processes to examine streamlining of administrative and control procedures.

It should be noted that program implementation was constantly evolving as the review was being carried out, and so were the risks facing the program. The risks identified in this report relate to the early stages of the program and the timing of the review.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Internal Audit and Risk Management Services' Plan for 2000-2001 included an implementation review of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, a contribution program funded under the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative.

The National Homelessness Initiative (NHI)

On December 17, 1999, the Government of Canada announced that it would invest $753 million over three years to alleviate and prevent homelessness across Canada. The strategic objectives of the National Homelessness Initiative, as recently developed by the National Secretariat on Homelessness are to:

- facilitate community capacity development to address the local needs of the homelessness by coordinating Government of Canada efforts and resources and by enhancing the diversity of tools and resources available.

- foster effective partnerships and investments that contribute to addressing the immediate and multifaceted needs of homelessness and to reducing homelessness in Canada.

- increase the awareness and understanding of homelessness in Canada.

Canada's National Homelessness Initiative includes seven funded interrelated components: a new Supporting Communities Partnerships Initiative ($305 M), the expansion of the Youth Employment programming ($59 M), the Urban Aboriginal Strategy ($59 M) and the Shelter Enhancement Initiative ($43 M), a new PWGSC initiative for the disposal of federal properties ($10 M), additional funding for the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program and related programs ($ 268 M) and funding for Planning and Research ($9 M).

The Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)

The Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative is the cornerstone of the Government's strategy as it supports communities in the development of local comprehensive plans that could be supported financially by the different components of the National Homelessness Initiative or from other provincial, municipal or private sources. The policy objectives of SCPI are:

- to ensure that no individuals are involuntarily on the street by ensuring that sufficient shelters and adequate support systems are available;

- to reduce significantly the number of individuals requiring emergency shelters and transition and supporting housing;

- to help individuals move from homelessness through to self-sufficiency;

- to help communities strengthen their capacity to address the needs of their homeless population; and

- to improve the social, health and economic well-being of people who are homeless.

SCPI is designed to assist communities in working together with various orders of governments and other stakeholders (e.g. private, voluntary and not-for-profits organizations), in order to develop community plans that identify needs and gaps and to implement comprehensive local strategies that address the immediate and long terms needs of homeless people. SCPI will therefore assist local communities in developing a continuum of support approach, involving a comprehensive range of measures that respond to the multifaceted needs of homeless persons.

Eighty percent of SCPI funds have been allocated to ten cities identified as having the most serious problems with absolute homelessness. These "Most Affected Cities" include Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, and Halifax. The remaining 20% of program funding has been allocated to approximately 45 other communities with significant homelessness problems identified through bilateral federal-provincial/territorial discussions.

Eligible communities are entitled to financial contributions to cover the full, reasonable and direct cost of preparing a plan to reduce homelessness, of developing, administrating, delivering and evaluating projects and to cover in whole or in part project costs.

SCPI funding can be used to cover up to 50 per cent of eligible costs, on an equal basis with direct and in-kind contributions from other funding partners. Not-for-profit organizations, individuals and municipal governments are eligible to receive funding. Public health and educational institutions may be also eligible for funding with the agreement of the provincial or territorial government. For-profit enterprises are also eligible for funding provided that the nature and intent of the activity is non-commercial and fits within the community plan.

The National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH) is located within HRDC. Its mandate is to:

- coordinate the implementation of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Initiative;

- to coordinate program development and implementation;

- to support research activities; and

- to provide functional direction and support to the regional delivery level.

Much of the work with communities in implementing the program is occurring in regional HRDC offices.

Review Objective and Scope

The objective of this review was to assess the adequacy of the current management framework of the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative in order to identify issues and risks in implementation of the program.

Elements of the management framework that were examined are detailed in appendix C. Conduct of this review occurred during the early phases of program development and implementation. In this context, implementation was constantly evolving, and so were the risks facing the program. As well, it was not expected that all aspects of a complete management system would be in place. To take this into account, a particular emphasis was placed on management action plans to address any issues or risks identified.

The review work took place between November 2000 and January 2001 and incorporated procedures intended to provide a moderate level of assurance. Observations and risks identified are based on interviews and a review and analysis of program documentation, and relate to the timing of the review during the early stages of the program. The review did not include a systematic risk assessment process to examine threats in the context of the program mandate, objectives, design and available resources. As well, this review did not include a detailed examination of project files as an audit of the program will be carried out during the 2001-2002 fiscal year.

Interviews were conducted with officials from both the National Secretariat on Homelessness and regional offices, including Halifax, Toronto, Regina, Calgary, and Vancouver. Meetings were also held with community partners in Halifax, Calgary and Vancouver.

3.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Program Planning and Implementation

With the announcement of the Homelessness Initiative in December 1999, HRDC needed to organize to deliver in a new program area, in a context involving horizontal co-ordination with other federal departments, and employing a partnership approach with other governments and community agencies.

In the first six months of implementation, the focus was on developing the appropriate policy and program frameworks as well as building partnerships and program infrastructure. This involved federal–provincial/ territorial negotiations, dialogue with community partners and initial community planning process development.

Final approval by the Treasury Board of the Terms and Conditions for SCPI was obtained in June 2000. Following this, national and regional delivery structures were established. Operational guidelines and tools were developed and initial community plans as well as projects were finalized and approved.

At the time of this review, in December 2000, much of the first year had been invested in program development and in building the relationships necessary to facilitate and complete community-planning processes. Staff commented that the first year had turned out to be a foundation year, and that organizational infrastructure, operational tools and processes, and partnerships were now largely in place.

The focus in the year following the initiative's announcement was on advancing community planning processes in the "Most Affected Cities". At the end of the year, eight of ten plans were in place or being finalized. Though work with the remaining eligible communities had commenced, with some plans nearing completion – finalization of the majority of these plans was to be a priority of the second year.

The allocation of funds for SCPI projects in the first fiscal year was 102 million dollars. It was clear that, due to the late approval of the program's Terms and Conditions, this would not all be spent in the initial year as projected. However, approval had been obtained to carry over these funds into the second year, so that no funds would be lost from the overall initiative.

We share the view of program officials that in the second year of the initiative, as more plans are implemented, the program will be in a better position to evaluate the results of investments.

It is important to note that the period covered by this review (January 2000-January 2001) represents the early stages of implementation of a new and untested program model. Not surprisingly in this context, there was a general recognition that several issues were receiving or required attention. In January 2001, the National Secretariat on Homelessness had completed a draft Business Plan for the remainder of the initiative, which identified priorities for action. Details of the relevant review observations and the proposed management action plan follow in subsequent sections of this report.

Recommendation #1:

The NSH should finalize its business plan for 2001-2003, and report periodically on progress against the priority commitments identified throughout this report and listed in the executive summary.

Management Response:

NSH agrees with this recommendation and has taken action.

The implementation review of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative review, carried out by IARMS, indicated several priorities for management action within the draft NSH Business Plan. NSH is confident that it is on track with respect to the various priorities established and is effectively meeting its Business Plan objectives.

NSH is committed to periodic reporting of its management commitments. Most of these management commitments have been incorporated into the objectives of both National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) & SCPI and the measured outcomes of both these initiatives.

NSH strongly supports transparency. It has regularly reported to Cabinet and has facilitated an open community process.

It should be noted the NSH has adopted the business plan in the implementation of SCPI in February 2001. It formed the basis of subsequent work plans of each of the directorates. NSH is currently in the process of undertaking planning exercises with regions for years 2 and 3 of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), with the goal of developing individual action plans that will be incorporated into an overall business strategy for the National Secretariat on Homelessness.

3.2 Program Design

The planning process

The program design is that the development of the community plan will be entirely community based. Community service providers, the private sector and various levels of government may participate in this process. HRDC officials and community partners commented on both the benefits and challenges of the community planning process. Though community service providers have for some time been working to address the needs of homeless citizens, and some networks existed, this was not usually in the context of a comprehensive plan focused on a continuum of supports approach for the community. Working within the context of a community plan also represents a significant change from previous approaches where services providers individually submitted funding proposals to funding agencies. Staff involved commented that a significant investment of time and resources had been made in building relationships, and defining and operationalizing a planning process, in some cases having to build on existing directions and plans in communities. Though at times challenging, the process was seen to have built and strengthened partnerships, enhanced the coordination of services and programs, and increased the exchange of information, knowledge and expertise.

Negotiating participation with the provincial government, and being able to address the sustainability of projects and plans, were consistently noted as a couple of the major challenges in the planning process. Many communities were also seeking to better integrate all federal homelessness initiative programs into their broad SCPI plans.

Community plans

At the time of this review plans were in place, or being finalized, in eight of the ten "most

affected cities". Plans were also nearing completion in ten other SCPI communities. It was too early, however, to assess the viability of the plans in meeting the SCPI policy objectives.

Many communities intend to review their community plans on a regular basis or had already committed to a second round of planning. Program officials stated the importance that community plans are seen as evolving documents. An initial broad analysis of completed community plans showed many placed an emphasis on addressing the urgent need for sufficient emergency shelter, consistent with one of the program's objectives.

The draft NSH Business Plan commits to:

- Providing feedback to communities on planning trends & achievement of key homelessness objectives.

- Facilitating discussion among all SCPI communities on planning practices.

Integration of Federal Government Programs

In the first year of implementation, funding programs such as Youth and Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) were viewed by HRDC staff and community partners as essentially independent planning and funding processes. The Terms and Conditions attached to these authorities were seen as less well suited to addressing the needs of those homeless, or at risk, than those of SCPI. In the course of this review, approval had been given by the Treasury Board to apply SCPI Terms and Conditions to Urban Aboriginal Strategy funds, with a similar decision likely to be sought for Youth programming. In the review team's opinion, integration of both of these programs into the SCPI planning process and plans should be an area of continued focus as identified in the draft NHS Business Plan.

The Plan commits to:

- Examining and addressing barriers that may exist between different federal programs.

- Developing and strengthening relationships among government departments involved in homelessness issues and determining ways to improve service delivery coordination.

The review team supports planned activities to further promote and foster an understanding of the continuum of supports approach, as well as promote a broader Government of Canada approach to support and facilitate the national homelessness initiative.

3.3 Project Selection and Approval

The planning process identifies priorities, which form the basis for funding decisions on individual projects. Recommendations on which projects should be funded are made by a community based advisory body. The exact decision-making approach may vary by community.

Where there is a completed community plan and SCPI funds have been allocated, communities have the following two choices to manage individual projects that address plan priorities:

a) The Community Entity will solicit, review, fund and administer individual project proposals, or;

b) A shared model will be used where individual projects will be solicited directly by the HRDC City Facilitator. These proposals will normally be reviewed and recommended by a Community Advisory Board and by HRDC. HRDC will be responsible for the administration of these projects.

In either instance, project proposals must fit within the program's objectives and Terms and Conditions, and be relevant to community plan priorities. To support decision-making, an assessment and recommendation checklist was developed to verify the proposal meets SCPI criteria, as well as the general requirements of all Grants and Contributions programs.

A variety of approaches to governance had and will be adopted as communities set priorities, make funding decisions, and monitor and evaluate performance.

At the time of this review it was early to assess the strengths and challenges of different approaches and models. In December 2000, as the first plans were being finalized in the "Most Affected Cities", most communities were completing a first round of project assessments and the first few community entities were being established.

In our opinion, the NSH should develop an approach and assess different community and non-governmental organizations models to share lessons learned and support communities in developing strong decision-making processes to support project selection, approval and administration.

In accordance with our opinion, the NSH draft Business Plan commits to working with communities to understand and assess how well their chosen model has worked for them, and to developing an overall assessment of governance approaches.

3.4 Financial Management – Administrative Guidelines and Processes

In implementing financial and administrative processes, a significant issue was noted in appropriately balancing the need for due diligence and accountability with the desire for responsive citizen-centred decision-making and service delivery.

During implementation, administrative procedures were initially established by providing documentation templates based closely on the departmental "model file" for grants and contributions programs. These were designed in a short timeframe to provide guidance to program staff and partners and ensure compliance with relevant policies and legislation and expenditure of funds conditional on compliance with program Terms and Conditions. Where a community entity was not in place at the regional level, administration of project files was to be integrated into the HRDC regional file review process for grants and contributions programs. For those projects, it is our opinion that the overall

administrative risks are being mitigated by the reinforcement of new departmental grants and contributions administrative procedures.

Administrative procedures and documentation developed at the time of this review included:

- guides for the community, operations, managing agreements, and the approval process,
- checklists – for proposal assessments, recommendations and approval, and
- application and contribution agreement templates for community entities, planning proposals, and specific projects.

An assessment of the above tools, as well as discussions with program staff and community partners, identified the following opportunities to enhance and streamline administrative processes:

General Project Administration

Both program staff and community partners noted the high administrative requirements and lengthy approval processes from the project selection stage through to the ministerial level. It was felt that these factors would impact on service delivery and the maintenance of constructive working relationships with partners. We agree with program officials that there is a clear need to undertake a review of administrative processes to examine opportunities for streamlining while still ensuring due diligence. In particular, lower risk/ dollar value projects were seen as an area where administrative and monitoring requirements were especially high.

Where a community entity is established, funds are transferred to this entity in a single contribution agreement. Community partners consistently expressed concerns around the resources required to meet extensive monitoring and reporting requirements outlined in the initial template for this community entity agreement. In our opinion, there is a need to review the minimum requirements for adequate accountability in this type of relationship, and streamline reporting processes to the greatest extent possible. At the time of the review, NSH had initiated processes to examine streamlining of administrative and control procedures.

Capital Construction Project Administration

It is evident that within SCPI contribution agreements there will be a large number that involve funding of capital construction projects. These types of projects are different from those normally funded by the Department and involve new considerations. All aspects of managing these projects need to be re-assessed to ensure due diligence. Tools

such as application forms, contracts, and checklists need to reflect and mitigate against risks in this type of project. Appropriate guidelines around managing tendering processes, as well as monitoring of construction projects also need to be developed.

At the time of completing this review, the NSH had initiated processes to examine streamlining of administrative procedures and to develop enhanced guidance and tools for managing administration of capital construction projects.

The review team supports NSH's effort to streamline general project administration while still ensuring due diligence and accountability. An initiative is underway to re-assess administration and financial control of capital construction projects. In our opinion, it is important that the review be completed in a timely manner to ensure project risks are adequately managed.

Capital Construction Expertise

As previously mentioned, the SCPI program will include administering and monitoring capital construction projects. Where there is no community entity established, accountability and liability for appropriately managing these projects remains with the Department. This is a new area of involvement for the Department and not generally an area of expertise for HRDC staff. The national and most regional levels had recognized this capacity issue and had begun to address it by seconding in, or developing contacts with, staff from departments such as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation or Public Works and Government Services Canada.

The Department needs to provide clear direction on when experts outside HRDC need to be involved to ensure appropriate risk management of these projects. Two stages of the project life cycle that may require external expertise are the review of project proposals and the monitoring of quantity and quality of construction work performed. Ensuring that there is clear guidance and support for regional delivery staff around accessing external capital construction expertise will become increasingly important as a greater number of smaller HRDC offices and communities become involved in these projects.

Recommendation #2:

The NSH should provide direction on where experts outside HRDC need to be involved to appropriately administer and monitor the administration of capital construction projects.

Management Response:

NSH agrees with this recommendation and has taken action.

The National Secretariat in Homelessness has acknowledged the need for involvement of external expertise to appropriately administer and monitor the administration of capital construction projects and the undertaking of environmental assessments.

This recommendation is being addressed through the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between HRDC and Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), in addition to the development of a Capital project handbook for HRDC staff.

3.5 Performance Measures and Accountability

Program staff observed that the SCPI Terms and Conditions and objectives were clear and quite workable. It was also noted that the program's objectives are very broad. This was intended and allows for maximum flexibility in facilitating a community-based planning and decision-making process. In our opinion, given the broad framework of program objectives, it is critical to define and clearly communicate results expectations by establishing performance indicators and clear accountabilities.

The evaluation and performance measurement strategy outlined in the program's Treasury Board submission involves:

1. *Reporting on project results*

   Funding proposals will include information on activities, expenditures and expected results linked to community plan objectives.

2. *Assessment of community plans and performance against broad program objectives*

   Community Entities will be asked to monitor and report on the development, implementation and impact of their community plan, including initiatives funded, expenditures and qualitative assessments of success in fostering a continuum of supports and building partnerships.

   The evaluation team will develop data collection tools to assist communities in reporting on activities and to ensure common information elements are collected. Evaluation interviews will also be used to gather perspectives on program design and implementation.

At the time of this review, we noted a number of measures at different stages of development:

- Initial development of a results reporting framework included templates providing a "menu" of possible results indicators to be used in completing the "results accountability and targets" schedules of contribution agreements. These templates were being used by regions to ensure coordination of information collection while they were reviewed and further refined. Agreements also included the schedule for reporting on project results.

- Signed community entity agreements included a requirement for yearly progress reports detailing performance against targets (activity completion milestones), expenditures incurred, as well as projects and activities funded.

- Further work was being done on developing performance indicators to capture more qualitative information, including the development of broad socio-economic indicators. A working group, which included evaluation and strategic policy groups was looking at information needs and different data capture methodologies. Additionally, the Evaluation and Data Development group was in the process of finalizing an evaluation framework and establishing an information collection methodology.

- A results-based accountability framework was being developed for the homelessness initiative, including SCPI, in line with HRDC's commitment to have such a framework in place for all grants and contributions programs by March 31, 2001. This should provide further clarity around outcome indicators, information sources, and data collection responsibilities. Establishing accountability goals that integrated all homelessness initiative programs was ongoing. We agree with program officials there was a need to further refine accountability measures and targets (including qualitative impact indicators) with key partners.

- Management information systems that had been developed included templates for inputting contribution agreement details into the Human Resources Investment Fund (HRIF) tracking system, as well as a web-based data capture tool. At the time of this review, timelines and responsibilities at the national and regional levels for uploading results into the program database in order to achieve streamlining of reporting were being clarified.

The SCPI program objectives include the development of a community-based continuum of supports, strengthened partnerships and enhanced community governance and sustainable capacity. In our opinion, it is critical that there is an effective means to assess and measure these outcomes, as well as project outputs. It will also be important to engage HRDC regional staff, other governments and community partners in the development of these broad socio-economic indicators and measurement methodologies. A large component of the more qualitative information will be gathered through program evaluation activities. As SCPI and the homelessness initiative involve several levels of partnerships with other levels of government and with other external partners, it is also important to clarify exactly where different responsibilities and accountabilities reside.

Both HRDC officials involved in delivery of SCPI, and community partners, consistently identified issues around finalizing broad outcome results measures, establishing clear accountabilities, as well as clarifying methodologies for monitoring and evaluating community plans. Developing, in consultation with partners, and clearly communicating details of outcome and accountability measures and an evaluation framework will allow for positive influence of community plans and initiatives. Bringing enhanced clarity to the result framework for the homelessness initiative will also provide further guidance to communities in developing criteria for decision-making processes.

The NSH draft Business Plan commits to engaging other governments and community partners in developing accountability measures and finalized performance measurement and evaluation frameworks.

3.6 Roles and Responsibilities

Work on documenting roles and responsibilities was completed in the initial stages of implementation and was included in the community guide to the program and planning process. City Facilitators and other regional staff commented that roles and responsibilities evolved and were further clarified in discussions with partners to suit regional contexts. No major issues in this area were noted at the time of the review.

3.7 Delivery Capacity

The work of the homelessness initiative is considerably different from the work traditionally carried out by regional offices. SCPI therefore, did not follow an existing pattern for resource allocations. Additionally, it is important to ensure departmental capacity in facilitation and negotiation to support community capacity building objectives.

General Resource Issues

Along with community partners, those involved in SCPI within HRDC commented that work completed to date including community planning, project selection, approval and administration, had all been highly resource intensive. In most cases, resources ultimately required and committed were greater than originally planned. Capacity issues will need monitoring, including re-assessment of the program's resource allocation model.

Recommendation #3:

As part of the planning process for the remainder of the program, the NSH should do a workload analysis of the resources required to deliver SCPI under various delivery models and ensure an appropriate resource allocation model is in place and used.

Management Response:

NSH agrees with this recommendation and has taken action. This recommendation is being addressed through several measures.

The NSH is working with the regions to address the resourcing / workload challenge. Regions have been asked to provide a forecasted resource costing for 2001-2002 based on experience and the number of community plans presently under development.

The Secretariat is also looking at a costing model based on dollars delivered and the funding model outlined in the capacity study in order to find an equitable means to re-allocate limited resources to areas of greatest need.

Capacity Risks: Skills and Expertise

Those involved in the implementation of SCPI noted the variety of skills required, some of which are unique to this new initiative. Abilities required include community development, facilitation, and contribution program management. Knowledge of homelessness and capital construction issues are also relevant on this file. Many highlighted a need to gain a greater understanding of the competencies required, and to have national support in skills development. Some areas of expertise such as partnership building, community capacity building, and contribution program management are common across HRDC programs, and already have relevant resource material and training modules. In our opinion, an appropriate role of the NSH may be to fill a coordination role, bringing together information on training needs and opportunities.

Recommendation #4:

The NSH should, in consultation with regional staff, develop skill profiles and coordinate information on training needs and related opportunities for skill development.

Management Response:

NSH agrees with this recommendation and has taken action.

The Secretariat has acknowledged the need for a coordinated national approach to skills development and that staff must have a solid understanding of the fundamentals of the homelessness initiative. This recommendation is being addressed through several measures.

3.8 Partnerships / Consultation

Federal-Provincial and Territorial Relations

Provincial and territorial governments often deliver programs and services aimed at preventing or alleviating homelessness. Prior to implementation of SCPI, provincial and territorial governments needed to be consulted and had to agree to the program's implementation. At the time of this review, there were agreements with all provinces and territories to support implementation of SCPI in communities. We support the program officials' views that ongoing dialogue will be required to sustain positive relations. Federal-provincial issues will need monitoring.

Inter-Departmental Coordination

While the homelessness initiative involves the programs and services of several federal departments, the NSH, supported by regional staff, has taken on the role of coordinating the national homelessness initiative. In many regions, federal inter-departmental coordination was an area where attention was being focused to enhance the exchange of information and expertise, and to improve coordination of service delivery. The review team observed challenges in facilitating a coordinated planning approach. In our opinion, barriers that may exist between different federal programs should continue to be examined by the national and regional levels and addressed. Similarly, it was noted that linkages between different HRDC programs, including the Youth, UAS and SCPI portions of the homelessness initiative could be strengthened. We conclude that supporting the necessary partnership arrangements to address gaps identified in community plans should be a continuing priority.

The NSH draft Business Plan commits to developing or strengthening relationships among government departments involved in homelessness issues and to determining ways to improve service delivery coordination. The review team supports planned initiatives to foster and strengthen linkages between different federal programs.

3.9 Communication / Coordination

Communications – General

In general, communications between the national level and regional staff were viewed positively. Community partners also commented on strong support and communications from regional and national HRDC staff.

At the time of this review, we noted more information was being shared with participants regarding examples and lessons learned in community planning and decision-making. The need to communicate discussions and decisions around policy and operational questions, in a timely manner, was also identified by program officials.

There was a keen interest on the part of HRDC and community participants to learn from the experience of other communities. There was seen to be a benefit in increasing the number of information sharing forums between communities. It was also noted that the Intranet and Internet sites could be strengthened by providing examples of planning documents, decision-making processes, answers to frequently asked questions, and discussion/bulletin boards. In our opinion, optimizing these communication tools will become increasingly important as a growing number of communities and community facilitators become involved in the initiative.

The NSH draft Business Plan commits to developing additional information tools to support the work of communities, as well as developing mechanisms for information sharing and establishing a process of continuous dialogue.

Communications – Public Communications Strategy

Given the high profile of this initiative and the different levels of partnership involved, it is important to have a strong communication strategy, including a means to coordinate communications with partners. The NSH's strategy involves a national communication framework, which provides for consistent messaging, supplemented by tailored regional approaches.

At a national level it is too early to determine whether the communication strategy will effectively manage public perceptions around the initiative. We agree that it will be important to continually monitor public opinion and issues. The communications function should continue to support all aspects of program delivery and include a means to evaluate effectiveness. The NSH draft Business Plan commits to further development and implementation of the communications strategy.

Regional staff noted the importance of developing a formal regional communication plan and implementing protocols with partners as part of their communications strategy. Similar to the national level, we agree monitoring communication issues will be important.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF REVIEW OBSERVATIONS / RISKS

The following table provides a summary of review observations, work in progress, and commitments and recommendations. It is important to note that the period covered by this review (January 2000-January 2001) represents the early stages of implementation of a new and untested program model. Not surprisingly in this context, there was a general recognition that several issues were receiving or required attention. A full discussion of each element can be found within the 'Observations and Recommendations' section of this report.

STATUS AT TIME OF REVIEW (January 2001)	OBSERVATION/RISK Work in Progress / Commitments & Recommendations
1. Planning and Implementation Jan – Jul 2000: • Fed-Prov/Territorial negotiations • Dialogue with community partners • Planning process development • TBS approval of Ts&Cs (June) July 2000 – Jan 2001: • Finalization & approval of initial plans and projects.	Year 1 – heavy investment in program & partnership development including: • Appropriate policy and program frameworks. • Operational guidelines, tools and procedures. • Service delivery infrastructure. Focus in the year following the initiative's announcement was on advancing community planning processes in the "Most Affected Cities". Due to late approval of Ts & Cs, not all funds allocated to SCPI will be spent in the initial year as projected. Carry-over of funds negotiated to ensure none of the initiative's funds will be lost. Years 2 & 3 • NSH has developed a draft NSH Business Plan (Jan 5, 2001) that outlines priorities for action. There was a recognition that several issues were receiving or required attention. Further details of implementation issues/risks are provided in the following sections of this table. **<u>Recommendation #1</u>:** **The NSH should finalize its business plan for 2001-2003 and report periodically on progress against the priority commitments identified throughout this report and listed in the executive summary.**

STATUS AT TIME OF REVIEW (January 2001)	OBSERVATION/RISK Work in Progress / Commitments & Recommendations
2. Program Design Program Terms and Conditions, and objectives are outlined in the program's Treasury Board submission • Community planning processes underway • Plans in place or being finalized in 8 of 10 most affected cities • Plans nearing completion in 10 smaller communities	• Significant time and resources investment required building relationships and completing planning process. • Process noted as building and strengthening partnerships, enhancing coordination, and fostering the exchange of information. • Initial plans completed show many place emphases on addressing the immediate needs of the homeless – need to ensure community plans articulate a continuum of supports approach. • Risk noted in integrating the various federal programs that address homelessness (i.e., Youth, UAS) into SCPI plan. • The NSH draft Business plan commits to: – Providing feedback to communities on planning trends & achievement of key homelessness objectives. – Facilitating discussion among all SCPI communities on planning practices. – Examining and addressing barriers that may exist between different federal programs. – Developing or strengthening relationships among government departments involved in homelessness issues and determine ways to improve service delivery coordination.
3. Project Selection & Approval To support decision-making, an assessment and recommendation checklist was developed to verify the proposal meets SCPI criteria, as well as the general requirements of all Grants and Contributions programs. A variety of approaches had been taken to governance as communities set priorities and made funding decisions.	• The NSH should develop an approach and assess different community and non-governmental organizations models to share lessons learned and support communities in developing strong decision-making processes to support project selection, approval and administration. • The NSH draft Business Plan commits to: – Working with communities to understand & assess how well their chosen model has worked for them. – Developing an overall assessment of governance approaches.

STATUS AT TIME OF REVIEW (January 2001)	OBSERVATION/RISK Work in Progress / Commitments & Recommendations
Possible approaches to governance included establishing a community entity or a shared (HRDC-community) model.	
4. Financial Management – Administrative Guidelines & Processes • Administrative procedures & documentation developed, based closely on G & C model file • Administration of project files integrated into regional file review process • Performance Tracking Directorate to include files in national monitoring process • National and most regional levels recognize a capacity issue in capital construction and have begun to address by seconding in, or developing contacts with CMHC or PWGSC staff	*General Project Administration:* • Significant risk noted in balancing the need for due diligence & accountability, with desire for responsive service delivery. • NSH leading process to examine streamlining of administrative procedures. *Capital Construction Projects Administration:* • Need to ensure capital construction project risks are adequately managed and due diligence is exercised. • NSH leading process to develop enhanced guidance and tools for administration of capital construction projects. *Capital Construction Expertise:* • Capital construction is a new area of involvement for the department, not generally an area of expertise for staff. • Need to rely on experts outside HRDC to ensure appropriate risk management. Project life-cycle stages that may require external expertise include review of project proposals & monitoring of quantity/quality of construction work performed. **<u>Recommendation #2:</u>** **The NSH should provide direction on where experts outside HRDC need to be involved to appropriately administer and monitor the administration of capital construction projects.**
5. Performance Measurement & Accountability • Development of results reporting template for projects	Issues in the areas of: • Finalizing broad qualitative results measures. • Establishing clear accountabilities. • Clarifying methodologies for monitoring & evaluating community plans. The NSH draft Business Plan commits to:

STATUS AT TIME OF REVIEW (January 2001)	OBSERVATION/RISK Work in Progress / Commitments & Recommendations
• Requirement in Community Entity agreements for yearly progress reporting on development, implementa-tion & impact of community plans • Initial development of management information systems including data capture screens for Human Resource Investment Fund (HRIF) tracking system & web-based data capture tool.	- Engaging other governments & community partners in developing accountability measures & performance measurement methodologies. - Developing an evaluation framework. - Finalizing performance indicators. - Establishing an accountability framework.
6. Roles & Responsibilities Work on documenting roles and responsibilities was completed in the initial stages of implementation and was included in the community guide to the program and planning process.	• City Facilitators and other regional staff commented that roles and responsibilities evolved and were further clarified in discussions with partners to suit regional contexts. • No major issues in this area were noted at the time of the review.
7. Delivery Capacity Allocation of resources to regional delivery level based on initial resource requirement projections	*General Resource Issues*: Community planning, project selection, approval and administration – all seen as highly resource intensive. Regional resource requirements greater than planned. Capacity risks require attention. **<u>Recommendation #3:</u>** **As part of the planning process for the remainder of the program, the NSH should do a workload analysis of the resources required to deliver SCPI under various delivery models and ensure an appropriate resource allocation model is in place.** *Capacity Risks – Skills and Expertise:* • Variety of skills required (i.e.: community development, facilitation, and contribution program management) and knowledge of homelessness issues. • Staff commented on a need for greater understanding of these competencies & national support in skills development. **<u>Recommendation # 4:</u>**

STATUS AT TIME OF REVIEW (January 2001)	OBSERVATION/RISK Work in Progress / Commitments & Recommendations
	The NSH should, in consultation with regional staff, develop skills profiles and coordinate information on training needs and related opportunities for skills development.
8. Partnerships/Consultation Agreements with all provinces & territories to support SCPI implementation in communities. The NSH, supported by regional staff, has taken on the role of coordinating the national homelessness initiative.	*Provincial Relations* Prior to implementation of SCPI, provincial and territorial governments needed to be consulted and had to agree to the program's implementation. Ongoing dialogue will be required to sustain positive relations. Federal-provincial issues will need monitoring. *Inter-Departmental Coordination* At the national and regional level, interdepartmental coordination was an issue receiving attention. Supporting the necessary partnership arrangements to address gaps identified in community plans should be a continuing priority. Opportunities should be explored to enhance the exchange of information and expertise and improve coordination of service delivery. The NSH draft Business Plan commits to developing or strengthening relationships among government departments involved in homelessness issues and to determining ways to improve service delivery coordination.
9. Communication / Coordination Intranet & Internet sites contain existing program information Approach taken involves a national communications	*Communications – General* Opportunities to strengthen communications internally and with partners included: • Increased sharing of examples & lessons learned in community planning & decision-making, incorporating enhanced information exchange between community partners. • Timely communication of policy & operational discussions and decisions. • Enhancing the Intranet & Internet sites with examples, answers to frequently asked questions, and discussion/bulletin boards. The NSH draft Business Plan commits to: • Developing additional information tools in consultation,

STATUS AT TIME OF REVIEW (January 2001)	OBSERVATION/RISK Work in Progress / Commitments & Recommendations
framework supplemented by regional communication approaches Several regional communication protocols with partners have been established to coordinate departmental communication with external partners	to support the work of communities. • Developing mechanisms for information sharing and establishing a process of continuous dialogue. *Public Communication Strategy* • Too early to assess the ultimate impact on public perception. • The communications function should continue to support all aspects of program delivery and include a means to evaluate effectiveness. The NSH draft Business Plan commits to further development & implementation of the communications strategy.

APPENDIX B

NSH ACTION PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW: SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (SCPI)

OBSERVATIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

IARMS OBSERVATION / RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE (as of 31/8/2001)	DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE
1. The NSH should finalize its business plan for 2001-2003, and report periodically on progress against the priority commitments identified throughout this report and listed in the executive summary.	• Completion of planning exercises with regions for years 2 and 3 of the National Homelessness Initiative, with the goal of developing, for each of the SCPI designated communities, action plans that will be incorporated into an overall business plan. • Updating of Operational Plan.	December 2001 October 2001	Director, Government Relations and Corporate Planning

BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENT			
1.a. The National Secretariat on Homelessness to provide feedback to communities on planning trends and achievement of key homelessness objectives.	• Monitoring progress of objectives and addressing issues relating to the Initiative through meetings and regular communications with regional staff and city facilitators. • Facilitating networking between regional staff responsible for NHI, city facilitators and participating community organizations through meetings, teleconferencing and the internet. • Conducting a series of regional sessions on emerging trends, community planning, and lessons learned. • Developing a reporting template to act as a mechanism for sharing information with various stakeholders and facilitating discussions around policy progress made by individual communities.	Ongoing Ongoing December 2001 November 2001	Director, Program Policy and Planning Director, Government Relations and Corporate Planning
1.b. The National Secretariat on Homelessness to facilitate discussion among all SCPI communities on planning practices**.**	• Arranging and conducting Regional Workshops with Regional and Community Facilitators. • Developing a planning template for smaller communities. • Arranging and conducting Regional Fora to discuss planning in communities.	Completed Completed Ongoing	Director, Program Policy and Planning

BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENT			
1.c. The National Secretariat on Homelessness to examine and address barriers that may exist between different federal programs.	• Providing flexible mechanisms and facilitating complementary relationships with other federal programs through expansion of SCPI Terms and Conditions to include Aboriginal and Youth homelessness programming. • Communication of changes to regions and to PCO-Aboriginal Affairs.	Completed Completed	Director, Program Policy and Planning
1.d. The National Secretariat on Homelessness to develop and strengthen relationships among government departments involved in homelessness issues and determining ways to improve service delivery coordination.	• Developing an inter-departmental strategy to broaden the engagement of other federal departments in the NHI. • Facilitating community access to a diverse range of resources necessary to build a continuum of supports through building and strengthening relationships with other government departments. • Liaison with other departments at the operational levels to share resources and address common projects. • Tri-partite work with PWGSC and CMHC on surplus real property. • Memorandum of Understanding between HRDC and PWGSC to assist with capital projects. • Intra-departmental (YID & UAS) and Inter-departmental discussions on intersection of the homelessness issue with other programs. • Involving federal partners in the development of the SCPI and NHI Logic Models and in the identification of the key performance indicators.	November 2001 Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing October 2001 Ongoing September 2001	Director, Program Policy and Planning Director, Program Management

BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENT			
1.e. The National Secretariat on Homelessness to work with communities to understand and assess how well their chosen model has worked for them, and to developing an overall assessment of governance approaches.	• Engaging in collaborative efforts with communities in order to determine, understand and assess how well the chosen model has worked. • Conducting a review of individual community responses to homelessness. • Assessing alternative community governance models. • Commissioning two research projects to analyze / compare the effectiveness of different models. • Gauging the effectiveness of individual governance models using the NHI evaluation framework currently under development. • Developing templates to facilitate the development of accountable, effective and community-driven governance structures for those community plans in the process of being developed. • Assessing governance outcomes in selected communities in 2002 and 2003.	Ongoing Ongoing November 2001 September 2001 Ongoing November 2001 March 2003	Director, Program Policy and Planning
1.f. The National Secretariat on Homelessness to engage other governments and community partners in developing accountability measures and finalized performance	• Conducted a national workshop for development of the SCPI Logic Model. • Conduct a workshop to develop a Logic Model for the National Homelessness Initiative. • Finalizing of SCPI and NHI Logic Models.	Completed Completed Completed	Director, Program Policy and Planning

BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENT			
measurement and evaluation frameworks**.**	• Developing a performance measurement strategy with performance indicators for SCPI with input from participating regional and city facilitators, community groups and other stakeholders. • Developing a performance measurement strategy with performance indicators for NHI with input from participating federal partners, regional and city facilitators, community groups and other stakeholders. • Developing an Evaluation Framework for NHI (including SCPI) • Creating a template for community progress reports. • Finalizing the report to be provided to EDD • Developing broad socioeconomic indicators for homelessness	Completed September 2001 Completed October 2001 January 2002 March 31, 2003	
1.g. The National Secretariat on Homelessness to develop additional information tools to support the work of communities, as well as developing mechanisms for information sharing and establishing a Process of continuous dialogue.	• Development of a SCPI Community Guide. • Development of a profile package highlighting 10 case studies on private sector partnerships. • Development of a directory of evaluation/results measurement resources for community groups. • Development of a central database that is the main data repository of NHI projects.	September 2001 October 2001 October 2001 Completed	Director General Director, Program Management Director, Partnership Development Director, Program

BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENT			
	• Public (internet) information tools. • Newsroom - one site with all NHI related press releases. • A "Contact Us" section and generic email address that gives Internet users a new channel for correspondence with the NSH. • A section on the web site that gives detailed information on city partnerships and links to community plans that have been approved. • Private (HRDC only) information tools – An electronic toolbox with all related SCPI and UAS forms, model files, applications for funding, and project guides, centrally located and conveniently distributed. • A section on lessons learned at Regional Workshops, including presentations, and tools. • NHI (National Homelessness initiative) Reporter (for HRDC and community partners only) – a web application providing secure access to all parties involved in the NHI to read data from the national database to generate customized reports of approved projects. • NHI Projects (all Internet users) – Using a highly filtered search engine, users can request and receive information on each and every project sponsored by the NHI.	Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Web access to reports– Completed September 2001 (Report Generator) November 2001 (Results Management Integration)	Policy and Planning Communication Advisor

BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENT			
	• HIFIS – For shelters already using or interested in obtaining the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), the NSH Internet site will make the application and training / support documentation available to the public.	September 2001	
	• Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) application – providing regions and community service providers with an online forum to pose and answer NHI-related questions.	October 2001	
	• Research tools – a database of government and third party research on homelessness.	November 2001	
	• Best practices and lessons learned - the NSH is planning to develop web tools that will collect information on lessons learned from all partners and sectors involved in the NHI and facilitate the sharing of this information nationwide.	April 2002	
1.h. The National Secretariat on Homelessness to further develop and implement a communications strategy.	• Completion of a Public Environmental Analysis.	Completed	Communication Advisor
	• Undertake a series of focus groups to obtain views of stakeholders.	Completed	
	• Reworking of NSH key messages based on results of study.	Completed	
	• Development of a strategic communications plan with key messages.	December 2001	
	• Development and implementation of a strategy to introduce and encourage use of key messages regionally.	September 2001	
	• Implementation of a bi-weekly teleconference with regional	Completed	

BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENT			
	communications people to discuss regional issues. • Introduction of an on-line newsletter to enhance internal communications. • Development of an M.P. kit to provide an overview of how SCPI, Youth and Aboriginal funds are being spent, as well as outlining the Initiative's goals and progress to date.	November 2001 September 2001	

IARMS OBSERVATION / RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE (as of 31/8/2001)	DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE
2. The NSH should provide direction on where experts outside HRDC need to be involved to appropriately administer and monitor the administration of capital construction projects.	• Memorandum of Understanding between HRDC and Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC). • Development of a Capital Projects Handbook.	October 2001 Completed	Director, Program Management
3. As part of the planning process for the remainder of the program, the NSH should do a workload analysis of the resources required to deliver SCPI under various delivery models and ensure an appropriate resource allocation model is in place and used.	• Participation in HRDC Grants & Contributions Capacity Study. • This fiscal year (2001-2002), based on experience, information being collected and through the establishment of a specific financial coding structure to capture homelessness costs, the NSH, in partnership with the regions, is in a position undertake a detailed workload analysis. This analysis will be the basis for the development of appropriate NHI resource allocation model for fiscal year 2002-2003. • Development of a proposed re-allocation model for program / operational funding.	Completed March 2002 November 2001	Director, Management Services
4. The NSH should, in consultation with regional staff, develop skill profiles and coordinate information on training needs and related opportunities for skill development.	• Appointment of a National Training Coordinator. • Conducting a national training needs assessment. • Conducting follow-up training sessions and workshops to address identified training gaps.	Completed Completed Starting September 2001 – on-going	Director, Program Management

IARMS OBSERVATION / RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE (as of 31/8/2001)	DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE
	TOOLS DEVELOPMENT		
	• Community Guide	September 2001	
	• Applicant's Guide	Completed	
	• Operational Guide	Completed	
	• Capital Projects Handbook	Completed	
	• Frequently Asked Questions System	September 2001	
	• Mandatory Courses for Grants and Contributions (i.e. – modern comptrollership, etc).	Ongoing	

OTHER	ACTION	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE (as of 31/8/2001)	DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE
5.The National Secretariat on Homelessness to establish administrative procedures that appropriately balance due diligence and accountability with responsive service delivery.	• Creation of revised application forms, with accompanying guide to address concerns that the application process is seen as too detailed and cumbersome.	Completed	Director, Program Management
	• Development of an SCPI Model File (streamlined approach).	Completed	
	• Treasury Board (TB) approval of revised Terms and Conditions that harmonize Youth and Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) Terms and Conditions with SCPI.	Completed	
	• TB approval for extension of Urgent Need Projects.	Completed	
	• Adoption of quarterly reporting rather than monthly reporting requirements.	Completed	
	• Clarification of reporting requirements (i.e. line by line forecasting), and claims policy requirement for supporting documentation (e.g. receipts, invoices).	Completed	
	• Obtaining formal capital project and environmental assessment expertise through administrative arrangements with PWGSC/ CMHC.	October 2001	
	• Develop a fast track process for time sensitive proposals. • Creation of a grant component to SCPI for those projects that are relatively small, low risk, and short in duration in order to lessen administrative burden and improve program effectiveness.	Completed December 2001	

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF REVIEW ELEMENTS

REVIEW ELEMENT	ISSUE / RISK AREAS
PROGRAM PLANNING AND DESIGN	**Program Planning** 1) Was implementation of program operations in accordance with program planning (i.e. funding strategy, performance milestones)? **Program Design** 2) Were objectives for the program clearly stated and measurable, and were expected outcomes and results clear? 3) Was there a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all participants? **Project Selection and Approval** 4) Were guidelines, policies and procedures documented, available and being followed? Did these clearly outline: • Eligibility and selection criteria consistent with program objectives? • Appropriate project selection and approval processes in order to best achieve program objectives? • Adequate decision making processes? **Financial Management, Accountability and Control** 5) Had operational processes including administrative and financial control processes been designed and implemented? Did these ensure: • Compliance with relevant policies and legislation? • Expenditure of funds is conditional on performance and consistent compliance with program Terms and Condition? • Adequate monitoring of recipients / projects? 6) Had a result-based accountability framework been

REVIEW ELEMENT	ISSUE / RISK AREAS
	developed which included performance measures, targets, assignment of responsibility, and reporting? Was performance information sufficient to support individual and collective accountability? **Monitoring – Measurement and Reporting** 7) Were policies and mechanisms, including data-capture infrastructure, and reporting requirements, in place to measure and report on project and program performance?
STRENGTHENING CAPACITY AS NEEDED	1) Did participants, within HRDC and at the community level, have access to needed resources, information, skills, tools and training to ensure successful delivery of this program? 2) Was there a process to identify and assess current capacity? What were the key capacities risks?
CO-ORDINATION / COMMUNICATION	1) Were stakeholders being consulted regarding program planning, design and implementation? Had significant issues/concerns been addressed? 2) Was there a communications plan – had the program been effectively and clearly communicated? 3) To what extent were appropriate mechanisms in place to support on-going coordination and communication within HRDC, and with Provinces and community partners? 4) What processes were in place to clarify policies, resolve issues / questions, establish precedents and ensure communications across all communities participating in the program?