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**EVALUATION OF THE
EXCHANGES CANADA PROGRAM**

Final Report

February 24, 2005

Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exchanges are activities that enable youth from different parts of Canada to learn from and about one another through direct interaction. In 2000, Exchanges Canada was created, under the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage, to increase exchange opportunities and provide leadership and coordination. Canadian Heritage undertook an evaluation of Exchanges Canada to explore the program's relevance, the success and results to date, and the adequacy of its design and delivery. This evaluation is based on research conducted by PRA Inc.

The methodology used to evaluate Exchanges Canada included four main components: a review of program documentation and studies relating to exchange programs; a file review of projects funded under the Innovative Projects component; a secondary data analysis; and key informant interviews.

Program profile

Exchanges Canada falls under the responsibility of Canadian Heritage and received initial annual funding of \$15 million in the 2000 Federal Budget (\$5.3 million in operating funding and \$9.7 million in grants and contributions [Gs&Cs] funding). The primary goals of the program are to diversify and increase the number of exchanges offered to Canadian youth. The program pursues three main objectives:

- ▶ to contribute to improved knowledge and understanding of Canada among Canadian youth, enabling them to learn first-hand about the history, geography, industry, institutions, cultures, communities, languages, and other facets of their country;
- ▶ to help Canadians connect to one another and create lasting linkages, across the country and between groups thereby helping to strengthen the fabric of Canadian society; and
- ▶ to develop Canadian identity and attachment to Canada among youth by enhancing appreciation of both the diversity and the shared aspects of the Canadian experience.

Exchanges Canada targets youth from under-represented groups. One of the program's goals is to have 25% of all participants from under-represented groups in the Youth Exchanges Canada program component, especially: Aboriginal youth, youth with disabilities, youth from low-income families, and youth from rural or isolated areas.

The educational component of an exchange can be cultural, bilingual, and/or thematic. It can also be centred around the environment, sports, or folklore. In some cases, the exchange may involve work experience. Exchanges Canada focuses its funding activities on exchanges between Canadians within Canada.

The program has two main components: Youth Exchanges Canada; and Youth Forums Canada. The latter has three sub-components: Youth Forums; Innovative Projects; and Summer Work/Student Exchange program.

- ▶ *Youth Exchanges Canada* allows youth between the ages of 11 to 18 to meet peers in another part of the country and stay in one another's home. Groups who wish to participate must be from schools or non-profit organizations, and can include anywhere from 10 to 30 youth. Youth help plan the exchange by actively participating in fund-raising events (to help cover expenses that will be incurred during their exchange, such as fees to museums) or research activities concerning their host region.
- ▶ *Youth Forums Canada* (YFC) are Canadian events that take place over five days with (at least) three days involving study and discussion. The subject matter of these events should relate to national institutions or issues of national interest.
- ▶ *Innovative Projects* enable youth aged 15 to 30 to participate in activities such as: conferences at the national or international level within Canada, workshops, reciprocal exchanges, virtual exchanges, or other exchange-related experiences.
- ▶ *Summer Work/Student Exchange* involves a six-week (from early July to mid-August) summer employment program aimed at students aged 16 and 17 who will be returning to school in September. Students selected will have the opportunity to work at a summer job in their second language and in another part of the country. During their stay, students will live with the family of the student with whom they have been paired.

These components are delivered through contribution agreements signed between Canadian Heritage and non-governmental organizations.

Program relevance

The relevance of exchange programs such as those supported by Exchanges Canada is largely determined by one's vision of citizenship and social cohesion. On this issue, the federal government's position is that the Canadian model of citizenship requires deliberate efforts to connect Canadians. To this end, the government supports exchange opportunities with the objectives of allowing Canadian youth to better understand their country, to connect with youth from across Canada, and to gain a better appreciation of Canada's diversity. In 2000, it created Exchanges Canada within the Department of Canadian Heritage to support its vision and create additional exchanges.

The program supports Canadian Heritage's overall mission and at least one of its strategic outcomes. The Exchanges Canada program links most closely with two strategic objectives: Connections and Active Citizenship and Civic Participation. Moreover, opinion polls indicate that Canadians are supportive of the government's role in funding exchange programs.

Program success and results

▶ *Securing partnerships*

The program has been successful in creating partnerships within the Department and with other federal departments to increase opportunities for youth to participate in exchanges. However, the program has had limited success in securing partnerships with private-sector organizations. At the time of the evaluation, the only partnership in place was the one with VIA Rail Canada.

It should be emphasized that some of the delivery organizations, particularly those involved in the Youth Forums and Innovative Projects components, have been successful at securing sponsorships.

▶ *Increasing exchange opportunities*

In 2000, the Government of Canada gave Exchanges Canada \$15 million to augment participation in exchanges. With the inclusion of the Summer Work/Student Exchange component in 2002-2003, the program resources increased by an additional \$6.4 million in 2002-2003 and \$6.5 million in 2003-2004. As a result, the number of exchanges has gradually increased and stood at more than 16,000 in 2003-2004.

▶ *Under-represented groups*

To the extent that data is available, the program appears to be successful in involving under-represented groups of Canadian youth, particularly youth from rural areas. The Youth Exchanges Canada component appears to be the most successful in involving all four under-represented groups.

In order to ensure better reporting to track its capacity, the program as a whole would benefit from having specific targets for each under-represented group, for each program component.

Recommendation **1. In order to improve reporting, the program overall should have specific targets for each of the under-represented groups, for each program component.**

▶ *Official languages*

The program has met its objective of providing exchanges that focus on encouraging second language use or on allowing official-language minority groups to meet youth from other regions of the country who speak their language.

▶ *Increase knowledge of exchanges and their benefits*

In order to reach their targeted audience, Exchanges Canada and its key delivery partners have implemented various promotional activities. Judging by the demand for the program, which currently exceeds the supply, it appears that promotional activities have been effective. However, the majority of the participants indicated that they learned about the program through a friend or a teacher, which suggests that limiting the program's promotion is advisable. Exchanges Canada has been proactive in closing its information kiosk on York Street in Ottawa, as it could not be justified in light of the volume of customers.

▶ *Benefits*

The evidence gathered during this evaluation supports the conclusion that participating in Exchanges Canada provides a number of personal benefits, such as the creation of new friendships among youth from various regions of the country, and a greater appreciation for and knowledge of other regions of Canada, as well as of Canada's democratic institutions.

The key challenge that the program is now facing is to be able to better gather, store, and use the data collected from program participants. This, in turn, would improve its measurement and reporting on the impacts of each of its program components. At the time of the evaluation, the content, format, and availability of data did not allow for cross-tabulations between participants' responses to questionnaires and individual socio-demographic information to conduct in-depth statistical analysis.

Recommendation

- 2. The Exchanges Canada Directorate should consider centralizing the input of participants' feedback questionnaire results and storing this information in a computer-assisted survey database. As part of this proposed exercise, the cost implications of various possible options would be important to consider. The information contained in such a database could then be used to perform statistical analysis.**

Recommendation

- 3. The Exchanges Canada Directorate should review the feedback questionnaire to ensure that it includes all the information required to measure the achievement of results. In particular, feedback questionnaires should include questions relating to age, gender, home province, mother tongue / official languages, target groups (except for low-income family status with respect to participants under the age of 18), year of participation, and program component.**

This information would constitute an important foundation to better measure the program's impacts on participating youth. Further consultations, such as periodic focus groups and/or interviews, could complement this information. Just as importantly, this information could be systematically transferred and used during evaluation processes. Longitudinal studies, involving direct consultation with program participants over a certain period of time, would be required to address fully the short-term and long-term impacts of Exchanges Canada.

Design and delivery / cost-effectiveness

The central function of Exchanges Canada is to provide financial support to non-profit organizations offering exchange opportunities. As the evaluation report indicates, the program supports a variety of initiatives, and as such, the cost per exchange varies considerably, ranging from approximately \$500 to \$5,000.

Overall, the evidence suggests that Exchanges Canada works closely with the delivery organizations to ensure that the appropriate procedures are followed. There is no doubt that moving up to 16,000 Canadian youth across the country presents some risk, and effective monitoring is paramount. We note that the program is mainly delivered by a few key organizations that have significant experience in managing exchanges.

The program has initiated important steps in documenting its activities and its expected impacts on participating youth. As recommended in this report, additional steps could be initiated to consolidate and improve this data collection process.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN

Overall Conclusions:

The Exchanges Canada Program is in agreement with the recommendations and conclusions contained in the final report of the evaluation.

Implementing the specific recommendations contained in the evaluation will strengthen the Program's ability to measure the achievement of objectives with regard to the participation of under-represented groups and assess the impacts of each program component on its participants.

Measuring long-term impacts is a frequently-encountered challenge for youth programs, given the high level of mobility of the participant pool. Exchanges Canada will work in close collaboration with its delivery partners to implement the improvements described below, particularly with regard to the Program's capacity to identify and reach past participants.

Achieving targets with regard to the participation of under-represented groups will involve the ongoing development of strategic intra- and inter-departmental alliances. These strategic alliances will also help to lower the average cost to Exchanges Canada per participant. It should be noted, however, that "average cost per participant" has certain limitations as a measure of program performance, given that Exchanges Canada strives to provide a wide range of exchange

experiences to the broadest cross-section of young Canadians, including youth from rural and remote areas and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Reaching these target groups is inherently more costly (e.g. transportation for youth from rural/northern communities) than reaching youth from major urban centers. Therefore, although average cost is an important consideration, to measure the efficiency of the program solely on that basis would not recognize the multiple public policy objectives of a national program.

Management Response to Recommendation 1:

As of 2005-06, Exchanges Canada will set specific targets for the participation of youth from the following under-represented groups in both of the program's components (Youth Exchanges Canada and Youth Forums Canada): Aboriginal youth, youth from rural or remote areas, youth with disabilities and visible minority youth. It should be noted that visible minority youth have been added as a new target group, based on participation data collected by Exchanges Canada since 2001-02. Although Youth Exchanges Canada will continue to set targets for the participation of youth from low-income households, these targets will be part of group statistics and will not be attached to the socio-demographic data on each participant questionnaire. The intent is to avoid singling out and embarrassing individual participants from low-income households while ensuring quality information. Group statistics, as compiled by group organizers, are a more sensible and reliable source of information, as these groups and participants are often chosen for their belonging to target groups and because individual participants would likely not self-identify if they felt the question was not appropriate.

Targets will continue to be set based on reliable Canadian demographic data, such as Census information, according to the age targets for each program component.

Implementation Schedule:

Beginning in April 2005 and ongoing thereafter.

Management Response to Recommendation 2:

Exchanges Canada recognizes the importance of gathering, storing, and using the data collected from program participants, and has already begun taking concrete action to improve current procedures.

Over the past two years, Exchanges Canada has been moving toward the use of optical scanning technology to capture participant and organizer feedback questionnaire data. Electronic data is then stored using a database management system. This approach has proven to be efficient and cost-effective, and allows for the data to be organized, cross-tabulated and analysed according to any of the existing variables (e.g. age and the extent to which the exchange experience contributed to the participant's knowledge of another part of Canada).

As of October 2004, Youth Forums Canada (YFC) has begun having all of its paper questionnaires scanned so that the electronic data can be entered into the database. To maximize the efficiency of Exchanges Canada data collection and the consistency of data formatting, all feedback questionnaires, for both program components, will be scanned optically beginning in April 2005.

Implementation Schedule:

April 2005

Management Response to Recommendation 3:

Although target group information was gathered as group data, the main limitation, as the evaluators pointed out, is the lack of socio-demographic data associated to each participant questionnaire. This information is sometimes delicate to ask directly to youth (e.g. low-income status).

Feedback questionnaires were amended in 2004-05 to include questions relating to age, gender, and other demographic information. Beginning in 2005-06, all participant questionnaires will also include questions relating to home province, mother tongue/official language, target groups (except for low-income household status), year of participation and program component. The addition of these data fields combined with the implementation of optical scanning of questionnaires (as per Recommendation 2) will provide for a much more useful and practical database, allowing the Program to measure results more accurately and propose any programming adjustments more promptly.

Group statistics, gathered from group organizers, will continue to be used to measure reach of target groups. This information is more reliable than individual questionnaires that sometimes get lost, are incomplete or where participants choose not to self-identify.

Exchanges Canada will also work at improving its performance measurement by developing new tools to measure short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of the program on participants.

Implementation Schedule:

Questionnaire amendment to include all demographic fields: April 2005.

1.0 Introduction

Exchanges are activities that enable youth from different parts of Canada to learn from and about one another through direct interaction. Over the years, the Government of Canada has funded youth exchange opportunities through a number of departments and programs. In 2000, the federal government announced a policy of expanding exchanges to enable youth to have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of their country, to connect with young Canadians from across the country and to better appreciate Canada's diversity. On April 27, 2000, Exchanges Canada was created, under the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage, to increase exchange opportunities and provide leadership and coordination.

Canadian Heritage undertook an evaluation of Exchanges Canada to explore the program's relevance, the success and results to date, and the adequacy of its design and delivery. This document, based on the research conducted by PRA Inc., constitutes the final report of the evaluation. It contains five sections, including this introduction:

- ▶ Section 2.0 outlines the methodology used to evaluate Exchanges Canada.
- ▶ Section 3.0 provides a description of the program.
- ▶ Section 4.0 presents the key findings that emerged from the evaluation.
- ▶ Based on the evaluation findings, Section 5.0 details a series of conclusions and recommendations.

2.0 Methodology

This section provides details on the research methods used over the course of this evaluation. Section 2.1 provides an overview of the issues and questions that guided the evaluation, and Section 2.2 details the methods used to answer these questions.

2.1 Evaluation issues and questions

The evaluation of Exchanges Canada addresses evaluation questions that relate to three main issues:

- ▶ *Relevance:* We explore how the program relates to federal government priorities and what specific contribution it is expected to make to the field of exchange programs available to Canadian youth.
- ▶ *Success and results:* We explore the extent to which Exchanges Canada is reaching its potential clientele, is increasing access to exchange opportunities, and is achieving its intended impacts in terms of increasing the knowledge and the appreciation of Canada's diversity among its participants.
- ▶ *Design and delivery / Cost-effectiveness:* Finally, we explore the extent to which resources are being used effectively and efficiently and the extent to which the current data collection is supporting program accountability.

The complete list of evaluation issues and questions is included as an appendix.

2.2 Research methods

The methodology used to evaluate Exchanges Canada included four main components:

- ▶ a review of program documentation and studies relating to exchange programs;
- ▶ a file review of projects funded under the Innovative Projects sub-component;
- ▶ a secondary data analysis; and
- ▶ key informant interviews.

2.2.1 Document review

The purpose of the document review was to gather information related to the program and to address evaluation issues and questions. The list of documents reviewed included, among other things, official program approval documents, contribution agreements, evaluation and audit reports, and administrative documents addressing management and budgetary issues. The majority of these documents were provided by the Exchanges Canada Directorate. Relevant information extracted from these documents is included in this evaluation report.

2.2.2 File review

An on-site file review of all Innovative Projects was conducted. This detailed review used a standard list of questions to gather consistent information about the projects, project participants, the contributions made to achieving the objectives of Exchanges Canada, and the project outcomes.

2.2.3 Data analysis

Exchanges Canada provided administrative data containing information on the number of participants per program component, tabulated results of feedback questionnaires administered to program participants and program organizers, and open responses and comments provided by participants and organizers in response to open-ended questions in feedback questionnaires.

The format, presentation, and range (fiscal years covered) varied between the various program components. This largely resulted from the fact that this data was submitted by various delivery organizations that used different approaches. Some of these results were provided in a series of graphs, others were tabulated in Excel worksheets, and in some cases, a first analysis had been completed and the information was presented in a narrative format, with some tables. Some of the information was provided in electronic files, other information in paper-based format only.

Generally, the data provided covered fiscal years 2000-2001 (first year of program implementation) to 2002-2003. It should be noted that not all data for all program components covered those years. Some data covered only one fiscal year, whereas other data covered more than one fiscal year. Moreover, some data on program participants included information for fiscal year 2003-2004. We also analysed the results of a pan-Canadian survey conducted by Decima Research in the Fall of 2003 and a study on the effects of participation in Exchanges Canada programs conducted by Circum Network Inc.

2.2.4 Key informant interviews

A total of 12 individuals, identified as key informants by Canadian Heritage, were interviewed as part of this evaluation. They received the interview guide in advance to help them prepare informed opinions. All interviews were conducted by telephone.

Key informants were grouped into three categories:

- ▶ delivery organizations involved in Youth Exchanges Canada (n=5)
- ▶ delivery organizations involved in Youth Forums Canada (Youth Forums, Innovative Projects and Summer Work/Student Exchange program) (n=4)
- ▶ representatives from Canadian Heritage (n=3).

2.3 Methodological limitations

Initially, the evaluation was expected to be completed within a time period of approximately three months. In light of this requirement, the analysis of program impacts had to rely almost exclusively on existing data gathered by delivery organizations.¹ This data imposed the following constraints:

- ▶ The first constraint related to the format of the data provided. As we already noted, the scope and content of this data varied among program components. More fundamentally, we did not have access to the actual data files (including individual database records structured in a consistent set of database fields), which could have been transferred in order to perform statistical analysis. We also note that the responses provided to open-ended questions were not coded for every single exchange activity, which again, limited potential analysis.
- ▶ The second constraint related to the fact that the information made available to the evaluation team was largely self-reported. While it is helpful, this information must be used with caution because it has not been validated by other quantitative lines of evidence.
- ▶ The third constraint related to the fact that Exchanges Canada offers different types of exchanges, varying in format and length (from five days to six weeks). As a result, any analysis had to be done on a component per component basis.

While the time frame for the study was modified and expanded during the course of the evaluation, the original methodology (along with its constraints) had to be largely maintained. The data provided by Exchanges Canada offered some insights into the various program components, but was insufficient to address fully all evaluation issues and questions, including especially those relating to program impacts. Longitudinal studies, involving direct consultation with program participants over a certain period of time, would be required to address fully the short-term and long-term impacts of Exchanges Canada.

¹A draft of the study entitled “*Étude relative aux effets de la participation aux programmes d’Échanges Canada*”, prepared by Circum Network for the Program area, was also reviewed. See Section 4.2.6 of this report for further details on the study.

3.0 Profile of Exchanges Canada

This section provides an overview of Exchanges Canada. The program logic model is provided in Appendix A.

3.1 Context

Several organizations offer exchange opportunities in Canada.² The vast majority of these opportunities involves international exchanges and requires participants to pay significant participation fees. As well, a number of these exchange opportunities are only available in some provinces or territories. While some exchange programs are highly specialized (in the fields of science or technology for instance), others reach broader audiences. Some of these exchange opportunities are funded by the private sector or by participants themselves, while others receive public funding.

Over the years, the Government of Canada has consistently funded exchange opportunities through a number of departments and programs. However, the actual level of funding provided has fluctuated significantly. For instance, an important federal initiative in the field of exchange programs was the creation, in 1977, of Open House Canada (OHC), in the former Department of the Secretary of State. This program was established to help strengthen Canadians' sense of national identity and unity through a series of reciprocal exchanges and forums. Participation in OHC reached 36,000 participants in 1978-1979. Over the years, OHC's budget was greatly reduced (by some 80%), and it has been estimated that, by the late 1990s, that program's base budget would have generated about 3,000 exchanges a year.

In 1997, the Government of Canada initiated a new strategy aimed at providing Canadians with greater exchange opportunities. As illustrated in Table 1, the government set the tone throughout a series of Speeches from the Throne.

²For a list of organizations offering exchange opportunities, see: www.exchanges.gc.ca.



Table 1: Extracts from Speeches from the Throne	
Date	Extracts
36 th Parliament 1 st Session September 23, 1997	“The Government will also bring forward measures to strengthen networks among Canadians and to increase knowledge of Canada and understanding among Canadians; these measures will include enhanced exchange programs for young Canadians.”
36 th Parliament 2 nd Session October 12, 1999	“The Government will focus on providing young people with more opportunities to connect to the Canadian experience, to view their country in all its splendour, to gain a first-hand understanding of the different regions, and to be challenged by what they learn from their fellow citizens across this land. The government will: [...] create a single-window service - Exchanges Canada (...).”
37 th Parliament 1 st Session January 30, 2001	“The Government will help Canadians to strengthen their bonds of mutual understanding and respect, to celebrate their achievements and history, and to exercise their shared citizenship. It will continue to expand exchange programs for young Canadians (...).”
37 th Parliament 2 nd Session September 30, 2002	“Canada has a unique model of citizenship, based simultaneously on diversity and mutual responsibility. This model requires deliberate efforts to connect Canadians across their differences, to link them to their history and to enable their diverse voices to participate in choosing the Canada we want.”

The federal government’s strategy in relation to Exchanges Canada essentially unfolded in two steps:

- ▶ As a first step, the federal government gave Canadian Heritage \$3 million over two years (1998-1999 and 1999-2000) to create a single window to access information on exchanges and to develop policy directions and outreach activities. During this period, the Department developed:
 - an extensive database on exchange programs and exchange-related activities sponsored by the Government of Canada, other levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and others;
 - the elements of a public access system (e.g., Web site, 1-800 line) required to allow easy access to information on existing exchange programs.

The Department also conducted research on exchange programs to explore different program models and best practices, to measure the multiplier effect of these programs, and to assess their potential impacts on a range of issues, including: social and human development and learning; the creation of long-lasting connections, and the identity and attachment to Canada.³ The Department also undertook public opinion polling to gather the views of Canadians on exchange programs.

- ▶ The second step undertaken by the federal government was to create, in 2000, Exchanges Canada, a new program aimed at providing policy leadership, coordination, and single-window public access to information on exchanges. This program, under the responsibility of Canadian Heritage, received an initial annual

³These studies were conducted by SPR Associates in 1998 and 1999.



funding of \$15 million (\$5.3 million in operating funding and \$9.7 million in grants and contributions [Gs&Cs] funding), applicable to the fiscal years 2000-2001 to 2004-2005. The primary goals of the program were to diversify and increase the number of exchanges offered to Canadian youth.

While Exchanges Canada was, technically, a new federal program, what was previously OHC and national forums served as its foundation. Existing terms and conditions of Canadian Heritage's OHC were amended to reflect new program objectives, such as ensuring the participation of target groups typically under-represented in exchanges activities. To this end, specific targets were set for these under-represented groups and participation fees or partial travel funding were eliminated.

3.2 Program objectives

The Government of Canada established Exchanges Canada to increase opportunities for Canadian youth to experience their country's diversity. By participating in exchanges and forums, young people are expected to learn more about their country while making lasting connections with youth from other regions of Canada. More specifically, Exchanges Canada pursues three main objectives:

- ▶ to contribute to improved knowledge and understanding of Canada among Canadian youth, enabling them to learn first-hand about the history, geography, industry, institutions, cultures, communities, languages, and other facets of their country;
- ▶ to help Canadians connect to one another and create lasting linkages, across the country and between groups thereby helping to strengthen the fabric of Canadian society; and
- ▶ to develop Canadian identity and attachment to Canada among youth by enhancing appreciation of both the diversity and the shared aspects of the Canadian experience.⁴

In accordance with its mandate, Exchanges Canada specifically targets youth from under-represented groups. In fact, one goal of Exchanges Canada is to have 25% of all participants from under-represented groups in the Youth Exchanges Canada program component, especially: Aboriginal youth, youth with disabilities, youth from low-income families, and youth from rural or isolated areas. Participants belonging to the aforementioned groups may receive supplemental funding in addition to travel costs to ensure their participation.

The educational component of an exchange can be cultural, bilingual, and/or thematic. It can also be centred around the environment, sports, or folklore. In some cases, the exchange may

⁴Canadian Heritage, Assurance Services Directorate, Corporate Review Branch, *Audit of Exchanges Canada*, February 2003

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involve work experience. Exchanges Canada focuses its funding activities on exchanges between Canadians within Canada.

3.3 Program components and delivery structure

Exchanges Canada has two main components: Youth Exchanges Canada and Youth Forums Canada. The latter has three sub-components: Youth Forums, Innovative Projects and Summer Work/Student Exchange program. This section provides a brief overview of these program components. Appendix B provides a breakdown of expenditures by organization from 2000-2001 to 2003-2004.

3.3.1 Youth Exchanges Canada

Youth Exchanges Canada allows youth between the ages of 11 to 18 to meet peers in another part of the country and stay in one another's home. Groups who wish to participate must be from schools or non-profit organizations, and can include anywhere from 10 to 30 youth. Youth help plan the exchange by actively participating in fundraising events (to help cover expenses that will be incurred during their exchange, such as fees to museums) or research activities concerning their host region.

These exchange activities are expected to contribute to the program's objectives by increasing participants' knowledge and understanding of Canada and its people, by allowing them to make lasting connections with other young Canadians and by enabling them to better appreciate Canada's diversity.

Exchanges Canada pays for two-way transportation for both participants and supervisors and provides some costs in respect of delivery and administration. The minimum duration for the exchange for each part of the two-way experience is five days (excluding travel time). Projects must have a "*strong educational component*" and should not be focussed on sporting competition, theatre, debating events, or festivals.⁵

This component is delivered through multi-year contribution agreements signed between Canadian Heritage and five non-governmental organizations (NGOs): YMCA, Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC), Canadian 4-H Council, Folklore Canada International, and Canada Sports Friendship Exchange Programs. It should be noted that these organizations were offering exchange opportunities on a much smaller scale, either nationally or internationally, before the establishment of Exchanges Canada. Some of these organizations were supported by OHC. As a result, Exchanges Canada selected these organizations to deliver the program in light of their experience and expertise.

As an indication of the magnitude of this component, in 2002-2003, approximately \$9 million (G&Cs portion only) was spent for this component to create approximately 10,000 exchanges.

⁵It should be noted that youth can participate in these types of events as long as they are not the main focus of the exchange.

3.3.2 Youth Forums Canada

Youth Forums Canada also contributes to the program's objectives by increasing participants' knowledge and understanding of Canada and its people, by allowing them to make lasting connections with other young Canadians and by enabling them to better appreciate Canada's diversity.

This program component has three sub-components: Youth Forums, Innovative Projects, and Summer Work/Student Exchange program. Canadians between the ages of 11 and 30 can participate. Exchanges Canada subsidizes direct costs of travel for participants and supervisors and, in some cases, related delivery and administrative costs.

Sub-component: Youth Forums

For the purpose of this program, a Youth Forum is defined as a Canadian event that takes place over five days with (at least) three days involving study and discussion.⁶ The subject matter of these events should relate to national institutions or issues of national interest.

Youth Forums are currently delivered by two non-profit organizations that signed multi-year contribution agreements with Canadian Heritage: the Foundation for the Study of Processes of Government in Canada (Forum for Young Canadians) and the Canadian Unity Council (Encounters with Canada program).

As an indication of the magnitude of this component, in 2002-2003, approximately \$2.4 million was spent for this sub-component (G&Cs portion only) to support 3,400 exchanges.

Sub-component: Innovative Projects

The Innovative Projects component enables youth aged 15 to 30 to participate in activities such as: conferences at the national or international level within Canada, workshops, reciprocal exchanges, virtual exchanges, or other exchange-related experiences. At the time of the evaluation, 27 non-profit organizations had received funding under this component. Approximately 54% of the projects funded received less than \$100,000, 30% received between \$100,000 and \$250,000, and 15% received over \$500,000.

Initially, to be considered innovative, a project had to meet the following criteria:

- ▶ contribute to the overall objectives and results of Exchanges Canada;
- ▶ contribute to expanding the inclusiveness and outreach of Exchanges Canada;
- ▶ be innovative; and
- ▶ be cost-effective.

⁶This five-day time period excludes travel time

When the program's Terms and Conditions and Applicant Guide were revised, the requirement relating to the innovative nature of the project was removed and replaced with a requirement to the effect that projects had to include pre- and post-exchange activities, as well as sources of revenue from other partners.

The review of administrative files indicates that some projects funded under this component have been recurring for several years (e.g., The Royal Commonwealth 31st Conference), while other projects have been funded more than once (e.g., Student Commission of Canada).

It should also be noted that most of these projects have multiple funders and sometimes multiple federal funders, since one of the purposes of the Innovations component is to help ensure a horizontal approach to exchange activities across the Government of Canada. Within Canadian Heritage, Official Languages contributed to some projects aiming at achieving objectives linked to linguistic duality (i.e., Peace Arch, Encounters with Canada and the *Association des collèges communautaires du Canada*).

As an indication of the size of this component, in 2002-2003, approximately \$1.1 million (G&Cs portion only) was spent for it to support 1,000 such exchanges.

Sub-component: Summer Work/Student Exchange

One non-profit organization, the Canadian Unity Council, has signed a contribution agreement with Canadian Heritage to deliver the Summer Work/Student Exchange program.

This initiative involves a six-week (from early July to mid-August) summer employment program aimed at students aged 16 and 17 who will be returning to school in September. Students selected will have the opportunity to work at a summer job in their second language and in another part of the country. During their stay, students will live with the family of the student with whom they have been paired. Co-ordinators, who are university students also employed in a summer job, are responsible for supervising program participants and developing a program of activities for their benefit. In order to become an eligible candidate, applicants must undergo a thorough selection process.

Participants are selected on a "first come, first served" basis from among the pool of eligible candidates.⁷

As an indication, in 2002-2003, approximately \$6 million was spent for this component to create 1,200 exchanges. A significant proportion of these funds coming from the National Unity Reserve will no longer be available after March 31, 2005, and the funding provided by the Department of Human Resources Development for this component (approximately \$1.8 million

⁷Information source: www.exchanges.gc.ca.

annually to cover a portion of the participants' salaries) is conditional on the exchange actually taking place.

3.4 Program management

The Exchanges Directorate, which falls under the Citizenship Participation and Promotion Branch of Canadian Heritage, manages the program. Other directorates or related programs included under the same branch are: Canadian Studies, Community Partnership, Voluntary Sector Affairs, and Katimavik.

The Exchanges Canada Directorate employs 27 persons tasked with the ongoing management of the program, as it relates to the monitoring and management of grants and contribution agreements.⁸

3.5 Resources

When established in 2000-2001, Exchanges Canada was allocated \$5.3 million in operating expenses and \$11.7 million in Gs&Cs funding (\$9.7 million plus \$2 million that was transferred from the former Open House Canada program). The operating expenditures were to maintain the Web site and 1-800 telephone number, storefront accommodations, advertising and marketing, and salaries.

The Summer Work/Student Exchange component only recently became part of Exchanges Canada. While the program had received funding in previous years from the Government of Canada, it became part of Exchanges Canada in 2002-2003. In order to support this program, an additional \$151,383 in operating funds and \$6.2 million in Gs&Cs were provided to Exchanges Canada. Funding has been partially provided by the former Human Resources Development Canada (\$1.8 million annually to cover a portion of the participants' salaries), and the balance of the funds comes from supplementary funding allocated to Canadian Heritage.

⁸The total figure includes the Policy and Promotion group (approximately five individuals), which is not responsible for monitoring and managing grants and contribution agreements, in addition to approximately four individuals who work in corporate services (finance, administration of human resources in support of the program, and two other directorates in the branch).

4.0 Evaluation findings

This section presents the evaluation findings. Conclusions and recommendations based on these findings are presented in Section 5.0.

4.1 Program relevance

The evaluation explores the relevance of the program, including an assessment of the extent to which it relates to overall government priorities and to Canadian Heritage's strategic objectives.

4.1.1 Government-wide and departmental objectives

The relevance of exchange programs such as those supported by Exchanges Canada is largely determined by one's vision of citizenship and social cohesion.

The federal government has articulated a vision of citizenship that favours closer links among Canadians, particularly among Canadian youth. Recent Speeches from the Throne (see extracts in Table 1) have confirmed the government's interest in facilitating greater interactions among young Canadians *"to strengthen their bonds of mutual understanding and respect, to celebrate their achievements and history, and to exercise their shared citizenship."*⁹ The fundamental premise is that *"Canada has a unique model of citizenship, based simultaneously on diversity and mutual responsibility" and that this "model requires deliberate efforts to connect Canadians across their differences, to link them to their history and to enable their diverse voices to participate in choosing the Canada we want."*¹⁰ Through its support for youth exchanges, the Government of Canada is supporting this vision.

Our consultations with representatives of Canadian Heritage and of delivery organizations largely echoed the government's vision relating to the need to facilitate greater connections among Canadians, particularly among youth. Key informants were practically unanimous in their opinion that the federal government plays a critical role in supporting closer links among regions, cultures, and language groups through exchanges. Key informants from the Exchanges Canada program also noted that previous research conducted on youth indicates that an exchange experience may have a significant long-term impact in forming their cognitive skills and in developing their ability to relate to other ethnocultural and language groups.¹¹

⁹Government of Canada. (2001). *Speech from the Throne*, 37th Parliament, 1st Session, January 30, 2001.

¹⁰Government of Canada. (2002). *Speech from the Throne*, 37th Parliament, 2nd Session, September 30, 2002.

¹¹See SPR Associates Inc. (March, 1998). "A Strategic Review of Exchange Programming", pp. 33-35.

Exchanges Canada also supports the overall mission of Canadian Heritage of working “*towards a more cohesive and creative Canada.*” The program is expected to support the achievement of at least one of the Department’s two strategic outcomes: “*Canadians live in an inclusive society built on inter-cultural understanding and citizen participation.*”

4.1.2 Public perceptions

A strong majority of Canadians, too, are supportive of exchange programs and of the federal government’s active role in funding these initiatives.

A public opinion poll conducted in 2003 by Decima Research Inc. largely confirmed these trends. As illustrated in Table 2, the vast majority of respondents value exchange opportunities and support the government’s role in funding them.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know/ No Answer
Exchange programs enable young people to better appreciate Canada’s cultural diversity.	1.6%	2.4%	0.5%	24.6%	69.9%	1.2%
Exchange programs enable young people to connect with youth across the country.	1.2%	1.5%	0.2%	24.4%	72%	0.7%
Exchange programs enable young people to strengthen their sense of belonging to Canada.	2.5%	5.2%	1%	34.5%	55.3%	1.5%
Exchange programs enable young people to learn more about their country.	1.5%	2.6%	0.2%	23.1%	71.9%	0.7%
Exchange programs encourage young people to become more involved in their community.	2.4%	6.7%	1.1%	36.1%	52.2%	1.5%
The Government of Canada should continue to invest in youth exchange programs.	2.8%	2.9%	0.6%	26.1%	66.3%	1.2%

Source: Decima Televox National Telephone Omnibus

4.1.3 Summary

The evidence supports the conclusion that Exchanges Canada contributes to the Government of Canada’s vision of shared citizenship, that it is in line with Canadian Heritage’s mandate, and that it is supported by Canadians.

4.2 Success and results

The program's terms and conditions identify a series of expected results for Exchanges Canada. A number of these expected results are operational:

- ▶ The Government of Canada will create partnerships in order to increase opportunities for youth to exchange.
- ▶ Canadians will have improved access to information about exchange programs and exchange-related activities.
- ▶ Canadians will have increased opportunities to learn about the value of exchanges.

Other expected results relate to the program's impacts on participants:

- ▶ Participants in exchange programs will have an enhanced appreciation of Canada's diversity.
- ▶ Participants in exchange programs will have an enhanced knowledge of Canada.
- ▶ Participants in a significant portion of exchanges will have the opportunity to live in an environment where the other official language is used.

The next sub-sections will explore the extent to which Exchanges Canada has been successful in achieving these expected results.

4.2.1 Partnerships

According to its Results-based Management and Accountability Framework (RMAF), Exchanges Canada is expected to develop strategic alliances with corporate sponsors to reduce the cost of exchanges, thereby increasing the overall number of exchanges that can be supported by the program. These partnerships typically take the form of financial support provided to the program and may be initiated and negotiated by Exchanges Canada (in which case, the benefits are expected to apply to all components of the program) or by individual delivery organizations (in which case, the benefits would only apply to the initiative managed by the organization). In addition, the program was expected to create partnerships within Canadian Heritage, as well as with other federal departments to increase exchange opportunities for youth.

Travel costs represent a significant program expense, and as a result, the program has focussed its partnership efforts on securing sponsorship from train and air carriers. In the fall of 2000 (a few months after the creation of Exchanges Canada), Canadian Heritage signed agreements with Air Canada and VIA Rail Canada that provided access to reduced tariffs and some flexibility on travel conditions. At the time of the evaluation, the agreement with VIA Rail was still in effect, but the agreement with Air Canada had been terminated:



- ▶ *VIA Rail:* The agreement with VIA Rail gives access to a 40% reduction off the full adult fare.¹² It should be noted that students already access, under certain conditions, a 35% reduction off the full adult fare. The program's administrative data indicate that train fare between 2002 and 2004 (January to July) would have cost approximately \$400,000, if participants had travelled at regular train fare. The student discount (35%) reduced this amount by approximately \$140,000 and the agreement between Exchanges Canada and VIA Rail contributes another 5% (or \$20,215) to the initial student reduction. As a result, approximately \$242,600 was spent on train fare, instead of \$400,000. As the agreement has been negotiated directly by the Department, any organization that receives Exchanges Canada funding can take advantage of this agreement. Our consultations indicate that some organizations use the train extensively to move participants around the country, while other organizations practically never use it. In particular, all participants who take part in the Summer Work/Student Exchange program are expected to travel by train, even going from Halifax to Vancouver. There was a consensus among many key informants that this agreement is beneficial and should remain.
- ▶ *Air Canada:* The agreement between Canadian Heritage and Air Canada was terminated in 2003 because parties could no longer agree on the terms. At that point, Air Canada was facing serious financial issues and could not offer an agreement that was, in the opinion of program managers, a worthwhile investment on the part of the program. Our consultations with delivery organizations indicated that they largely prefer dealing with a variety of airlines.

No other agreement with private-sector sponsors has been signed by the Department. During our interviews, program key informants noted that when Exchanges Canada was created in 2000, it was expected that the initial funding received would be followed by additional long-term funding. However, over the course of the evaluation period, no large-scale funding was received by the program. As a result, key informants were of the opinion that the program was no longer in a position to negotiate or renegotiate more substantive or additional partnerships with private-sector partners due to the smaller number of participants in the program.

During our consultations, key informants also noted that some private-sector companies had been approached by the program and had expressed an interest in sponsoring the program, should the number of exchanges be substantially expanded. Key informants added that the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, and other safety issues such as SARS, have put a damper on any effort to secure private-sector partnership.

As noted earlier, each delivery organization can also gather financial support from public and private partners. For instance, Royal LePage and Microsoft sponsor Forum for Young Canadians

¹²An agreement was also negotiated directly between the Summer Work/Student Exchange program and VIA Rail. Because the agreement is confidential, we did not have access to its content and cannot report on the reduction offered.

(offered by the Foundation for the Study of Processes of Government in Canada), whereas the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Veterans Affairs Canada sponsor Encounters with Canada (offered by the Canadian Unity Council). Program key informants noted that it is more difficult to negotiate private-sector partnerships directly with the private sector when the Government of Canada is not delivering the program itself but through NGO delivery partners.

With respect to partnerships within the Department and with other federal departments to increase opportunities for youth to participate in exchanges, the program has been successful in creating several partnerships with the following organizations to support exchange activities: Justice Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Multiculturalism and Official Languages Support programs (Canadian Heritage).

In summary, efforts made by Exchanges Canada to negotiate partnerships have had some success both within and outside the Department while partnerships with private-sector organizations have had limited success. Only one agreement, with VIA Rail, remains in place. According to key informants, no other agreement involving Exchanges Canada and a private sector company is expected to be signed at this time.

4.2.2 Increased exchange opportunities

In 2000, the Government of Canada gave Exchanges Canada approximately \$15 million (G&C and O&M) to augment participation in exchanges. With the inclusion of the Summer Work/Student Exchange component in 2002-2003, program funds increased by an additional \$6.4 million. Table 3 displays grants and contributions, number of participants and average cost per exchange, for 1999-2000 (OHC) and between 2000-2001 and 2003-2004 (Exchanges Canada). As illustrated in the Table, the number of exchanges has gradually increased and stood at more than 16,000 in 2003-2004.¹³

¹³It should be noted that for fiscal year 1999-2000, supplemental funding was given to the Open House Canada program. The A-base budget of this program was \$2,012,120. Considering the average cost per participant for the 1999-2000 fiscal year, it has been estimated that the A-base budget for Open House Canada would have generated approximately 3,200 exchanges for 1999-2000. Exchanges Canada, in its first year (2000-2001), provided 14,970 exchanges at a cost of \$11.3 million. This represents an increase of approximately 11,770 new exchanges for Exchanges Canada, compared to the above-mentioned estimated number of exchanges (3,203) provided with the A-base funding (approximately \$2 million) for Open House Canada in 1999-2000.



Fiscal year*	Component**	Total amount spent (G&C only) ***	Number of participants	Average cost per exchange**
1999-2000	Open House Canada	\$5,940,909	9,457	\$628
2000-2001	Exchanges Canada	\$11,520,316	14,970	\$770
2001-2002	Exchanges Canada	\$11,770,700	14,893	\$790
2002-2003	Exchanges Canada	\$18,550,579	15,730	\$1,179
2003-2004	Exchanges Canada	\$19,063,814	16,753	\$1,138

Source: Exchanges Canada administrative data.
 * 1999-2000 to 2001-2002 exclude Summer Work/Student Exchange and 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 include Summer Work/Student Exchange, as this component became part of Exchanges Canada in 2002-2003.
 **The Open House Canada program and the Exchanges Canada program are not directly comparable. For example, in order to increase access to under-represented youth groups, the Exchanges Canada program discontinued individual participation fees and partially-funded travel for participants in reciprocal exchanges and created new opportunities for Northern residents.
 *** Grants and Contributions (G&C) expenditures only; excludes Operations and Maintenance (O&M)

We also analysed the number of participants per province and territory. This data indicates strong participation rates in all jurisdictions in Canada, except Ontario, which tends to be under-represented in all three main program activities (Youth Exchanges, Youth Forums, and Summer Work/Student Exchange). Quebec is also under-represented in the Youth Forums component, but is significantly over-represented in the Summer Work/Student Exchange sub-component (as a result of the second-language learning of this component). Alberta, British Columbia, and the three territories are under-represented in the Summer Work/Student Exchange sub-component partly as a result of the second-language emphasis of this activity. It should be noted that funds have been included in certain contribution agreements to increase the representation of youth from specific provinces in exchange activities.

4.2.3 Under-represented youth

An important feature of Exchanges Canada is that it targets under-represented youth. In particular, the goal of the Youth Exchanges Canada program component is to have 25% of all of its participants from under-represented groups. To this end, contribution agreements signed between a delivery organization and Canadian Heritage include the following clause:

The recipient shall: [...] take measures to help increase the participation of all Canadians and in particular, Aboriginal youth, youth with disabilities, youth from rural and isolated areas and youth from low-income families, and will endeavour to identify and remove any barriers to such participation in its Program and organization.¹⁴

Our consultations indicate that Canadian Heritage has retained the following strategy in relation to under-represented groups:

¹⁴Source: Administrative documents provided by Exchanges Canada.
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- ▶ In collaboration with Statistics Canada, Canadian Heritage identified the proportion of Canadian youth that would fall under each of the four under-represented categories. Table 4 (see below) presents this data, based on the 1996 Census.
- ▶ Based on these numbers, the Department initiated discussions with reputable non-profit organizations that had the administrative capacity to manage exchanges, in addition to having established relationships with these population groups identified as under-represented youth:
 - *Youth Exchanges Canada:* the Department’s strategy in relation to this specific component is to ensure that, among the approximately 10,000 exchanges that occur yearly, under-represented youth will be adequately represented. As a result, the five delivery organizations were partly selected based on their established capacity to reach some of the under-represented youth. To this effect, they are given a specific target to achieve, as per their respective contribution agreement. The expectation is not necessarily that each of the five delivery organizations will effectively reach the four under-represented youth categories. Rather, the goal is to aim for a good representation once the aggregate results from the five organizations are taken into account.
 - *Youth Forums Canada:* while no specific targets have been established, the Department’s expectation is that each project under the three sub-components of Youth Forums Canada (Youth Forums, Innovative Projects, and Summer Work/Student Exchange) will work toward ensuring that Canada’s diversity is reflected among participants. However, for some projects, such as conferences where youth register to participate, setting targets and collecting related data for the under-represented groups is not always feasible. In addition, it would not be feasible or appropriate to single out certain target groups (i.e., low-income) in selecting participants for certain exchange activities.

Table 4: Census data on under-represented groups

Group	Age group 11 to 18		Age group 15 to 30	
	n	%	n	%
Total population	3,167,595	100.0%	6,337,990	100.0%
Aboriginal youth	114,140	3.6%	211,670	3.3%
Rural youth	724,365	22.9%	1,184,225	18.7%
Youth with disabilities	97,675	3.1%	244,185	3.9%
Youth from low-income families	524,710	16.6%	556,160	8.8%

Source: Administrative document provided by Exchanges Canada.

As illustrated in Figure 1 (see below), the program has been successful in ensuring strong participation of youth from rural areas (exceeding their demographic weight). For the other under-represented groups, the situation varies.

- ▶ The Youth Exchanges Canada program component has been successful in ensuring a strong participation from the remaining three under-represented groups.
- ▶ Summer Work/Student Exchange has been successful in ensuring a strong representation of youth with disabilities, but less so of youth from low-income families and Aboriginal youth.
- ▶ Youth Forums had fairly good representation from youth with disabilities and Aboriginal youth, but no data were available on youth from low-income families.

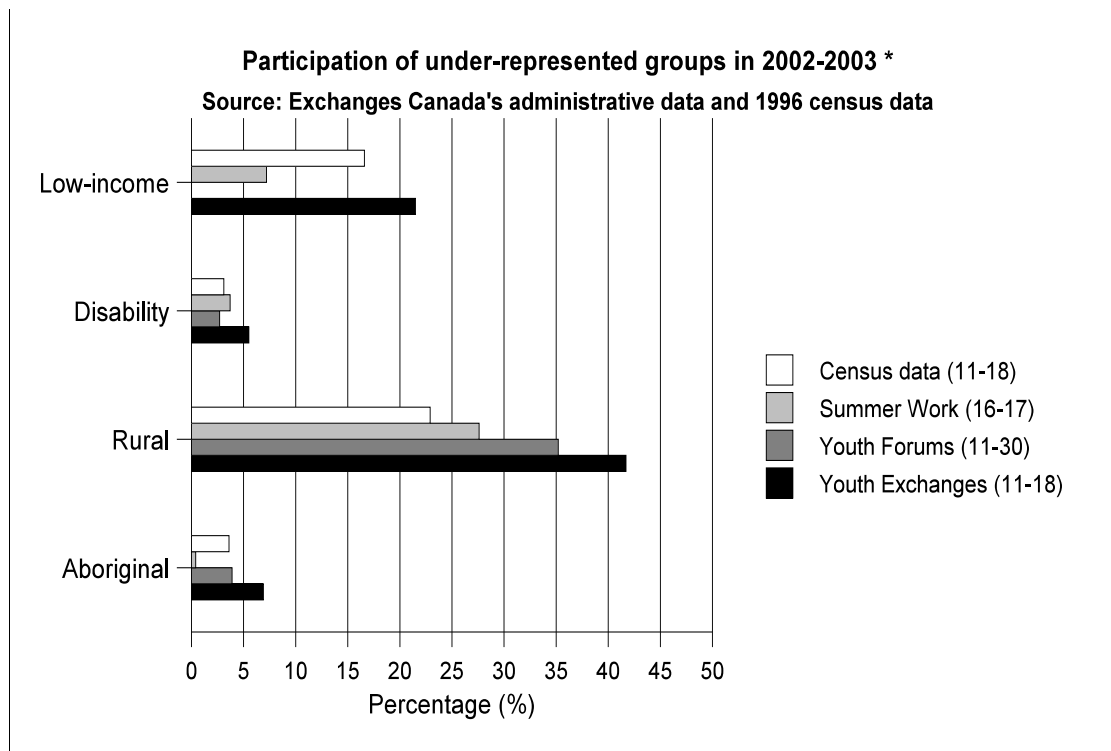


Figure 1

* No data were available on the number of low-income participants from the Youth Forums program component. No data was available for the Innovative Projects component. As well, the only census data available for this evaluation for comparison was for either the 11 to 18 year-old range or the 15 to 30 year-old range. We selected the former, as it most closely aligns with the age group of the various program components. See Table 4 for further details on the census data.

Our consultations indicated that tracking the number of low-income participants is difficult, as participants are not asked to self-identify themselves as low-income. This explains the lack of

data collected for the number of low-income participants under Youth Forums. In the other sub-components, the organizers identify participants who are most likely from low-income families.

It should be noted that, as it currently stands, the current goal of having 25% of participants from under-represented groups raises some challenges in terms of its measurement. One may argue that the strong presence of youth from rural areas is enough to conclude that the goal has been exceeded. Although the objective of 25% of under-represented youth has been met overall, it does not indicate whether each of the four under-represented groups has been adequately represented.

In summary and to the extent that data is available, the program appears to be successful in involving under-represented groups of Canadian youth, particularly youth from rural areas. The Youth Exchanges Canada component appears to be the most successful in involving all four under-represented groups. In order to ensure better reporting, the program would benefit from having specific targets for each under-represented group, for each program component.

4.2.4 Official languages

Exchanges Canada also promotes Canada's linguistic duality by encouraging second language use or by allowing official language minority groups (OLMG) to meet Canadians from other regions who speak their language.

Two components particularly contribute to this goal:

- ▶ *Summer Work/Student Exchange:* All participants in this program are provided with an opportunity to improve their second language, as this is a primary goal of the program. Participants must already have a foundation in their second language, which the program helps foster by having participants work in their second language.
- ▶ *Youth Exchanges Canada:* In relation to this program component, the objective is to have 25 to 30% of all exchanges focus on encouraging second language use or allowing OLMG to meet youth from other regions of the country who speak their language. As illustrated in Figure 2 (see below), this objective is met and exceeded, as approximately half of all exchanges fall under this category. Figure 2 also indicates that three of the delivery organizations, including SEVEC, which delivers 70% of all exchanges under Youth Exchanges Canada, far exceed this initial goal of 25 to 30%.

It should be emphasized that the other two program sub-components, Youth Forums and Innovative Projects, also offer opportunities to promote Canada's linguistic duality. As an example, through the Innovative Projects component, Peace Arch Elementary School in British Columbia received funding to allow the students from an immersion classroom to travel to Quebec to experience the French language and culture first-hand. The main objective was to encourage the children to continue in the immersion program at the secondary level.

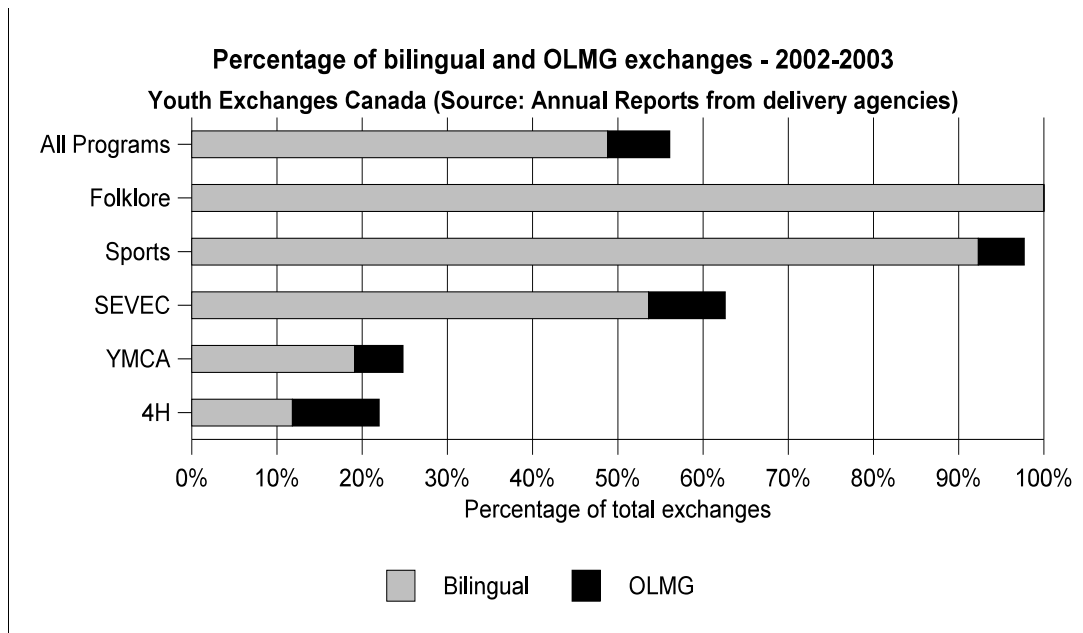


Figure 2

4.2.5 Increase knowledge of exchanges and their benefits

Exchanges Canada has an annual operational budget of \$5.3 million (in 2002-2003, an additional \$151,383 was added when the Summer Work/Student Exchanges component became part of Exchanges Canada). The initial planning was to spend approximately \$2.8 million for marketing and promotional activities, including an allocation to regional offices.

Based on financial information provided by the program, the financial envelope dedicated to promotional activities was significantly less than originally planned due to the fact that the program never received substantive additional funding after its launch in 2000. As an example, in 2002-2003, approximately \$350,000 was spent on promotional activities.

The main activities carried on in recent years and their reach include the following:

- ▶ Establishing and maintaining a Web site (<http://www.exchanges.gc.ca>) that provides an overview of the various program components, information on benefits associated with exchange activities, and direct links to the various organizations delivering each program component. The number of visitors for the years 2001 to 2003 was, on average, approximately 122,600 per year.
- ▶ Producing generic information about Exchanges Canada (posters, brochures, etc.) that can be used by delivery organizations as part of their promotional activities. The levels of production and distribution were:



Pamphlets - Produced and distributed in 2002: 80,000 copies

Pamphlets - Produced in 2003: 30,000 copies

Posters - Produced and distributed in 2001: 20,000 copies

Posters - Produced in 2002: 30,000 copies

Video - A bilingual promotional video produced by Exchanges Canada is used by some delivery partners for recruiting youth into the program.

Newspaper advertising - occasionally Exchanges Canada or the delivery partners will advertise exchange opportunities in local newspapers.

- ▶ Making information about the Exchanges Canada program available by telephone through the 1-800-O-CANADA service and the Youth Info Line. From 2001 to 2003, the number of inquiries were, respectively: 1,600; 1,000; and 823.¹⁵
- ▶ Making information available in person from an information kiosk located at 12 York Street (Exchanges Canada headquarters). Approximately 50% of the inquiries were related to exchanges programs. Visitors also sought information on other government programs and services or tourist information (the kiosk was located in the busiest tourist area of Ottawa). The information kiosk was closed in March 2004.
- ▶ Providing to each of the five Regional Offices of Canadian Heritage approximately \$50,000 per year to undertake promotional activities such as placing advertisements, purchasing promotional material, or making presentations to schools or community organizations.

In addition, key delivery organizations are also encouraged to promote exchange opportunities. While promotional strategies vary among these organizations, our consultations indicated that they all have their own Web site that offers program information and registration forms (paper or on-line). In addition, each organization may undertake specific promotional activities by attending fairs or conferences, by making presentations to youth, or by contacting community organizations.

There was a large consensus among key informants that promotional activities must be carefully managed, as the number of applications is already significantly higher than the number of places available. Figure 3 confirms this trend in relation to the Youth Exchanges Canada component, which generates close to two-thirds of all exchange opportunities funded by Exchanges Canada. In this case, approximately half of all the applicants who apply to the various delivery organizations are turned down, mostly as a result of a lack of available spaces. Key informants from organizations who deliver the other components of the program have indicated that they,

¹⁵Source: Administrative data from Exchanges Canada.

too, turn down a significant portion of applicants. In this context, there was a large consensus among key informants that unless the number of spaces is significantly increased, it will be counter-productive to promote the program more aggressively.

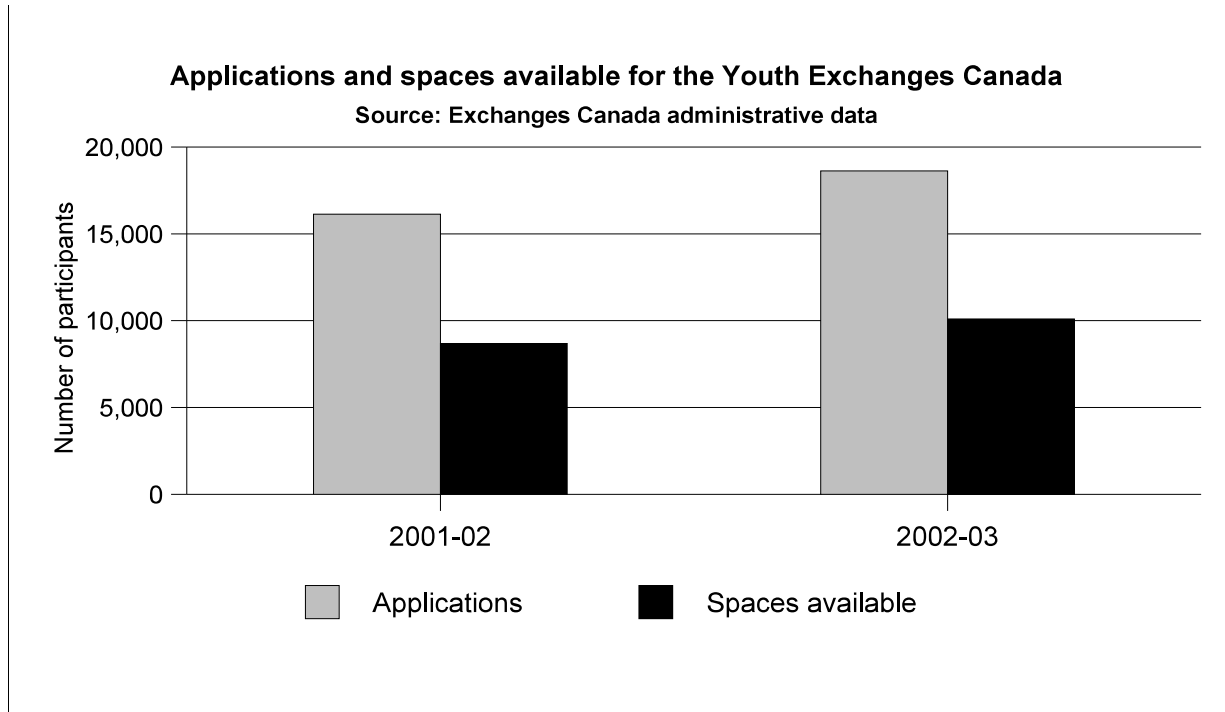


Figure 3

According to key informants, promotional resources should be directed toward promoting the program among key youth groups, such as under-represented youth.

Exchanges Canada collects data on how participants learned about their exchange program through post-exchange questionnaires. This data indicates that the majority of participants find out about exchange opportunities through friends or teachers, and not through advertising or other promotional materials.

In summary, the number of applicants to Exchanges Canada far exceeds the number of available spaces. At this point, Exchanges Canada remains a program that youth largely learn about from other youth who already took part in it. In this context, there is a need to clarify the purpose of the current list of promotional activities and assess their effectiveness and the need to maintain them.

4.2.6 Program impacts

As described in Section 2.0 (Methodology), only limited information and data were available on the impact of Exchanges Canada's various program components. For the purpose of this study, we must rely on information provided by program participants, through feedback questionnaires on their perceived benefits, and one recent study on overall benefits considered as associated with youth exchanges, to provide some insights on potential program impacts.

Results from participants' feedback questionnaires

Regardless of the program component in which they are involved, all participants are asked to complete a feedback questionnaire at the end of their exchange experience. These feedback questionnaires provide a snapshot of the immediate benefits that participants may or may not have gained from their experience. It is self-reported information addressing a range of potential benefits typically associated with an exchange opportunity.

Table 5 presents results of feedback questionnaires completed by program participants for activities that occurred in 2002-2003.

Statements	Program	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	n/a
I became friends with the other participants.	Youth Exchanges	90%		7%		0%
	Youth Forums	87%	11%	2%	0%	0%
	Summer Work	85%	11%	2%	1%	2%
I visited places that were very different from my own community.	Youth Exchanges	89%		7%		0%
	Youth Forums	78%	17%	4%	1%	0%
	Summer Work	68%	22%	6%	2%	1%
I learned new things about my own community.	Youth Exchanges	65%		28%		0%
	Youth Forums	26%	32%	22%	12%	9%
	Summer Work	25%	29%	27%	12%	7%
I learned new things about the community I visited.	Youth Exchanges	92%		4%		0%
	Youth Forums	73%	22%	2%	1%	3%
	Summer Work	67%	25%	5%	2%	1%
My exchange experience helped me to learn new things about Canada.	Youth Exchanges	89%		6%		0%
	Youth Forums	83%	16%	1%	0%	0%
	Summer Work	59%	32%	6%	1%	2%
My exchange experience helped me to discover the different ways people live in other parts of Canada.	Youth Exchanges	88%		6%		0%
	Youth Forums	82%	17%	2%	0%	0%
	Summer Work	68%	26%	4%	1%	1%
I think my exchange experience has developed my interest in learning more about Canada.	Youth Exchanges	77%		16%		0%
	Youth Forums	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Summer Work	46%	35%	12%	4%	2%

¹ The scale used for feedback from Youth Exchanges Canada only included “agree” and “disagree” sections.
Source: Participant data provided by Exchanges Canada.

As the table indicates, most program participants typically associated their exchange experience with a series of benefits, including the creation of new friendships and an increased knowledge of Canada and its people.

When asked specifically what they liked best about their exchange (open-ended questions), participants provided a wide range of responses, some of which are presented in Table 6. It is important to note that the information provided in the table is not meant to be representative, but rather, it is meant to illustrate some of the perceived benefits, as described by the participants themselves.



Table 6: What participants liked best about their exchange experience	
Program component	Selected quotes from participants
Summer Work/Student Exchange	<p>"I enjoyed meeting new people, experiencing different parts of Québec, and learning about the difference in cultures within Canada."</p> <p>"La découverte d'une autre province du Canada, l'amélioration de ma langue seconde et la découverte de moi-même."</p> <p>"I loved speaking French on a day to day basis. (...) My family here was amazing! I couldn't have asked for more from them. (...) The last, but certainly not least thing that I liked about this exchange were the friends I met. I have a very strong feeling that some of those friendships will be lifelong! I hope to see them and my host family again in the near future."</p>
Youth Forums Canada	<p>"My exchange has increased my sense of belonging. I realized I am very similar to other students my age in Canada."</p> <p>"My knowledge of Canada has increased and I am an important part of Canada, as are all the other participants from all over the country."</p> <p>"I feel that Canada is a great country with a lot of great people. This program promoted unity of our country and everyone made positive comments about one another."</p>
Youth Exchanges Canada	<p>"The friendships developed not only with the people from the other group, but also those from here. Particularly the strong bond I share with my twin. The opportunity to see a different place through the perspective of someone who is a part of that culture"</p> <p>"Je vous remercie de m'avoir permis de vivre une si belle expérience qui m'aura définitivement fait grandir. C'est une merveilleuse chose de faire ce que vous faites. Merci."</p> <p>"I feel more of a connection with Canada as a whole rather than just my province or community. Canada is diverse, now I'm part of more than just one aspect."</p>
Source: Responses from feedback questionnaire administered to program participants, as compiled and reported by Exchanges Canada.	

Potential impact of exchange activities

In 2003, Exchanges Canada commissioned a study on the potential impacts of exchange activities. The purpose of the study was not to assess the extent to which Exchanges Canada was achieving its expected program results; rather, the study more broadly explored the range of potential impacts that exchange activities may have. The study involved participants from Youth

Exchanges Canada, Youth Forums, and Summer Work/Student Exchange components from 2000-2001 to 2002-2003.¹⁶

During the first phase of the study, focus groups were undertaken with program participants, parents, and organizers to identify potential impacts resulting from participation in exchange programs. During the second phase of the study, a survey of program participants and of individuals who applied to the program but were not selected (used as a control group) was conducted to further explore and test these potential impacts.

The six benefits that appear to be more closely linked to participation in Exchanges Canada are:

- ▶ a perception that government treats citizens equitably;
- ▶ a better understanding of Canadian society;
- ▶ an increased knowledge of Canadian political institutions (particularly for participants in forums);
- ▶ a greater knowledge of Canadian geography;
- ▶ a greater sense of belonging to Canada; and
- ▶ a greater openness to the idea of moving to another part of Canada.

These benefits are closely linked to the program objectives. However, because the study was mostly exploratory, further analysis would be required to understand how the various program components could be expected to have an incremental impact on participants.

4.3 Design and delivery / cost-effectiveness

One of the questions explored by this evaluation is whether the resources dedicated to Exchanges Canada are being used effectively and efficiently to maximize the achievement of results and whether program authorities are sufficient to support effective program delivery.

In 2003-04, Exchanges Canada expended approximately \$19 million in grants and contributions to deliver its various program components. In addition, the salary and operating budget was established at \$5.5 million (this includes \$5.3 million for Exchanges Canada and \$0.2 million for Summer Work/Student Exchange). Of this amount, approximately \$2.4 million was expended on corporate taxes and other corporate adjustments, and \$800,000 was transferred to the grants and contributions budget to create more exchanges, leaving \$2.3 million available to the Program to cover operating and salary expenses

Grants and contributions

¹⁶See Échanges Canada. (2003). *Étude relative aux effets de la participation aux programmes d'Échanges Canada*, préparée par Réseau Circum Inc.

Table 7 describes the cost per exchange for each program component. It should be emphasized that these estimated costs per exchange are based only on the resources transferred as Gs&Cs and do not include operating expenditures.

Table 7: Cost per exchange (2002-2003)			
Component	Expenditures	Total number of exchanges	Cost per exchange G&C
Youth Exchanges Canada	\$9,057,550	10,105	\$896
Youth Forums	\$2,370,000	3,400	\$697
Innovative Projects	\$1,153,856	1,036	\$1,114
Summer Work/Student Exchange	\$5,969,173	1,189	\$5,020
Source: Administrative data from Exchanges Canada. Include financial support from Exchanges Canada (Grants and Contributions (G&C) portion only; excludes Operations and Maintenance (O&M)). Other funding sources, including sponsors or participant fees, may contribute to the total budget of an activity.			

As Table 7 illustrates, the cost per exchange varies significantly since every component is unique and subject to variables such as: participant’s contribution, multiple sources of funding, or type of expenditures allowed:

- ▶ *Youth Exchanges Canada:* This component has one of the lowest cost per exchange and typically involves an exchange that will last 14 days. One of the key features of this component is the fact that participants normally reside in a family, therefore reducing or eliminating a number of expenses related to accommodation. Participants are expected to cover expenses relating to local activities that amount to around \$400 during the exchange. Participants typically raise this money through fundraising activities.
- ▶ *Youth Forums:* This component has the lowest cost per exchange. This is partly explained by the fact that participants pay registration fees (between \$590 and \$790) and that the two delivery organizations have been successful in securing sponsorships.
- ▶ *Innovative Projects:* With approximately 28 different projects funded through this sub-component, the cost per exchange can vary significantly from one project to the next (refer to Appendix B). The scope of these projects is broad. According to key informants, travel costs are generally higher for a number of reasons, including the fact that tickets are purchased individually because participants do not travel in groups and more participants come from remote locations.
- ▶ *Summer Work/Student Exchange:* This component has a cost per exchange that is considerably higher than any of the other components. This is partly explained by two features of these exchanges. First, each participant is expected to spend six weeks in another region of the country. Second, the program covers the salary of

participants and coordinators through a subsidy offer to each employer. All participant activities are covered by the program.

Operating budget

The program's operating A-base budget is established at \$5.3 million. This amount is expected to cover some of the operating expenses of the Citizenship Participation and Promotion Branch (particularly the Exchanges Directorate operating costs) within Canadian Heritage. Our consultations indicated that not all of this reference budget is actually used. In 2002-2003, the operating costs of the program were approximately \$3.1 million, representing roughly 60% of the total amount allocated for this purpose. Starting in 2002-2003, the program transferred some operating dollars, approximately \$800,000, to the Gs&Cs budget to create more exchanges and to absorb new permanent corporate taxes.

Approximately 27 employees within Canadian Heritage are involved in the ongoing management of the program. This includes a core group of employees (approximately 23) within the Exchanges Directorate. The majority of these employees (approximately 13) are program officers, including senior program officers and program managers. The other positions include director, managers, promotion officers, information officers, policy analysts, and administrative support. Our consultations indicated that the relatively large number of program officers (approximately 13, including program managers for 33 contribution agreements) comes from the fact that each contribution agreement is closely monitored. Key informants emphasized that moving 15,000 Canadian youth around the country (the majority of whom are between the ages of 11 and 18) requires close monitoring and follow-up. It has often been noted during our interviews that one serious incident could have a significant impact on the viability of the program. As a result, program officers do regular on-site visits to ensure that all program requirements, including all security measures, are being applied. Program officers also provide ongoing support to delivery organizations.

Key informants from delivery organizations indicated that the current terms and conditions of the program are appropriate. They could not identify any significant operational constraints that would have a negative impact on the program's ability to achieve its expected results. There was a large consensus among representatives from delivery organizations that program officers and other personnel from Canadian Heritage provide important and helpful support in the delivery of their programs.

An audit of Exchanges Canada was conducted in 2002. This audit focussed on the first two years of the program (2000-2001 and 2001-2002) and concluded that the program was well managed.¹⁷

¹⁷Canadian Heritage. (2003). *Report on the Audit of Exchanges Canada*. Ottawa, p. 4.

4.4 Data collection

Each delivery organization is expected to provide activity and financial reports to Canadian Heritage:

- ▶ *Activity reports:* Each contribution agreement describes the specific requirements relating to activity reports. These requirements will typically include information on the profile of applicants and participants, as well as a description of activities relating to program promotion, services offered, delivery strategy, monitoring and evaluation, as well as management and accountability. Interim reports are provided throughout the project implementation, and a final report is provided once the project is completed. The final report also includes data from the feedback questionnaires distributed to all exchange participants and organizers.
- ▶ *Financial reports:* Various payments to delivery organizations are conditional upon the submission of financial reporting, including monthly or quarterly cash-flow reports.

During our consultations, key informants from delivery organizations indicated that, while the reporting does constitute an administrative burden, it is generally perceived as being reasonable and manageable. Some key informants added that program officers and other staff members from Canadian Heritage have been helpful in providing assistance in preparing these reports.

An important component of the reporting process is the feedback questionnaire distributed to all exchange participants and organizers. This process allows Canadian Heritage to go beyond the reporting of activities (largely done through the activity reports) and explore actual program impacts on participants. In particular, this feedback process allows Canadian Heritage to monitor the extent to which Exchanges Canada's expected results are achieved. The feedback process is particularly helpful in monitoring the following three planned results:

- ▶ Participants in exchange programs will have an enhanced appreciation of Canada's diversity.
- ▶ Participants in exchange programs will have an enhanced knowledge of Canada.
- ▶ Participants in a significant portion of exchanges will have the opportunity to live in an environment where the other official language is used.

A review of the post-exchange questionnaire for participants indicated that a number of questions do address these planned results. In this context, the issue becomes one of determining if a process has been established to report on these findings. The current process, as described by key informants, includes the following components:

- ▶ For Youth Exchanges Canada, Youth Forums and Summer Work/Student Exchange, each delivery organization gathers the information and transfers the aggregate data to Canadian Heritage (in both paper and electronic formats).



- ▶ For Innovative Projects, as the administrative capacity of delivery organization is often more limited, completed paper surveys are sent directly to Canadian Heritage, where staff members do the data entry. Our consultations indicated that the feedback data is being entered in Microsoft Access and analysed using Impromptu and Powerplay software.

While the current process represents an important step in gathering key impact data, three important shortcomings have been identified:

- ▶ First, the current version of the questionnaire (provided as part of the document review) lacks critical data that would help establish a profile of program participants. In particular, the following information is not being collected from survey respondents:
 - Program component
 - year of participation
 - age group
 - gender
 - whether the participant belongs to one of the target groups
 - home province (and postal code)
 - mother tongue/official language.

While some of this information is being gathered (in aggregate form) through other reporting requirements, such as the annual reports from delivery organizations, the absence of such information on the feedback form itself makes it practically impossible to proceed with cross-tabulations to explore potential differences of opinions based on gender, age group, or other demographic components.

- ▶ Second, although the questionnaires give participants the opportunity to provide qualitative information about their exchange experience (through open-ended questions), this information is largely anecdotal and provides little insight on what participants actually learned about Canada, its diversity, and its people.
- ▶ Third, the current process whereby most delivery organizations enter the data themselves before transferring it to Canadian Heritage creates inconsistencies in format and procedures. During our administrative data review, it was impossible to access the core electronic data in a format that would have enabled statistical analysis. It remains unclear how Canadian Heritage compiles and uses that data provided by delivery organizations.

5.0 Conclusions, Recommendations and Management Response

This section summarizes the evaluation findings according to evaluation issues, draws conclusions, and, when required, includes recommendations.

Relevance

The relevance of exchange programs such as those supported by Exchanges Canada is largely determined by one's vision of citizenship and social cohesion. On this issue, the federal government's position is that the Canadian model of citizenship requires deliberate efforts to connect Canadians. To this end, the government supports exchange opportunities with the objectives of allowing Canadian youth to better understand their country, to make lasting connections with youth from across Canada and to gain a better appreciation of Canada's diversity. In 2000, it created Exchanges Canada within the Department of Canadian Heritage to support its vision and create additional exchanges.

The program supports Canadian Heritage's overall mission and at least one of its two strategic outcomes. Also, Canadians are supportive of the government's role in funding exchange programs.

Success / results

- ▶ *Securing partnerships*

The program has been successful in creating partnerships within the Department and with other federal departments to increase opportunities for youth to participate in exchanges. However, the program has had limited success in securing partnerships with private-sector organizations. At the time of the evaluation, the only partnership in place was the one with VIA Rail Canada.

It should be noted that some of the delivery organizations, particularly those involved in the Youth Forums component, have been successful at securing sponsorships.

- ▶ *Increasing exchange opportunities*

When created, Exchanges Canada was allocated \$15 million in order to augment participation in youth exchanges. The available data indicates that the number of exchange opportunities has gradually increased over the years and now stands at more than 16,000 (2003-2004).

- ▶ *Under-represented groups*

To the extent that data is available, the program appears to be successful in involving under-represented groups of Canadian youth, particularly youth from rural areas. The Youth Exchanges Canada component appears to be the most successful in involving all four under-represented groups.

In order to ensure better reporting to track its capacity, the program as a whole would benefit from having specific targets for each under-represented group, for each program component.

Recommendation

- 1. In order to improve reporting, the program overall should have specific targets for each of the under-represented groups, for each program component.**

- ▶ ***Official languages***

The program has met its objective of providing exchanges that focus on encouraging second language use or on allowing official-language minority groups to meet youth from other regions of the country who speak their language.

- ▶ ***Increase knowledge of exchanges and their benefits***

In order to reach their targeted audience, Exchanges Canada and its key delivery partners have implemented various promotional activities. Judging by the demand for the program, which currently exceeds the supply, it appears that promotional activities have been effective. However, the majority of the participants indicated that they learned about the program through a friend or a teacher, which suggests that limiting the program's promotion is advisable. Exchanges Canada has been proactive in closing its information kiosk on York Street, in Ottawa, as it could not be justified in light of the volume of customers.

- ▶ ***Benefits***

The evidence gathered during this evaluation supports the conclusion that participating in Exchanges Canada provides a number of personal benefits, such as the creation of new friendships among youth from various regions of the country, and a greater appreciation for and knowledge of other regions of Canada, as well as of Canada's democratic institutions.

The key challenge that the program is now facing is to be able to better gather, store, and use the data collected from program participants. At the time of the evaluation, the content, format, and availability of data did not allow for cross-tabulations to perform in-depth statistical analysis relating to the program's impacts.

Recommendation

- 2. The Exchanges Canada Directorate should consider centralizing the input of participants' feedback questionnaire results and storing this information in a computer-assisted survey database. As part of this proposed exercise, the cost implications of various possible options would be important to consider. The information contained in such a database could then be used to perform statistical analysis.**

Recommendation

- 3. The Exchanges Canada Directorate should review the feedback questionnaire to ensure that it includes all the information required to measure the achievement of results. In particular, feedback questionnaires should include questions relating to age, gender, home province, mother tongue / official languages, target groups (except for low-income family status with respect to participants under the age of 18), year of participation, and program component.**

This information would constitute an important foundation to better measure the program's impacts on participating youth. Further consultations, such as periodic focus groups and/or interviews, could complement this information. Just as importantly, this information could be systematically transferred and used during evaluation processes. Longitudinal studies, involving direct consultation with program participants over a certain period of time, would be required to address fully the short-term and long-term impacts of Exchanges Canada.

Design and delivery / cost-effectiveness

The central function of Exchanges Canada is to provide financial support to non-profit organizations offering exchange opportunities. As the evaluation report indicates, the program supports a variety of initiatives, and as such, the cost per exchange varies considerably, ranging from approximately \$500 to \$5,000.

Overall, the evidence suggests that Exchanges Canada works closely with the delivery organizations to ensure that the appropriate procedures are followed. There is no doubt that moving up to 16,000 Canadian youth across the country presents some risk, and effective monitoring is paramount. We note that the program is mainly delivered by a few key organizations that have significant experience in managing exchanges.

The program has initiated important steps in documenting its activities and its expected impacts on participating youth. As recommended in this report, additional steps could be initiated to consolidate and improve this data collection process.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN**Overall Conclusions:**

The Exchanges Canada Program is in agreement with the recommendations and conclusions contained in the final report of the evaluation.

Implementing the specific recommendations contained in the evaluation will strengthen the Program's ability to measure the achievement of objectives with regard to the participation of under-represented groups and assess the impacts of each program component on its participants.

Measuring long-term impacts is a frequently-encountered challenge for youth programs, given the high level of mobility of the participant pool. Exchanges Canada will work in close collaboration with its delivery partners to implement the improvements described below, particularly with regard to the Program's capacity to identify and reach past participants.

Achieving targets with regard to the participation of under-represented groups will involve the ongoing development of strategic intra- and inter-departmental alliances. These strategic alliances will also help to lower the average cost to Exchanges Canada per participant. It should be noted, however, that "average cost per participant" has certain limitations as a measure of program performance, given that Exchanges Canada strives to provide a wide range of exchange experiences to the broadest cross-section of young Canadians, including youth from rural and remote areas and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Reaching these target groups is inherently more costly (e.g. transportation for youth from rural/northern communities) than reaching youth from major urban centers. Therefore, although average cost is an important consideration, to measure the efficiency of the program solely on that basis would not recognize the multiple public policy objectives of a national program.

Management Response to Recommendation 1:

As of 2005-06, Exchanges Canada will set specific targets for the participation of youth from the following under-represented groups in both of the program's components (Youth Exchanges Canada and Youth Forums Canada): Aboriginal youth, youth from rural or remote areas, youth with disabilities and visible minority youth. It should be noted that visible minority youth have been added as a new target group, based on participation data collected by Exchanges Canada since 2001-02. Although Youth Exchanges Canada will continue to set targets for the participation of youth from low-income households, these targets will be part of group statistics and will not be attached to the socio-demographic data on each participant questionnaire. The intent is to avoid singling out and embarrassing individual participants from low-income households while ensuring quality information. Group statistics, as compiled by group organizers, are a more sensible and reliable source of information, as these groups and participants are often chosen for their belonging to target groups and because individual participants would likely not self-identify if they felt the question was not appropriate.

Targets will continue to be set based on reliable Canadian demographic data, such as Census information, according to the age targets for each program component.

Implementation Schedule:

Beginning in April 2005 and ongoing thereafter.

Management Response to Recommendation 2:

Exchanges Canada recognizes the importance of gathering, storing, and using the data collected from program participants, and has already begun taking concrete action to improve current procedures.

Over the past two years, Exchanges Canada has been moving toward the use of optical scanning technology to capture participant and organizer feedback questionnaire data. Electronic data is then stored using a database management system. This approach has proven to be efficient and cost-effective, and allows for the data to be organized, cross-tabulated and analysed according to any of the existing variables (e.g. age and the extent to which the exchange experience contributed to the participant's knowledge of another part of Canada).

As of October 2004, Youth Forums Canada has begun having all of its paper questionnaires scanned so that the electronic data can be entered into the database. To maximize the efficiency of Exchanges Canada data collection and the consistency of data formatting, all feedback questionnaires, for both program components, will be scanned optically beginning in April 2005.

Implementation Schedule:

April 2005

Management Response to Recommendation 3:

Although target group information was gathered as group data, the main limitation, as the evaluators pointed out, is the lack of socio-demographic data associated to each participant questionnaire. This information is sometimes delicate to ask directly to youth (e.g. low-income status).

Feedback questionnaires were amended in 2004-05 to include questions relating to age, gender, and other demographic information. Beginning in 2005-06, all participant questionnaires will also include questions relating to home province, mother tongue/official language, target groups (except for low-income household status), year of participation and program component. The addition of these data fields combined with the implementation of optical scanning of questionnaires (as per Recommendation 2) will provide for a much more useful and practical database, allowing the Program to measure results more accurately and propose any programming adjustments more promptly.

Group statistics, gathered from group organizers, will continue to be used to measure reach of target groups. This information is more reliable than individual questionnaires that sometimes get lost, are incomplete or where participants choose not to self-identify.

Exchanges Canada will also work at improving its performance measurement by developing new tools to measure short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of the program on participants.

Implementation Schedule:

Questionnaire amendment to include all demographic fields: April 2005.