

Formative Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program

Final Report

*Program Evaluation Directorate
Strategic Policy and Research
Human Resources and Social Development Canada*

February 2007

SP-AH-687-02-07E
(également disponible en français)

Paper

ISBN: 978-0-662-45282-9

Cat. No.: HS28-79/2006E

PDF

ISBN: 978-0-662-45283-6

Cat. No.: HS28-79/2007E-PDF

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	i
Executive Summary	iii
Management Response	ix
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Program Overview and Context	1
1.2 Evaluation Scope and Methodology	3
2. Objectives, Outputs and Early Impacts	5
2.1 Objectives	5
2.1.1 Recent Studies	5
2.1.2 Foreign Perspective	6
2.1.3 The Complex Environment in Canada	8
2.1.4 Planned and Actual Program Expenditures.....	9
2.2 Outputs and Outcomes.....	11
2.2.1 An Early Look at Outputs	11
2.2.2 An Early Look at Outcomes.....	14
3. Program Design and Delivery	17
3.1 Decision-Making – Deciding What Should Be Funded.....	17
3.2 Duplication.....	18
3.3 Communications	20
4. Performance Measurement	23
4.1 Is the Logic Model an Appropriate Reflection of the Program?	24
4.2 Are the Performance Indicators Per Se Appropriate?.....	24
4.3 Are Individual Performance Indicators Sufficiently Well-Defined?.....	25
4.4 Are Data Collection Procedures Manageable and Economical?	26
4.5 Are the Performance Data Being Collected and Reported?	26
4.6 To What Extent Are the Performance Data Being Used?	26
4.7 Are Agreement Holders Providing Appropriate Results Information, and Is There Sharing?	27

5. Challenges for a Summative Evaluation	29
5.1 The Challenge of Diverse Project Outputs and Impacts.....	29
5.2 Traditional Control or Comparison Groups not Practical.....	30
5.3 The Possibility of Making Use of the Monitoring System	31
5.4 The Possibility of Making Use of Surveys	31
5.5 Making Full Use of Qualitative Methods	32
5.6 Additional Data for the Summative Evaluation.....	32
6. Conclusions and Recommendations	35
6.1 Some Overall Conclusions.....	35
6.2 Lessons and Recommendations	37

List of Tables

Table 2.1	Total FCRP Budget (Thousands of Dollars)	9
Table 2.2	Perceptions on the Prospects that the FCRP Will Achieve its Outcomes.....	15

List of Figures

Figure 2.1	Main Outputs – Most Projects Span Two or Three Phases	12
Figure 3.1	Most Agreement Holders Learned of FCRP from an HRSDC Official	21

List of Abbreviations

AIPSO	Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
CAPER	Canadian Post-M.D. Education Registry
CCPE	Canadian Council of Professional Engineers
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CICIC	Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials
COPS	Canadian Occupational Projection System
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres
FCRP	Foreign Credential Recognition Program
HRSDC	Human Resources and Social Development Canada
IEGs	International Engineering Graduates
ITWI	International Trained Worker Initiative
MCC	Medical Council of Canada
NACES	National Association of Credential Evaluation Services
NARIC	National Academic Recognition and Information Centre
NOC	National Occupational Classification
PLA	Prior Learning Assessment
PLFCAR	Prior Learning and Foreign Credential Assessment and Recognition
RMAF	Results-based Management and Accountability Framework
USNEI	United States Network for Education Information

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the Formative Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP). The program is operated by the Human Resources Partnership Directorate, within Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), and has a total budget allocation of \$68 million over six years (2003-04 to 2008-09).

The FCRP is a contribution program that works with public and private sector partners to develop pan-Canadian approaches, tools and processes for foreign credential assessment and recognition. Potential partners include sector councils, occupational and professional regulatory organizations, educational institutions, other governments within Canada, and employers. The program funds projects that involve research and analysis of problem areas, planning, process development, activation of standardized processes and systems, development and dissemination of information, partnership development and related implementation activities.

The overall objective of the FCRP is “to develop coherent, transparent, fair and equitable foreign credential assessment and recognition processes to enhance labour market outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.”

Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The Formative Evaluation was focused on four specific evaluation issues:

- assess the clarity and relevance of the program objectives, and the extent to which the objectives are measurable;
- examine the adequacy of program design in providing safeguards against overlap/duplication;
- validate the Performance Measurement Framework, and assess the relevance of the performance indicators; and,
- determine the availability, reliability and validity of existing program data, and the feasibility of collecting new data needed to support the summative evaluation of the FCRP.

Six main sources of information were used to conduct the formative evaluation: a review of documents and files; a review of administrative data; key informant interviews (with FCRP officials, representatives of credential assessment agencies across Canada, and representatives of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials); a survey of all funded projects as of early fall 2005; six case studies of projects funded by the program (five with regulated occupations and one with a sector council); and an external review of the performance measurement system.

Each issue was examined using multiple lines of evidence. At the same time, certain limitations and cautions should be noted.

- Many of the lines of evidence were drawn from sources that either work for the program (FCRP officials) or benefited from the program (FCRP contribution agreement holders who were surveyed by the project survey, or managers of funded projects who were interviewed in depth for the case study analysis). In this context, the evaluators were very much aware of the importance of exercising professional judgment when reporting on opinions/comments and ensuring that appropriate qualifiers were in place so that readers could understand the source and context of statements/opinions.
- The evaluation did not include the views of provincial and territorial representatives because FCRP officials requested that the interviews not proceed given that negotiations were ongoing with several jurisdictions at that time.
- In some instances, the evaluators found that it was too early to develop a strong assessment of certain evaluation questions.

Main Findings

a) Assessment of Program Objectives, Outputs and Early Outcomes

The objective of the FCRP is consistent with recent studies that identify non-recognition of foreign credentials as a factor contributing to the labour market outcomes for foreign-trained individuals. The review of recent studies indicated that research has identified lack of Canadian work experience and/or non-recognition of foreign credentials as one of the contributing factors in the labour market experience of skilled immigrants in Canada.

Other countries have or are developing processes for foreign credential recognition. The review of Australia, the United States, and Member States of the European Union indicated that these jurisdictions are developing processes for foreign credential recognition and are competing with Canada to attract highly skilled immigrants.

The objective of the FCRP – with its emphasis on processes and partnerships – is consistent with and aligned with the complex Canadian context of the program. Provincial and territorial governments have constitutional authority for the regulation of most professions and have delegated regulatory authority to various professional bodies. Provinces and territories also regulate skilled trades that involve apprenticeships. In addition, foreign credential assessment and recognition can involve post-secondary institutions, employers and numerous immigrant-serving agencies.

Working in this complex environment, the FCRP is fostering pan-Canadian approaches and improving processes at a systemic level. It also encourages and enables groups to work together to develop tools and processes that will be acceptable to all jurisdictions. In this way, the program recognizes that the building of partnerships is central to success

because of the number of partners involved, the complexity of issues, and the need for extensive coordination and open communication.

The program objective recognizes the practical importance of taking a targeted approach. Program designers initially focused on three occupational priorities: nurses, doctors and engineers. The choice of these three occupations was influenced by labour market issues and targeted on specific issues. In the case of engineers, for example, the large number of immigrants designating themselves as professional engineers overwhelmed the capacity of self-regulatory organizations to vet the qualifications.

Program designers also identified a three-step process for achieving systemic change: diagnostic, formulating recommendations (i.e. an action plan), and implementation. The use of this three-step approach is strongly recommended by the Program.

Although it is too early to develop a strong assessment of the level of pan-Canada action/processes and partnerships for addressing credential recognition, the evidence drawn from key informants, survey respondents and the case study analysis suggests that the FCRP is achieving its intended outputs and progressing towards its intended outcomes. As of September of 2005, 35 projects had been approved for FCRP funding and about one-quarter of these projects targeted the initial three priority occupations. Information collected by the project survey and supplemented by administrative data indicated that project outputs correspond to the three phases, with most of the projects spanning two or three of the phases.

The projects involving the initial three targeted occupations tended to be the furthest along to the implementation phase, in part because some of these projects had started earlier under other funding auspices. The case study analysis, which was designed to provide a more in-depth assessment of some of the projects for the three targeted occupations, provided further evidence that the advanced projects were implementing tools and processes that could be expected to contribute to the program's objective and planned outcomes.

The project survey and case study analysis indicated that FCRP agreement holders were aware of the outputs and results they were accountable for. The survey respondents (FCRP funding recipients) also felt the FCRP will do well in achieving most of its expected outcomes. There were two exceptions: identification of future occupations/sectors facing critical shortages, and standardization of pan-Canadian processes in targeted occupations.

The HRSDC key informants (program managers and staff) felt the FCRP will do well or quite well in achieving most of its outcomes. Like the survey respondents, they were less optimistic about the program's prospects for achieving standardization of pan-Canadian processes in targeted occupations. Unlike the survey respondents, however, they were quite optimistic about the prospects for the identification of future occupations/sectors facing critical shortages, and they were less optimistic about achieving the two long-term outcomes (improved ability of sectors/employers/regulators to assess and recognize foreign-trained individuals, and reduced barriers to entry into the labour market by foreign-trained individuals).

The work the FCRP is doing takes a lot of time, and often the issues go beyond credential recognition. Systemic change takes time and effort. Also, the federal government's mandate is limited in that many of the issues surrounding credential recognition are under the purview of the provinces. In addition, the issues often go beyond credential recognition. For example, even with the implementation of a fast-track system to assess the credentials of foreign-trained physicians, the limited number of residency positions for foreign-trained doctors means the queue for licensure remains long.

b) Safeguards Against Overlap and Duplication

The document review and key informant interviews indicated that the FRCPC has taken steps and put in place a number of safeguards to control for overlap/duplication. Within the federal government, the International Trained Worker Initiative (ITWI) coordinates the efforts of the 15 agencies involved in recognition of foreign credentials and controls for overlap/duplication. The key informants felt that ITWI performs this function well.

There is greater potential for, or the perception of, overlap/duplication of effort between the federal and provincial governments. The FCRP is dealing bilaterally with each province in an attempt to coordinate efforts. At the time of the evaluation, agreements had been reached with two provinces (Manitoba and British Columbia), and negotiations with other provinces were progressing.

c) Review of the Performance Measurement Framework

The review of the performance measurement strategy for the FCRP found that the strategy and its performance indicators are appropriate for the most part, but identified some areas that should be improved. For example, each of the performance indicators needs to be thoroughly defined/documented to ensure that individuals who submit and report on performance data will do so in a way that generates consistent and reliable information.

d) Review of Program Data

At the time of the evaluation, it was not possible to assess the manageability/feasibility and economy of data collection processes and reporting because of the lack of program data. The reviewers felt, however, that the monitoring system for the FCRP will give a good indication of the potential for the FCRP to bring about systemic change – once the suggested improvements were made to the strategy.

Looking ahead to the types of information and data needed to support a summative evaluation, the review identified a number of suggestions. For example, projects could be required to submit a precise set of indicator data related to the program's performance measures (e.g. how many employers, regulators, educational institutions, and so forth, received the tools and processes created by the project) so that the monitoring system will provide a good overview of what was produced and how the products were used by the

occupation. It might also be possible to require the projects to keep records of their target groups (such as employers, universities, regulators and internationally-educated individuals) and to make these records available for research purposes at the time of the summative evaluation.

Summary of Lessons and Recommendations

- The recommended improvements should be made to the performance measurement strategy as soon as possible.
- The FCRP is designed to foster systemic change and the FCRP will need to continue to manage expectations of the program to maintain its focus.
- Since the program has been encountering some delays and difficulties in strategies for determining what professions/occupations to focus on in the future, measures need to be put in place to speed up this process. In addition, it may be appropriate to consider other approaches to identifying future occupational priorities.
- Although the program has been approached to fund projects that are somewhat related to FCRP interests, the re-allocation of funds may affect achievement of FCRP objectives.
- The FCRP should develop ways to increase the sharing of project results. Possibilities might include periodic conferences and placing project summaries on the program website.

Management Response

Introduction

In the fall of 2005, a Formative Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) was undertaken to fulfill a commitment made by the FCRP in its 2004 Treasury Board Submission.

The FCRP Formative Evaluation was designed to focus on four specific evaluation issues: an independent assessment of the clarity and relevance of measurable program objectives; the adequacy of program design in providing safeguards against overlap/duplication; validation of the Performance Measurement Framework and relevance of the performance indicators; assessing the availability, reliability and validity of existing program data and the feasibility of collecting new data needed for the summative evaluation of the FCRP.

Six main sources of information were used to conduct the formative evaluation: a review of documents and files; a review of administrative data; key informant interviews (with FCRP officials, representatives of credential assessment agencies across Canada and representatives of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC); a survey of all (n=35) funded projects as of early autumn of 2005; six case studies of projects funded by the FCRP (five with regulated occupations, one with a sector council); and an external review of the performance measurement system. In addition, the evaluation study used the internet and documentary evidence to obtain basic information on what other countries are doing in the area of foreign credential recognition.

The Evaluation concludes that the FCRP is progressing well towards accomplishing its objectives and outcomes, especially for the three originally targeted occupations (engineers, physicians and nurses). Furthermore, it specifically mentions that the FCRP's strength is in ensuring that the proper foundation is laid through investments in diagnostics which are instrumental in ensuring that partners understand the current situation before trying to solve the problem and also provide the framework to obtain buy-in from and build partnerships between stakeholders.

FCRP Accomplishments

Since the evaluation was undertaken, the FCRP has made substantial investments in improving the ability of partners to assess foreign credentials. As of March 31, 2006, the FCR Program supported 52 projects to address credential recognition barriers. Initial work with regulated professions focused on Physicians, Nurses and Engineers. Since then, work has been expanded to Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Medical Laboratory Technology, Medical Radiation Technology, Pharmacy, Cardiology Technology, and Architecture. As of September 30, 2006, the FCRP has invested in 66 (completed and/or ongoing) projects.

To address credential recognition issues within non-regulated occupations, the FCR Program works with employers primarily through the national sector councils. The relationship that sector councils have forged with employers and educational institutions positions them to serve as the initial and primary point of contact in the program's work in credential assessment and recognition in non-regulated occupations. At the time of the evaluation, the FCR Program had agreements with seven sector councils: Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council, Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council, Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, Canadian Trucking Human Resource Council, Construction Sector Council, Information and Communications Technology Council and the Environmental Careers Organisation of Canada. Since then, the program has negotiated agreements with three more councils: Biotechnology Human Resource Council, Textile Human Resource Council and Electricity Sector Council since March 2006.

The 2005-2006 formative evaluation made six recommendations for the FCRP. While some observations are within the FCRP control, others are more complex and need to be addressed more broadly through a wider government forum. Below is each finding and the program response.

Recommendations:

1. The recommended improvements should be made to the performance measurement strategy as soon as possible.

- a. The FCRP is in agreement with the recommendation. Since the Formative Evaluation, the FCRP has developed the following:
 - i. **Performance database** - provides statistical and analytical data on the FCRP's progress by activity area and expected results. Reports generated provide information on the progress of investments, types of activities, organizations funded, outputs and outcomes by project and occupation.
 - ii. **Investment Analysis Report** - updated every six months, provides information on investments and the FCRP's progress in addressing FCR issues.
 - iii. **Revised Performance Indicator** - revised indicator will report on the percentage of the immigrant labour market where the FCRP has undertaken interventions in support of foreign credential assessment and recognition activities. The revised indicator will be reflected in the 2007-2008 Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) and the Departmental Performance Report (DPR).
- b. Definitions for performance indicator will be developed and the logic model will be revised to better reflect program objectives by the end of February 2007.

- 2. The FCRP is designed to foster systemic change and will need to continue to manage expectations of the program to maintain its focus.**
 - a. The FCRP is in agreement with the recommendation. The key objective of the FCRP is to provide strategic and financial investments to develop foreign credential assessment and recognition processes that are fair, accessible, consistent, transparent and rigorous in targeted regulated and non-regulated occupations and sectors.
 - i. The FCRP works with provincial/territorial regulatory bodies to develop Pan-Canadian assessment and recognition processes for regulated occupations. In this regard, the program continues to engage with Provinces and Territories on FCR and through F/P/T working groups (Alberta) and assist in F/P/T coordination where appropriate. Currently the FCRP has signed contribution agreements with British Columbia and Manitoba and has received ministerial approval to enter into agreements with Saskatchewan and with the Atlantic Ministers of Education to take steps to create an Atlantic Assessment Centre.
 - ii. The FCRP builds on existing partnerships with sectoral organizations and national consortia to increase awareness and to develop tools and processes to be used by employers to assess and recognize foreign credentials for non-regulated occupations. Clear messaging on FCRP's role and objectives is an ongoing activity that is facilitated through presentations and/or meetings with stakeholders.
 - iii. The FCRP facilitates horizontal leadership. The integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour market is an issue that involves several federal departments at various points in the process. As a result the FCRP has taken proactive steps to ensure that the FCRP is complementary to similar GOC efforts. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSD) has taken the lead in establishing a Director General Forum on Internationally Trained Workers (ITWI) and has coordinated federal departments that meet regularly to share policy ideas and steer horizontal initiatives.
- 3. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS)/National Occupational Classification (NOC) have not been able to give the program the detailed data needed at a regional level for planning purposes. Measures need to be put in place such that FCRP gets priority in getting the data it needs from COPS/NOC.**
 - a. Initially, the FCRP had considered the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS)/ The National Occupational Classification (NOC) as data sources for planning purposes. The COPS provides information on current and future conditions of labour supply and demand by occupation and industry in order to heighten job market effectiveness. The NOC is a system used to classify all occupations in Canada. Subsequently, the FCRP has utilized more

dynamic data sources (e.g. CIC data, sector studies) for planning purposes and has implemented proactive ways to target future investment.

4. **It may be appropriate to consider other approaches to identifying future occupational priorities. Other grant and contributions programs use a Request for Proposals (RFP) model to determine what to fund. The FCRP has not used RFPs because it implies abandoning the proposal development strategy that has set it apart to this point, and because increased human resources requirements would be needed to deal with an increased number of proposals. But if the FCRP fails to develop analytically sound criteria for project selection, an RFP process is one option that could be reconsidered.**
 - a. At the time of the evaluation, the FCRP was focused on Physicians and Nurses due to the labour shortages in those occupations and Engineers due to the large numbers of immigrants that have self identified in that category. Since the evaluation, the FCRP has implemented proactive ways to determine future occupational priorities. The FCRP has developed a **Selection Matrix** by cross tabulating skills shortage statistics in the Canadian labour market with immigration labour market supply figures for highly skilled immigrants, and readiness to engage measures. Sources of information utilized to develop the selection matrix include: Citizenship and Immigration, Labour Mobility initiatives, Sector studies and Job Futures. The Selection Matrix enhances the level of understanding on occupations and readiness of sectors to address issues related to FCR thereby guiding the Program in future strategic investments.
 - b. The FCRP is still in its early stages of operations and continuous intake has allowed the program to take a proactive and strategic approach to the development of agreements respecting the client business cycle, and the time it may take to develop partnerships necessary to prepare proposals and negotiate agreements. As a new program in a field of activity new to the Government of Canada, the program works closely with potential funding recipients from concept through to the proposal development. The program brings stakeholders together and funds them to run one project as a consortium. It is more efficient and to the extent the partners buy in, more effective in bringing about the kind of systemic change the program seeks to effect. However, as the program matures, becomes known and its demand and intake for project proposals increases, alternative approaches for proposal intake may be considered.
5. **With respect to comments about funding pressures, FCRP was required to fund Labour Mobility projects. Labour Mobility had no designated source of funds, the FCRP was identified as a funding source under the rationale that newcomers, like Canadians, face obstacles to working in various provinces because of differing provincial policies respecting licensure. While the Labour Mobility Program was certainly related to FCRP interests, this type of funding decision can detract from the FCRP objective fostering systematic change. Similarly, FCRP was approached to fund bridge-to-work and overseas pilot projects. While these pilot projects may help to inform future policy**

development and decision-making, the diversion of funds may affect achievement of program objectives.

- a. Recognition of foreign credentials is a complex subject that cannot be addressed in isolation. FCR is one of several components contributing to the competitiveness of Canada's economy by improving immigrants' labour market integration.
 - i. Bridge-to-work and overseas pilot projects have required little investment. However, overseas interventions will help immigrants to address issues associated with the recognition of foreign credentials prior to arriving in Canada. Some occupations require Canadian work experience as a requirement of credential recognition and licensing. Bridge-to-work pilot projects contribute directly to the FCR agenda and further the integration of immigrants into the labour market.
 - ii. Reducing internal barriers to labour mobility continues to be seen as a key to addressing FCR issues. When internal mobility issues for an occupation have been addressed, the willingness and ability of involved parties to address FCR issues is seen to be more likely. In the past, Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) did not have to address FCR issues. However, as of September 2006, MRAs must ensure that foreign credentials recognized in one jurisdiction are accepted by all others. The Selection Matrix which helps guide future FCR Program investments also directly links with labour mobility initiatives underway to help identify priority occupations.

6. The FCRP should develop ways to increase sharing of project results. Possibilities might include periodic conferences to share results, and placing summaries of each project on its website.

- a. FCRP is developing an on-line platform to showcase the current and past projects which have been funded under the FCRP. The intent is to present to the public a list of FCR projects along with a short description and a link to the contribution recipient's website. The online platform is in its final stages of development and should be live by spring 2007.
- b. FCRP is in the process of developing a more comprehensive Stakeholder Outreach Strategy to be complete by spring 2007. This strategy will be instrumental in facilitating the sharing of results, fostering new ideas and promoting collaboration among stakeholders.
- c. FCRP is contracting a third party to conduct a research case study that will showcase how FCR Program investment activities have achieved systematic change since 2004. This product, to be completed in spring 2007, could be disseminated to stakeholders through the web site.

Future Application of FCRP Formative Evaluation Recommendations

In summary, the initial conclusions of the Evaluation are generally positive and provide a critical path for improvements to FCRP's current and future systematic and collaborative approaches to credential recognition and assessment. This evaluation further contributes to FCRP's accountability and has resulted in the implementation of bi-annual Investment Analysis reports, centralized databases on project and outreach activities in addition to selection and risk matrices. These ongoing activities will ensure sound future investments. The Evaluation lessons and recommendations will continue to inform FCRP priorities.

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of the Formative Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP). The Formative Evaluation was undertaken to provide an early review and assessment of the program's objectives, design, performance measurement framework and data. The summary provided in this report consists of six chapters:

- Chapter 1 presents a brief description of the program and its context, and also presents the scope and methodology of the evaluation;
- Chapter 2 examines the program's objectives, and takes an early look at outputs and impacts;
- Chapter 3 examines issues related to program design and delivery;
- Chapter 4 assesses the Performance Measurement Framework, performance indicators and data;
- Chapter 5 identifies a number of factors that can be expected to affect the design of the Summative Evaluation of the FCRP and offers some suggestions; and
- Chapter 6 presents the conclusions, lessons and recommendations.

1.1 Program Overview and Context

The 2001 Speech from the Throne (as well as those in 2002 and 2004) highlighted the federal government's concerns about improving the integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian labour market. In addition, Canada's recent positive economic performance has highlighted skills and labour shortages in various regions and occupations. At the same time, other countries are facing similar challenges of dealing with both skills shortages and an ageing workforce. A commitment to facilitate employment for new and recent arrivals within their chosen occupation has also attracted considerable public policy attention at both the federal and provincial levels.

The FCRP is a key component of the Government of Canada's commitment to the attraction, selection and integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian economy and society at large. The FCRP is a contribution program that works with public and private sector partners to develop pan-Canadian approaches, tools and processes for foreign credential assessment and recognition. Potential partners include sector councils, occupational and professional regulatory organizations, educational institutions, other governments within Canada, and employers.

The FCRP focuses on selected regulated and non-regulated occupations. It uses contribution agreements to fund projects that are designed to facilitate understanding and resolution of the challenges associated with foreign credential recognition issues. For example, the program may fund projects involving research and analysis of problem areas, planning, process

development, activation of standardized processes and systems, development and dissemination of information, partnership development and related implementation activities. In this way, the FCRP seeks to increase awareness and the adoption of tools and processes that increase/improve standardization of approaches to foreign credential recognition, improve the ability of partners to assess foreign credentials, and reduce barriers for foreign-trained individuals to participate productively in the Canadian labour market.

The program is operated by the Human Resources Partnership Directorate, within Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), and has a total budget allocation of \$68 million over six years. Most of the program's funding is for the five years from May 2004 to May 2009. More detailed financial information is available in section 2.4.1 (Table 2.1).

The FCRP operates in a complex environment. In Canada, the issue of foreign credential assessment and recognition cuts across the federal and provincial levels of government. In addition, credential assessment agencies provide educational assessment services to employers, governments and academic institutions by validating academic credential documents for authenticity and determining their equivalency in the Canadian context.

Working in this environment, the FCRP involves a range of stakeholders and operates at a systemic level, rather than dealing with individuals. In addition, the FCRP goes beyond the task of credential "assessment" to fostering and facilitating credential "recognition" within Canada. This involves recognizing the wide range of diverse governance regimes, interests and responsibilities.

- There are 51 regulated occupations, more than 200 apprenticeable trades and over 400 regulatory bodies in Canada.
- There are 15 federal departments and agencies with direct interest in integrating foreign-educated immigrants into Canadian society – including labour market integration.
- There are at least three ministries (e.g., education/labour/health/advanced education) involved with immigrant integration in each jurisdiction.
- Post-secondary institutions undertake assessments of foreign credentials for the purposes of qualifying foreign-educated individuals for continuing education, and also provide training to immigrants seeking to meet Canadian standards or requirements.
- Employers are final arbiters in non-regulated occupations, and neither the federal nor the provincial governments can impose a particular system of credential recognition.
- Numerous immigrant-serving agencies are also involved. These agencies often pass along information (sometimes of varying degrees of completeness and/or accuracy) to prospective immigrants about the prospects of working in their occupation in Canada. Prospective immigrants may also seek this type of information from informal sources such as friends, family and acquaintances.

Although it is beyond the scope of this Formative Evaluation, it is worth noting at the outset that “credential recognition” as a policy issue touches upon other matters such as immigration policy and the immigration approval process, job-seeking strategies for immigrants, and the scope and quality of Canadian government generated Labour Market Information (LMI) that informs prospective immigrants about opportunities.

1.2 Evaluation Scope and Methodology

A formative evaluation is usually aimed at comparing the program as designed to the result as implemented, and assessing the managerial and operational effectiveness of the program. The Formative Evaluation of the FCRP was focused on four specific evaluation issues. Evaluators were requested to:

- facilitate an independent assessment of the clarity and relevance of the program objectives, and ensure that the objectives are measurable;
- assess the adequacy of program design in providing safeguards against overlap/duplication;
- validate the Performance Measurement Framework, ensuring the relevance of the performance indicators; and,
- assess the availability, reliability and validity of existing program data, and the feasibility of collecting new data needed to support the summative evaluation of the FCRP.

The extent to which the FCRP has met its objectives and the extent to which observed outputs and outcomes can be attributed to the program will be issues for a future summative evaluation.

Six main sources of information were used to conduct the Formative Evaluation: a review of documents and files; a review of administrative data; key informant interviews (with FCRP officials, representatives of credential assessment agencies across Canada, and representatives of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)); a survey of all (n=35) funded projects as of early autumn of 2005;¹ six case studies of projects funded by the FCRP (five with regulated occupations and one with a sector council); and an external review of the performance measurement system. In addition, the evaluation study used the internet and documentary evidence to obtain basic information on what other countries are doing in the area of foreign credential recognition.

¹ The response rate was 89% (n=31).

The following limitations should be noted.

- A primary caution is that most of the sources of information either work for the program (FCRP officials) or benefited from the program (FCRP contribution agreement holders who were surveyed by the project survey, or managers of funded projects who were interviewed in-depth for the case studies). Although the key informant interviews with credential assessment agencies (who have expressed some misgivings about the FCRP) were ostensibly independent sources of information, there is still the possibility of bias. On one hand, agencies could be biased against the program because they consider the FCRP to be duplicating at least some of what they are doing and/or that its growth might impact on their potential revenues. On the other hand, agencies might be indirect beneficiaries of FCRP funding. Given these circumstances, the evaluators were very much aware of the importance of exercising professional judgment when reporting on opinions/comments and ensuring that appropriate qualifiers were in place so that readers could understand the source and context of statements/opinions.
- The evaluation did not include the views of provincial and territorial representatives. The evaluators intended to interview provincial and territorial representatives as key informants, but FCRP officials requested that the interviews not proceed given that negotiations were ongoing with several jurisdictions at that time.
- In some instances the evaluators found that it was too early to develop a strong assessment of certain evaluation questions. Although the FCRP started operations in 2003, its formal announcement was in April of 2005 as part of the International Training Worker Initiative. At the time of the project survey (fall 2005) very few funded projects had reached the stage that would enable a strong assessment of the level of pan-Canada action and standardization for the development of partnerships, tools and processes being advanced by the program.

2. Objectives, Outputs and Early Impacts

This chapter examines the relevance of program objectives by examining:

- whether the program objective is realistic; and
- whether Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) contribution agreement holders are aware of what outputs and results they are accountable for.

This chapter also examines:

- what outputs the FCRP has achieved to date; and
- what are the early impacts of the FCRP.

The question of whether the mandate and operational objectives of the FCRP are clear (i.e. consistent with the logic model provided in the Results-based Management and Accountability Framework (RMAF)) is examined in Chapter 4 as part of the review of the performance indicators and measurement.

2.1 Objectives

The objective of the FCRP is “to develop coherent, transparent, fair and equitable foreign credential assessment and recognition processes to enhance labour market outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.”

The question of whether this objective is realistic was examined by considering:

- recent studies;
- what other countries are doing in this area;
- the complex environment in which the FCRP operates in Canada; and
- planned and actual program expenditures.

The additional question of whether FRCP agreement holders are aware of what outputs and results they are accountable for is examined as part of Section 2.2.

2.1.1 Recent Studies

Each new wave of immigrants to Canada has faced the challenge of finding employment in order to meaningfully integrate into Canadian society. Difficulties have arisen and have been discussed in the popular media with respect to highly-trained foreign professionals. The difficulties are often linked to one or more factors: real or perceived differences in educational, professional and regulatory standards; differences in skill levels; and/or access to or familiarity with the most up-to-date technology, equipment and research.

The objective of the FCRP is consistent with recent studies that identify non-recognition of foreign credentials as one of the factors in labour market outcomes for foreign-trained individuals. Recent studies suggest that it takes a highly skilled immigrant 10 years before he or she reaches the same level of employment as a Canadian with similar credentials.² That research identified lack of Canadian work experience and/or non-recognition of foreign credentials as one of the contributing factors. Other contributing factors identified by the research include a lack of proficiency in English or French, the fluctuating absorptive capacity of the Canadian labour market, and unsystematic requirements of regulators and employers.

2.1.2 Foreign Perspective

Other countries have or are developing processes for foreign credential recognition and are competing with Canada to attract highly skilled immigrants. Experts identified Australia, the United States (U.S.) and the Member States of the European Union (EU) as having initiatives that may be meaningfully compared and contrasted with Canada. Although it is difficult to summarize the efforts of any jurisdiction in a few paragraphs, the following summary provides a brief description of the approaches being used in these jurisdictions.

Australia³

The Australian system was identified by interviewees as being quite similar to the Canadian system. Australia, like Canada, faces skills shortages, and both countries seek to fill this void with highly-qualified immigrants.

A noteworthy difference in the Australian versus Canadian system is that individuals wanting to immigrate to Australia must identify an occupation from the “Skilled Occupations List” and have their skills and qualifications assessed by the relevant Australian assessing authority prior to entry into that country. Information on the process, including occupation-specific requirements, is available on the Australian Education International website. The website notes that each assessing authority has its own assessment procedures, timeframes and charges and that the process may be lengthy.

The advantage of the Australian approach is that the process of assessment, which can be time consuming, takes place while the prospective immigrant is still living and working in their home country. Problems with assessment and recognition would presumably come to light before the individual leaves his/her home country, allowing the individual to take this into consideration prior to making the move. This process also provides the prospective immigrants with a better idea of their potential for employment once they arrive in Australia. The government’s immigration website notes, however, that possessing qualifications that are acceptable for immigration purposes does not guarantee employment in their profession in Australia.

² Canadian Alliance of Education and Training Organization, *Foreign Credential Recognition: An Overview Of Practice in Canada*, 2004

³ Sources: <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/QualificationsRecognition/Default.htm>; www.immi.gov.au/migration/; www.immi.gov.au/settle/work/employment.htm

Unless immigrants have been nominated by a prospective employer in the first instance, they are on their own to find employment once landed in Australia. In some instances financial support, through the “Bridging Course for Overseas-Trained Professionals,” may be available to assist those that are required to complete bridging study before entering their chosen profession in Australia.

United States⁴

The U.S. Department of State website notes that, “in order to be eligible to apply for an immigrant visa, a foreign citizen must be sponsored by a U.S. citizen relative(s) or by a prospective employer.” It is up to prospective immigrants, before or after immigration, to obtain assessment of their credentials.

Employment, education and licensure are the jurisdiction of the individual states. The evaluation of foreign academic, professional, and vocational credentials is delegated to academic institutions and private sector evaluation services. The National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) is the principal national professional association representing private credential evaluation services. For non-regulated professions, the hiring employer is designated as the competent authority in assessing credentials. The United States Network for Education Information (USNEI) is the main U.S. portal for links and information about education in the U.S. and other countries, and includes a sub-heading on the topic of “Foreign Diploma and Credit Recognition”.

Using Internet searches to test ease of access, the evaluators noted that information on the U.S. recognition process and requirements for credential assessment and professional licensure were not easily found. Most Internet searches yielded private-sector services such as credential assessment agencies and immigration lawyers.

Member States of the European Union⁵

Since the Treaty of Rome, every citizen of a Member State of the EU has been free to practice a profession, provide services or set up a business within any other Member State. Because of its desire to allow for free mobility of citizens from one member country to another, the EU has focused on the need for recognition of professional and academic qualifications.⁶ The recognition of qualifications for professional (employment) purposes depends largely on whether or not the profession in question is regulated in the host country. The choice of which professions to regulate is left up to each member country. If a profession is not regulated, it is the employer that makes the decision regarding employment of a foreign-trained individual. In the case of regulated professions, the EU has established means by which the credentials of individuals from other member countries are either automatically recognized, or, in instances where there are discrepancies, have clearly identified remedial training that will be required in order for recognition to take place. As one of the key

⁴ Sources: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-visitus-forrecog.html>;
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-visitus-forrecog.html>;

⁵ Sources: www.enic-naric.net; http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Recognition/exp_text/

⁶ Individuals from countries that are not a part of the European Union reportedly face a similar situation to those arriving in Canada.

informants has noted, however, "...while protecting customers, consumers, patients etc. from low quality professional services, the national legislation in the field of regulated professions may well create unnecessary difficulties for professionals holding other countries' qualifications."⁷

The EU has created a system of evaluation centres under the umbrella of the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC); within ENIC each country has its own National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC). Through NARIC, academic credentials from foreign countries are assessed and equivalency is determined.

2.1.3 The Complex Environment in Canada

The objective of the FCRP, with its emphasis on processes and partnerships, is consistent with and aligned with the Canadian context of the program.

- Provincial and territorial governments, which have constitutional authority for the regulation of most professions, have delegated regulatory authority – including the right to determine licensing and certification (i.e., entry) requirements – to professional bodies established under legislation within their jurisdiction.
- Provinces and territories regulate skilled trades that involve apprenticeships, but do not apply control over non-regulated occupations.
- Each provincial self-regulatory body may operate independently from others in Canada. The independence of these bodies, in the absence of province-to-province coordinating arrangements or a national umbrella organization promulgating a national policy, can make more difficult the acceptance of cross-jurisdictional standards.
- Among provinces, regulatory bodies may use different methods and standards for the assessment of foreign qualifications, they may have varying requirements concerning required and acceptable documentation, and they may arrive at different conclusions about recognition of foreign credentials or what is required to meet provincial standards.
- A wide range of information providers exist in the “credential recognition area, together with a diverse range of the ways such information is imparted.”⁸

In addition, there appear to be some “disconnects” that deserve mention. This can be illustrated using the example of physicians. The immigration process is based on “points”. A university education or specialized skill gives the prospective immigrant some necessary points, but this is not necessarily related to subsequent employment within a chosen field. A foreign-trained physician would certainly receive points for a medical degree and/or a BSc, however he/she will also receive a letter indicating that there is no guarantee, and it can be highly unlikely, that this person will be able to work in their chosen profession or skill in Canada due to regulatory constraints and/or credential recognition difficulties. At

⁷ Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, Andrejs Rauhvargers, August, 2004.
http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Recognition/exp_text/

⁸ Stephen Adam, Too much or just right: how can information for recognition be improved? Presentation to the Council of Europe Seminar on Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process, 11-12. April 2001

the same time, there is free flow of information (and misinformation) across the globe and from a variety of sources suggesting that there is a shortage of physicians in Canada. One can draw a variety of conclusions here, but this example suggests that there might be a better match between applicants to Canada and available employment opportunities if the immigration selection criteria and credential recognition were more closely aligned to employment situations.

The presence of disconnects and barriers within and among processes and institutions that assess and recognize foreign credentials is the central issue impelling and justifying the FCRP. Under the program, the role of the federal government is to foster the development of pan-Canadian approaches to facilitate foreign credential recognition and to improve processes at a systemic level. Specifically, the FCRP provides a “contribution” to groups within selected occupations to work together to develop tools and processes for assessing and recognizing foreign credentials that will be acceptable to all jurisdictions. In this way, the program recognizes that the building of partnerships is central to success because of the number of partners, the complexity of issues, and the need for extensive coordination and open communication.

2.1.4 Planned and Actual Program Expenditures

The FCRP budget allocation of \$68 million over six years and the approved annual budget for the program are shown in Table 2.1. Financial assistance for projects is distributed in the form of contributions to partners. The FCRP Terms and Conditions specify that the maximum contribution payable to each recipient is \$2 million per fiscal year for up to five years.

Table 2.1								
Total FCRP Budget (Thousands of Dollars)								
Expenditures	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	Total	On-Going
Operating	\$373	\$1,273	\$1,665	\$1,742	\$1,567	\$1,567	\$8,187	\$1,080
Grants and Contributions	\$627	\$5,227	\$8,335	\$14,758	\$15,433	\$15,433	\$59,813	\$6,920
Total	\$1,000	\$6,500	\$10,000	\$16,500	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$68,000	\$8,000

Source: Foreign Credential Recognition Program Investment Analysis, January 09, 2006

The program objective recognizes the practical importance of taking a targeted approach. Rather than attempting to use the program budget to improve assessment and recognition processes across all 51 regulated occupations in Canada, or across the hundreds of non-regulated occupations, program designers initially focused on three occupational priorities established for the initial stage of the program: nurses, doctors and engineers. The method used to select these three occupational priorities is discussed in Section 3.1.

Program designers also identified a three-step process for achieving systemic change in the area of foreign credential recognition within an occupation. The use of the three-step process is strongly recommended by the program and is described below.

- **Diagnostic** is the first phase, and it has two fundamental aims. The first aim is to develop a detailed understanding of the problem by gathering and analyzing information on foreign credential recognition processes and approaches for the occupation as well as the challenges faced by foreign-educated individuals. The second aim is to ensure consensus and buy-in of proffered solutions by building partnerships with all key stakeholders.
- **Formulating Recommendations** (*i.e. an action plan*) is the second phase. During this stage, the consortium devises a plan and validates it in the community using the research findings derived from the diagnostic phase. The chief aims are to identify barriers to employment and integration, discover gaps in the integration process, uncover best practices for dealing with the barriers and develop appropriate recommendations.
- **Implementing Recommendations** is the third phase. The recommendations (*i.e.*, regarding tools and processes) derived from the second phase must be implemented and used by regulatory bodies, professional associations, employers, educational institutions, and other partners. The aim is to develop standardized processes for the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials.

As of September of 2005, 35 projects had been approved for FRCP funding and about one-quarter of these projects targeted the initial three priority occupations. Data on FCRP projects were provided in the form of files containing tombstone data plus activities, outputs, and outcomes on a subset of projects that the evaluator compiled into a master file. These administrative data were supplemented by data collected by the survey of all funded projects.

- The total number of projects approved as of September 2005 was 35. Only two applications were rejected.
- Of the 35 projects, four (11%) dealt with international medical graduates, four (11%) targeted internationally educated engineers and one (3%) dealt with internationally educated nurses. Thus, one-quarter of the projects targeted the initial three priority occupations.
- As of late September of 2005, a total of \$15,943,135 had been approved or committed. About 56% of the contributions expenditures by early autumn of that year had been spent or allocated to projects targeting regulated professions; 26% of the spending related to non-regulated occupations; the balance (18%) went to other projects that addressed issues for both regulated and non-regulated occupations.

Although actual expenditures are lower than planned, there are several explanations for this situation. In 2005-06, \$15 million was to be expended, but the program re-profiled \$8.5 million into the next two fiscal years. The reason was twofold. First, the engagement process took more time to yield promising projects. Second, the early work done for projects – diagnostic analysis – costs less than the subsequent implementation.

The document review and informant interviews indicated that the program has encountered some hurdles/constraints in addressing the program objective. The initial hurdle was the time it took to get the program launched. The FCRP started operations in 2003, but it was only announced in April of 2005 as part of the International Trained Worker

Initiative (ITWI) and could not be actively publicized prior to its formal announcement. Outreach was carried out on a meeting-by-meeting basis, but the inability of project recipients to publicize may have hindered their progress. Another hurdle is that negotiations with the provinces have also been slow. At the time of the evaluation, two years of negotiations had yielded two agreements (with Manitoba and British Columbia).

2.2 Outputs and Outcomes

This section draws from the survey, the case studies of projects, and key informant interviews to take an early look at outputs and outcomes.

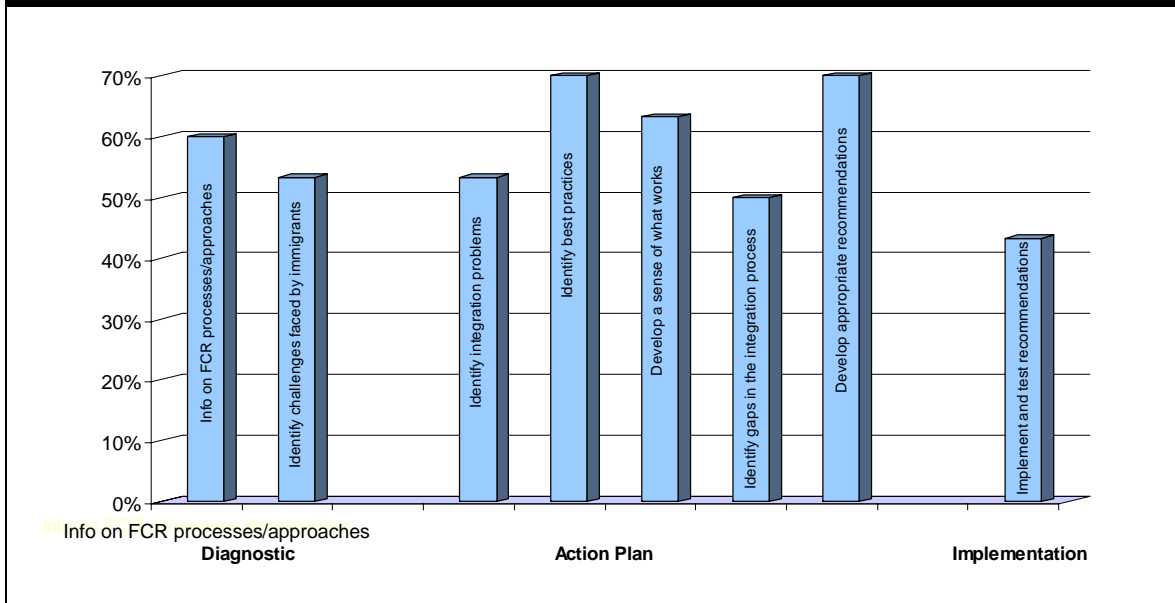
2.2.1 An Early Look at Outputs

As noted above, 35 projects had been approved for FRCP funding as of September 2005. The 31 projects that returned surveys reported a total budget of \$17,861,658, which implies that the FCRP funded approximately 90% of the project budgets. Survey results showed that 43% of the FCRP recipients were funded solely by the FCRP.

Information collected by the project survey and supplemented by administrative data indicated that project outputs correspond to the three phases (diagnostic, formulating recommendations (action plan), and implementing recommendations) strongly recommended by the program for achieving systemic change. Most projects, as suggested by Figure 2.1, spanned two or three phases and were aimed at generating multiple outputs. For example, 70% of the projects were aimed at identifying best practices and 70% were to develop appropriate recommendations. The average number of outputs per project was 5.⁹

⁹ As noted in Section 1.2, the extent to which the observed outputs and early outcomes can be attributed to the program will be issues for a future summative evaluation.

Figure 2.1
Main Outputs – Most Projects Span Two or Three Phases



Source: Survey of funded projects (n=31). Refers to projects approved as of September 2005.

The project data also indicated that most of the first 35 projects have focused mainly on the diagnostic¹⁰ and recommendations phases (as seen in Figure 2.1), while just over 40% included the implementation phase. This means that, during the early stage of the program, the emphasis has been on laying the appropriate groundwork to ensure that partners develop a sound understanding of the current situation and agree on the potential solutions. The projects involving the initial three targeted occupations tended to be the furthest along to the implementation phase, in part because some of these projects had started earlier under other funding auspices.

The six case studies provided a more in-depth assessment of some of the projects involving the initial three targeted occupations.¹¹ The six case studies were selected on the basis of the significance of the projects in terms of size and expected impact. *In general, the case study analysis indicated that some of the advanced projects were implementing tools and processes that could be expected to achieve more coherent, transparent, fair and equitable foreign credential and recognition processes.*

- The *Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE)* has undertaken three projects. A “phase I” (diagnostic) project¹² undertook a comprehensive environmental scan (diagnostic) of the International Engineering Graduate (IEG) experience before

¹⁰ It should be noted that some projects did not involve diagnostics due to the fact that these projects had already been started under other funding auspices (e.g., in collaboration with Health Canada programs) and were shifted to the FCRP at the recommendation and/or implementation stage.

¹¹ Each case study included an in-depth interview with the project manager, interviews with other managers or advisory group members, a review of relevant documents, a review of relevant internet sites, and administrative and survey data on each project. The five case studies that included a site visit also included site-visit observations.

¹² This project started in January, 2003 (before FCRP was launched) and was initially funded by the Sectoral Partnerships Initiative. Once the FCRP became operational, the file was shifted to the FCRP.

immigration and once in Canada. A “phase II” (recommendations) project analyzed the data gathered in phase I, determined what part of the integration process needed improvement, developed processes and tools to help IEGs, developed 17 recommendations and started building consensus among stakeholders on key issues. Besides the final report, Phase II outputs included creation of a website dedicated to the project (containing all reports); distribution of regular e-bulletins to major stakeholders; presentation of project information at various engineering conferences; development of fact sheets to explain the project in five languages; and production of a document entitled “Plan to Implement the Recommendations.” The implementation phase was just beginning at the time of the evaluation. For this phase, the FCRP was funding one of the recommended projects (to date) that is to create a database that all regulatory bodies in Canada will use to foster more efficient foreign credential assessment decisions and protocols for assessing foreign credentials.

- The project entitled *Canadian Information Centre for IMGs* was aimed at implementing a website created by the Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (AIPSO) for “international medical graduates” (IMGs). The purpose of the website was to provide detailed information regarding medical licensure in Canada.¹³ The case study analysis found that the website offers a great deal of information, is well organized and looks professional. IMGs in Canada and around the world can readily use the website via a computer and the Internet.
- The *Medical Council of Canada* (MCC) was funded for three FCRP projects: one developed a web-based self-assessment tool to help IMGs self assess their level of readiness to take the MCC Evaluating Examination; one is creating a National Credential Verification Agency and Physicians Registry; and one will transform the MCC Evaluation Examination to make it available more frequently and in more locations around the world.
- Under the project titled *The National IMG Database*, the FCRP is funding implementation¹⁴ to produce a national database to facilitate research and planning regarding access to Canadian training and practice for “...IMGs and the eventual contribution of IMGs to the Canadian physician workforce.”¹⁵ Once finalized, the database will be used to: identify traits of IMGs obtaining licenses in each jurisdiction; determine timelines for points along the pathway to obtaining licenses; determine how background variables relate to these same points; identify hindrances to licensure; and describe the contribution of IMGs to the Canadian workforce. This project is being undertaken by the Canadian Post-M.D. Education Registry (CAPER). CAPER proposes to release only group-level data in the form of tables and graphs.¹⁶

¹³ The research and design were done under funding from Health Canada prior to the FCRP.

¹⁴ The feasibility study was focused by Health Canada and focused on matters that the FCRP would likely categorize as being equivalent to its diagnostic and recommendation phases.

¹⁵ Calgary IMG National Symposium held in 2002

¹⁶ In other words, individual level data will not be available to outside users.

- The project entitled *Diagnostic Evaluation of National Assessment of International Nurse Applicants* was undertaken by the Canadian Nurses Association and produced a report. The report, entitled, “Navigating to Become a Nurse in Canada,” represents the output of the diagnostic and recommendations phases of the project.
- Under the project titled *Prior Learning and Foreign Credential Assessment and Recognition (PLFCAR)*, the Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council was funded to develop a PLFCAR system. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is defined as “the process of identifying, assessing and recognizing skills, knowledge, or competencies that have been acquired through work experience, unrecognized training, independent study, volunteer activities, and hobbies.”¹⁷ The PLFCAR system will assist in assessing candidates and in planning the best means to fill any training gaps. Results will be stored in the PLFCAR database, which will also be used to rate the training provided by training institutions outside of Canada.¹⁸

The project survey and case study analysis also indicated that FCRP agreement holders were aware of the outputs and results they were accountable for. For example, all respondents to the project survey said that the outputs and results that their project produced or will produce match what HRSDC is expecting from that project.

2.2.2 An Early Look at Outcomes

Although it is too early to develop a strong assessment of the level of pan-Canada action/processes and partnerships for addressing foreign credential recognition, the evidence drawn from key informants, survey respondents and the case studies suggests that the FCRP is progressing towards its intended outcomes.

- The case study analysis indicated that the emphasis on laying the appropriate ground work, although often time consuming, was considered to be important for a thorough examination of the issues and buy-in for the development and implementation of tools and processes.
- The project survey indicated that project managers felt their individual projects went a long way towards achieving the immediate objectives of the FCRP. This also suggests the projects selected for funding accord well with the aims of the program. When asked what the most successful aspect of their project was, survey respondents most often mentioned the collaboration of key stakeholders to build consensus, and the enthusiasm around the issues and recommendations to bring about recognition that barriers exist for immigrants and that there is a need to do something about them.

¹⁷ Human Resource Development, Canada (HRDC). *Prior Learning Assessment Newsletter*, 1(2). Ottawa, Ontario: Human Resource Development Canada, May, 1995.

¹⁸ Funding of \$1,606,200 from FCRP made this the largest single project funded by the program at the time of the evaluation.

- Despite the postponement of program launch, both HRSDC key informants (program managers and staff) and the survey respondents (FCRP funding recipients) felt the FCRP will do well in achieving the immediate outcome of increasing understanding, consensus and commitment on issues and potential solutions related to foreign credential recognition. As shown in Table 2.2, this outcome received an average rating of 5.7 out of 7 in the case of HRSDC interviewees and 6 out of 7 in the case of FCRP funding recipients.

Table 2.2		
Perceptions on the Prospects that the FCRP Will Achieve its Outcomes		
FCRP OUTCOMES	HRSDC Key Informants	FCRP Recipient Agencies
Immediate Outcomes		
Increased understanding, consensus and commitment on issues and potential solutions related to foreign credential recognition	5.7	6.0
Identification and dissemination of best practices that can be applied across Canada	4.9	6.2
Identification of future occupations/sectors facing critical shortages	5.0	3.1
Enhanced national coordination and action with regard to foreign credential recognition	4.6	5.5
Medium Term Outcomes		
Standardization of Pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes in targeted occupations	4.3	4.4
Increased awareness and availability of tools and processes for employers/regulators to assess and recognize foreign credentials	4.9	5.3
Long Term Outcomes		
Improved ability of sectors/employers/regulators to assess and recognize foreign-trained individuals	4.3	5.6
Reduced barriers to entry into the labour market by foreign-trained individuals	4.6	5.3
Sources: Key informant interviews with FCRP officials and the survey of funded projects.		
Note: Table entries are average responses (where 1 = to no extent, and 7 = to a great extent).		

- Both HRSDC key informants and the survey respondents were hopeful about the prospects of achieving the medium-term outcome of increasing awareness and availability of tools and processes for employers/regulators to assess and recognize foreign credentials. As shown in Table 2.2, this outcome received an average rating of almost 5 in the case of HRSDC informants and slightly over 5 in the case of FCRP funding recipients. Although this is ultimately the responsibility of project partners, FCRP officials felt that in most cases the partners have enthusiastically bought into project recommendations. For much the same reason, the key informants and survey respondents were also optimistic about the prospects for identifying and disseminating best practices that can be applied across Canada (i.e. projects have identified many best practices and partners seem willing to adopt them). HRSDC informants and the survey

respondents were somewhat less optimistic about the prospects for standardization of pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes in targeted occupations (4.3 and 4.4 out of 7, respectively).

- Regarding the long term outcomes, the prospects of achieving improved ability of sectors/employers/regulators to assess and recognize foreign-trained individuals were rated as 4.3 by HRSDC interviewees, but somewhat higher (rated as 5.6) by FCRP funding recipients. The reasons given for this rating centred on what the program can realistically do with the available funding.

At the same time, some shortcomings or areas that could influence the ability of the program to achieve outcomes were identified.

- A common theme among the least successful aspects of the FCRP was the delay in getting approval to proceed or the acquisition of needed information. This was noted by six of the 13 recipient organizations who responded to the question.
- There was a perception among key informants that there were too few analysts to adequately oversee the number and size of projects envisaged for the coming years (currently there are four analysts, and there is approval to hire two more).
- Only one-third of survey respondents said they used the results of other FCRP projects. Some survey respondents commented that there has been too little sharing of project results, which could lead to duplication of effort.
- The case study analysis identified the following areas that could influence the achievement of outcomes:
 - Evidence collected on the experience of the AIPSO suggested that the regulatory and political realities in each province can be a major challenge – which, in turn, underscores and supports the leadership role of the federal government to create and promote standards and pan-Canada processes.
 - The CCPE’s experience indicates that completing the three-phase process can take years. Therefore, a one - or two-year project is unlikely to move far enough through the process to foster dramatic change.
 - Identifying sources of ongoing funding to support tools and processes developed through the FCRP may become a challenge as more projects progress to the implementation stage.

Despite the evidence suggesting that FCRP is achieving some early success, it is important to emphasize that it is too early to develop a strong assessment of the level of pan-Canada action and standardization for the development of partnerships and tools to address foreign credential recognition, or the adoption of foreign credential recognition tools and processes. Engineers and physicians are at the implementation stage, but few other projects/occupations have reached this stage.

3. Program Design and Delivery

This chapter examines issues related to program design and delivery.

3.1 Decision-Making – Deciding What Should Be Funded

A number of strategies for deciding what should be funded have been developed and used to advance the agenda of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP). As noted in Section 2.1.4, program designers initially focused on three occupational priorities established for the initial stage of the program: nurses, doctors and engineers. The choice of the initial three occupations was influenced by labour market conditions and targeted on specific issues. In the case of doctors and nurses, there is an apparent shortage of physicians and a looming shortfall of nurses in Canada. In the case of engineers, the large number of immigrants designating themselves as professional engineers overwhelmed the capacity of self-regulatory organizations to vet the qualifications of foreign-trained individuals.

The work in the three original regulated occupations was intended to serve as a roadmap for other professions and occupations. In particular, the “Phase I” project of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers set a precedent, not only because it was the first FCRP project, but because it was also the archetype of the FCRP three-phase process – diagnosis, recommendations (action plan), and implementation – strongly recommended by the program.

The FCRP has not yet settled on a definitive means of determining what professions/occupations to focus on in the future. Regarding the identification of additional priority occupations, the provincial/territorial Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources has prioritized five additional health-related occupations with existing or looming human resource challenges: pharmacy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, medical laboratory science, and medical radiation technology. At the same time, the FCRP is trying to put in place more generalized strategies for identifying near-term priorities.

- One strategy involves using existing labour market information from such sources as the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) and the National Occupational Classification (NOC) to help identify occupations for study. At the time of the evaluation, the FCRP had asked COPS/NOC for specific data for planning purposes, but was awaiting these data.
- A second strategy involves working with the provinces and territories and other federal government departments to identify the most urgent areas for action. This approach involves negotiating with the different jurisdictions with respect to Contribution Agreements. At the time of the evaluation, two provinces had signed such agreements.

On the non-regulated side, Sector Councils are being used as the venue of choice for advancing the agenda of the program. There are 34 sector councils covering about half the labour market. The expectation is that Sector Councils will:

- establish partnerships with educational institutions and assessment agencies to adapt tools to be of use to employers and newcomers who want their credentials assessed and recognized in a non-regulated occupation;
- bring the issue of foreign credential recognition to the attention of employers, industry and the public; and
- work with employers to develop their capability to assess and recognize foreign credentials.

At the time of the evaluation, however, the Sector Council work was in the early stages. Four councils had been funded by the FCRP:¹⁹ Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council; Environmental Careers Organization of Canada; Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council; and Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council.

3.2 Duplication

Within the federal government, 15 agencies are involved in immigration settlement and integration of those immigrants into the labour force. Along with the FCRP, other programs include Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) programs for settlement and language training, Health Canada's internationally-trained health professionals programs, Heritage Canada's anti-discrimination programs, and a Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) portal (on the Going to Canada website) that provides labour market information.

In such a complex arena, there is always a potential for duplication, or at least the perception of duplication of effort, as both the federal and provincial jurisdictions attempt to deal with the issue of foreign credential assessment and recognition. It is important to emphasize that the FCRP is aimed at fostering collaborative approaches to develop processes to deal with the issue at a systemic level – and creating synergy in this complex area is not the same thing as duplication. In addition, *the document review and key informant interviews indicated that the FCRP has taken steps and put in place a number of safeguards to control for overlap/duplication.*

As noted in Section 2.1.4, the FCRP was announced as part of the ITWI in April 2005. The ITWI was generally cited by FCRP interviewees when asked what mechanisms are in place to prevent duplication. The ITWI's objective is "to facilitate the integration of internationally trained Canadians and immigrants into Canada's labour force",²⁰ and it was established to coordinate efforts and control for overlap/duplication. The FCRP took the lead on planning and developing ITWI and is currently the co-leader of ITWI. Five subcommittees staffed by program, policy, communications and research specialists from each department set joint

¹⁹ Technically the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (funded for 2 projects) is a sector council, but their FCRP work targeted a regulated group: engineers.

²⁰ Internationally Trained Workers Initiative Overview, Government of Canada

priorities and keep the federal effort coordinated. The five subcommittees relate to communications, project review, research, bridge to work, and overseas capacity. The FCRP initiated and provided most of the support for all five subcommittees. It leads three and co-leads the other two (communications and research).

ITWI's project review committee reviews all projects recommended for FCRP (as well as other programs). It does not perform an explicit challenge function on a project-by-project basis nor does it have overall oversight capability; rather, it looks at each project in terms of how it ties into the overall federal strategy and offers suggestions for improvement. FCRP managers, as part of this committee, are informed about what other federal programs are doing in the area, learn how they may tie in with what FCRP is doing, and determine what links can be made among the programs and whether and how the FCRP may be of assistance. Each department has full authority for its individual projects and does not need the approval of the others, but others may give information (such as whether they are already funding the same or a similar project) or advice (such as adding an aspect to a project to cover a critical concern of theirs).

Within HRSDC there are programs and initiatives that touch upon FCRP's policy and program scope of interest. These include the Workplace Skills Initiative, Essential Skills, Sector Council Program, and Foreign Workers Program, for example. The Workplace Skills Branch – which includes some of these programs as well as the FCRP – has for several years convened a weekly management (Directors) meeting where all projects are discussed and approved.

There is greater potential for duplication of effort with respect to provincial activities, although the FCRP has or is putting in place some agreements and other strategies to coordinate efforts with the provinces. Several provinces have developed their own strategies to address the issue of foreign credential recognition, and selected initiatives bear a strong resemblance to the FCRP initiatives. For example:

- An Ontario funded program entitled “Regulators for Access,” is “designed to help Ontario regulatory bodies improve access by international candidates to self-regulated professions in Ontario while maintaining standards for public safety.”²¹ Members of the program's steering committee represent many of the same regulatory bodies involved in FCRP projects.
- Alberta has recently issued a policy framework on integrating immigrants into the Alberta labour force: “Supporting Immigrants and Immigration to Alberta.” One section of this framework identifies the following strategies: “Expand efforts to work with regulatory bodies to develop innovative assessment frameworks that recognize foreign credentials as well as skills and work experience gained abroad, reducing the time required to complete the assessment.”²²

²¹ Source: www.regulators4access.ca/

²² Source: www.gov.ab.ca/hre/immigration

- Manitoba has adopted a strategy that looks at “qualification recognition” as opposed to “credential” recognition. Manitoba’s focus is on systemic change which requires the involvement of many stakeholders including various levels of government, regulatory bodies, institutions and employers.
- Québec’s Task Force on Access to Regulated Trades and Professions (*Groupe de travail sur l’accès aux professions et métiers réglementés*) has a mandate to identify the difficulties involved in recognizing competencies and training, and to propose solutions to eliminate these problems. The “*Groupe de travail* carried out a thorough examination of the obstacles encountered by foreign-trained immigrants seeking recognition of their training and experience by regulatory bodies and (it) used its findings to put forward realistic solutions for facilitating access to regulated trades and professions.”²³
- Interviewees also made reference to databases and immigration information portals that were under development.

Notwithstanding the heightened provincial interest and focus on the matter of credential recognition, the challenge remains to create the synergy to encourage the various jurisdictions to work together and agree on standards. Greater continuity across the country is one of the main goals of the FCRP. It is worth noting again that creating synergy in this complex area is not the same thing as duplication. FCRP strives to bring consistency across the country in terms of foreign credential recognition and assessment by bringing key players together from all jurisdictions to learn how other jurisdictions are dealing with foreign credential recognition and to generate pan-Canadian approaches. That being said, the FCRP is dealing bi-laterally with every province in an attempt to coordinate efforts to prevent duplication and to encourage and facilitate standardization across the jurisdictions. In addition, the FCRP contributions support mainly national organizations. In the event of considering support for provincially based organizations, FCRP requires the proponent to provide a letter of recommendation/support from the province to ensure there is no duplication.

3.3 Communications

The key informant interviews indicated that communications with the provinces were considered good for the most part, and bi-lateral negotiations are ongoing with all provinces but Québec.

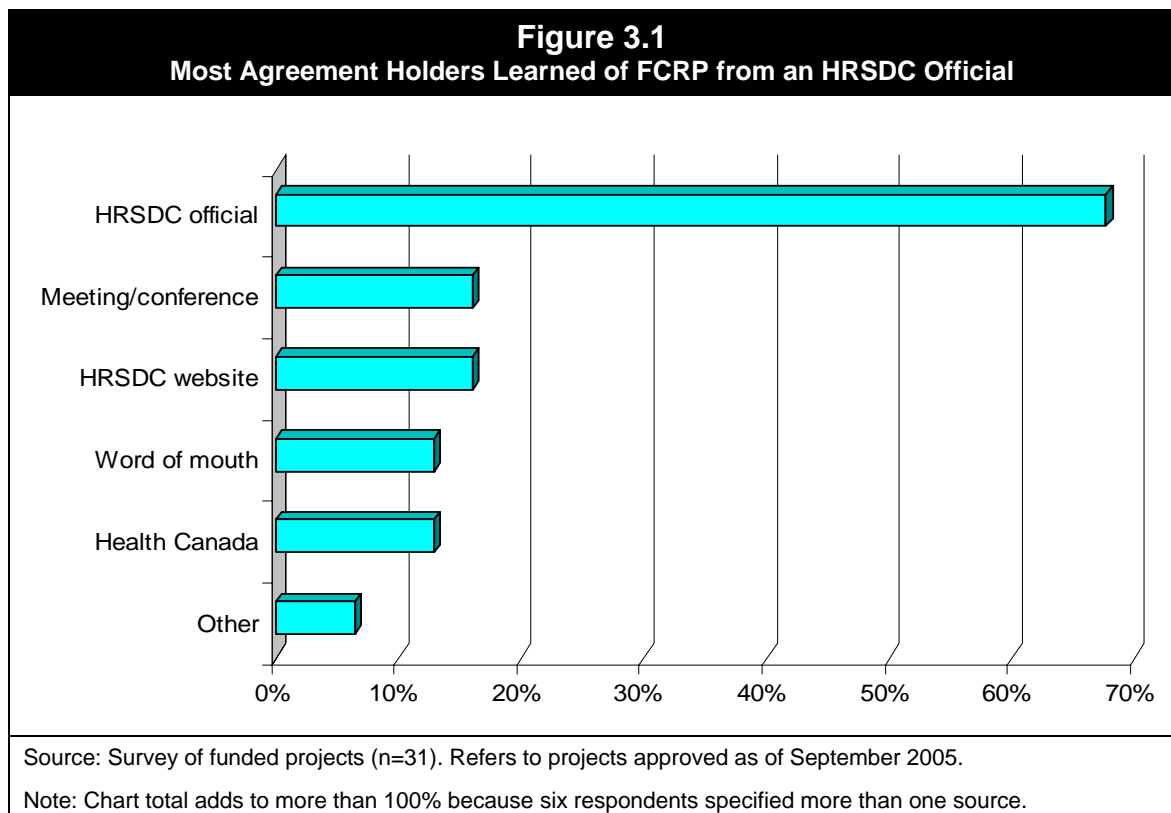
Communications with agreement holders were generally considered to be good. FCRP officials who were key informants felt that communications with agreement holders were straightforward. For example, there are financial and narrative reporting requirements throughout the project. A final audit report and final summative report (narrative of what was accomplished) are required at project completion. The case study analysis found that most of those funding recipients considered the monitoring requirements reasonable and communications good, although one organization had reservations about financial reporting.

²³ Source: “Rapport du Groupe de travail sur l’accès aux professions et métiers réglementés, February 2005

The survey of funded projects asked respondents to grade/rate the monitoring and reporting requirements for the FCRP, and the average of these grades was 'B' (indicating "good").

One aspect of communications that was problematic related to "outreach". At issue was the delayed official announcement of the program that subsequently proved to be an obstacle to an effective outreach campaign. A public announcement when the program actually started may have led to a more immediate knowledge of and interest in the program. There has been no generalized marketing effort. Targeted marketing has occurred with several regulated occupations and a few non-regulated ones (typically through sector councils). In general however, marketing effort is characterized by an information kit that managers and staff hand out at conferences. In addition, managers give presentations at relevant conferences or visit key groups such as sector councils to encourage them to think about foreign credential recognition in their field.

Most funding recipients learned about the program from an HRSDC official. The survey of funded projects asked respondents how they found out about the program. Results conform to the targeted marketing effort the FCRP managers said they undertook, with most funding recipients (close to 70%) having learned of the program from an HRSDC official (as indicated in Figure 3.1).



4. Performance Measurement

A standard requirement for program design and evaluation is the development of a set of performance indicators that provide meaningful accountability reporting to elected representatives and that can assist managers with respect to planning, monitoring and evaluating program results. This chapter assesses²⁴ the performance measurement strategy of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) by examining the following questions:

- i. Is the logic model an appropriate reflection of the mandate, objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes of the program?
- ii. Are the proposed performance indicators themselves appropriate?
- iii. Have the individual performance indicators been sufficiently well-defined to produce timely, consistent and reliable data for decision making?
- iv. Are the data collection procedures feasible and economical?
- v. Are the performance data in fact being collected and reported, and are they timely, consistent and reliable?
- vi. To what extent are the performance data being used and integrated by FCRP management for ongoing program management and decision making?
- vii. To what extent are agreement holders providing appropriate results information, and to what extent is that information being shared?

This review of the performance measurement strategy for the FCRP found that the strategy is appropriate for the most part and is being implemented. The logic model was found to be consistent with the mandate of the program and to be internally consistent. The performance indicators for the most part were found to link to the results identified in the logic model. At the same time, the evaluators identified a number of areas where individual indicators could be improved. For example, some indicators could be dropped, because they are duplicated, and others should be made more precise. In addition, the evaluators found that the performance indicators should be better documented and defined. As well, little performance data had been generated at the time of the evaluation, and consequently little use had been made of performance data except in monitoring the progress of projects. It should be noted, however, that a performance measurement database with data was in the process of being set up for the FCRP, with an anticipated completion date of mid-November. The evaluators also found that the program appears to be using what results information it has, and is ensuring that funded projects link clearly to the results that the FCRP is trying to achieve.

²⁴ This assessment draws from the key informant interviews, and the document review (which included a review of the documentation for the FCRP's logic model, documentation for the intake and review of funding applications, and a sample of project records). In addition, a group interview was conducted with key managers and staff of the program.

4.1 Is the Logic Model an Appropriate Reflection of the Program?

The logic model of the FCRP was reviewed for consistency with the program's mandate and for internal consistency from one level of the logic model to the next. Consistency problems with logic models generally fall into three categories. First, the link between one level and another is sometimes tenuous. For example, a training program might identify access to training of unemployed workers as a short term outcome and secure earnings of trainees as an intermediate outcome – but an important logical link is missed here (for example, the improved ability of trainees to obtain employment). A second problem is that logic models sometimes contain activities (or outcomes) that are not consistent with the program or do not appear able to affect the program's outcomes in any material way. A third problem is that logic models often contain outcomes that are not supported by activities that could reasonably be expected to affect those outcomes.

The review found the logic model of the FCRP to be consistent with the program mandate and to be internally consistent. All the levels of the logic model seem to flow directly from the preceding level, and the activities, outputs and outcomes all represent a plausible chain of expected results. As well, the outcomes are supported by activities. The FCRP is not the only influence on the outcomes, as the RMAF clearly points out, but the expected contribution of the FCRP is noted within the logic model.

4.2 Are the Performance Indicators Per Se Appropriate?

This question was assessed in two ways: via a group interview with HRSDC officials and by assessing each individual performance indicator.

The group interview produced findings that were generally favourable to the current set of performance measures. Participants in the group interview seemed fully aware of the FCRP performance measures and all felt familiar with them. In general, participants felt that the FCRP performance indicators were appropriate, but that some of the indicators were too far beyond the control of FCRP to be used as accountability or management tools. These concerns centered on the two indicators of the ultimate outcome, but also included the output indicator “participation rates of federal departments for each committee”. The group's concerns and comments raise several important points.

- Ultimate outcomes are by definition affected by many factors other than the impact of any individual program. In that respect, indicators of ultimate outcomes may not be useful for program management and program accountability simply because attribution becomes more difficult as external factors to the program cannot be adequately controlled. That being said, it is appropriate to have indicators of ultimate outcomes because they do have use in strategic planning and in summative evaluation. For example, a summative evaluation might find that ultimate outcomes did not occur as intended despite success in achieving immediate and intermediate outcomes. In terms of management

and accountability, however, attention is often focused on immediate and medium-term outcomes.

- Regarding the output indicator, participants in the group interview observed that committee participation rates were high initially, but in some cases participation had fallen off or committee members were often sending delegates rather than attending in person. These developments do not necessarily mean that program performance is declining. It might just mean that committee members are sufficiently confident that the committees are functioning well that they do not require as much personal attention. In a similar sense, some performance indicators can have a limited “shelf life” – they might have been useful early in the program, but later they may need to be replaced by different indicators. The point of assessing performance in any performance indicator is that program managers need to be alert for trends or for variances between planned and actual performance, and investigate them. If management feels that corrective action is required regarding an indicator, then it should take such action. But program managers must bear in mind that trends or variance might also mean that targets should be adjusted to current needs.

Findings from the Assessment of Individual Performance Measures

The assessment of each performance indicator supported the generally favourable assessment provided by the group interview. Overall, there appear to be a manageable number of FCRP performance indicators, although some could be discontinued or replaced by others. For the most part the FCRP performance indicators do reflect the results FCRP is trying to achieve, although there may be indicators (such as committee participation rates) that might usefully be replaced by others. As well, there is not much duplication of indicators, and most of the performance indicators have been stated in fairly precise terms.

4.3 Are Individual Performance Indicators Sufficiently Well-Defined?

In order to be implemented properly, each performance indicator needs to be thoroughly defined/documented to ensure that individuals who enter and compile the performance data do so in a way that will generate timely, consistent and relevant information. Each indicator ought to have precise definitions of terms, the source of the performance data needs to be clearly noted, the data collection and calculation procedure must be laid out along with the timing and frequency of collection, the timing and format of reporting performance should be specified, and the individuals responsible for managing the performance measure (along with their backup) should be identified.

Evaluators conducted a review of the documentation of each performance indicator alone and merged this review with opinions from key informant interviews and the group meeting. ***The review found that there was no documentation of the performance indicators beyond what appeared in the RMAF.*** Of particular note, key terms and data sources were not sufficiently well defined. Without precise definitions, FCRP runs a risk

that performance data would not be timely and would ultimately result in inconsistent and unreliable reports. *Therefore the FCRP should develop detailed documentation of each of its performance indicators.*

4.4 Are Data Collection Procedures Manageable and Economical?

At the time of the evaluation, it was not possible to assess the manageability/feasibility and economy of data collection processes and reporting because of the lack of documentation of the performance measures. FCRP had created a budget for each of its performance measures, however, and that suggests that FCRP has given attention to the implementation and use of the performance indicators. *Therefore, following the detailed documentation of each of its performance indicators, FCRP should review the budget for each performance indicator in order to verify the costs associated with performance measurement.*

4.5 Are the Performance Data Being Collected and Reported?

In the absence of performance information, the performance measurement process can make no contribution to strengthened accountability or improved program performance. Except for information on output, at the time of the evaluation there had been no performance reports containing a compilation and consolidation of the ongoing performance indicators. This may be due to the fact that some data collection methods had just been implemented; however other performance data were not being generated. *Therefore FCRP needs to continue to devote resources to developing data collection methods and proceed to compile the performance information.*

4.6 To What Extent Are the Performance Data Being Used?

Even if appropriate, timely, consistent and reliable performance data are available, there is no guarantee that management will use it. As is often the case with other programs, procedures have to be implemented to ensure that management reviews the performance measurement data on a regular basis.

Evaluators intended to answer this question through the key informant interviews, the group meeting, and a review of written records (e.g. management committee meeting minutes) to note whether the performance reports had been formally received and reviewed and whether any action had been taken as a consequence. *At the time of the evaluation, however, there was no evidence of report compilation and the consolidation of the ongoing performance indicators.* This is not to imply that FCRP management and staff do not consider available results in decision making. The performance measurement database was being populated with data at the time of the evaluation, with an expected completion date of mid-November 2005. When the database is fully populated, information will be entered on a continuous basis as it is received, so FCRP could in theory review performance data at any interval. *Therefore FCRP should continue its efforts to gather performance data and should report it for management review on a quarterly basis, as planned.*

4.7 Are Agreement Holders Providing Appropriate Results Information, and Is There Sharing?

The intended results of the FCRP are achieved through the action of recipient organizations. That, as well as the fundamental importance of accountability of results for resources, means that contribution recipients need to plan for and report results. Evaluators reviewed this matter via the group interview, by reviewing the documents used by the FCRP for the intake and evaluation of funding applications, and by reviewing a sample of project records to see if results information was included. *On the basis of the available information, evaluators noted an active review process to promote a results measurement orientation. At this early stage, however, there is little actual result-based information flowing from the projects to FCRP and consequently little being shared.*

5. Challenges for a Summative Evaluation

This chapter looks at some factors that can be expected to affect the design of a summative evaluation. It includes the following: exploring the feasibility of constructing a suitable comparison group for analysis and considering statistical approaches to comparison group analysis for a summative evaluation; exploring potential methodological strategies in case there is no suitable comparison group; identifying potential methodologies available to produce quantitative estimates of program impact; and exploring what results-oriented data are available from agreement holders and recommending what indicators the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) and its agreement holders should begin collecting to facilitate future evaluations.

To assess the requirements for a summative evaluation, the evaluators:

- questioned case study informants about the data they collect on their activities under the FCRP and the kinds of information they maintained in their databases;
- asked survey respondents whether the project developed performance indicators to monitor progress and report results; and
- reviewed a previous evaluation report that focused on this task – “Formative Evaluation of the Sectoral Partnerships Initiative.”

5.1 The Challenge of Diverse Project Outputs and Impacts

The case study analysis indicated that the FCRP is funding a diverse range of projects that are aimed at producing diverse project outputs and impacts. As discussed in Section 2.2.1, some of the case study projects were aimed at producing websites or web-based tools (Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE), Canadian Information Centre for IMG, and MCC), some were creating registries or databases (MCC, the IMG database) and some were creating assessment systems (PLFCAR). The very heterogeneity of the case studies and their associated outputs and outcomes indicate that the idea of creating systematic requirements that agreement holders must collect from a generic list of variables is impractical. The collecting of a precise set of indicator data related to the program’s performance measures (under the program monitoring system) is probably the most that can be expected.

The diverse range of project activities, outputs and impacts also leads to other challenges for the design of a summative evaluation. In the first place, the projects are doing very different things with different target groups. No single summative evaluation design could encompass the many project outputs and impacts that numerous different projects will produce. In many cases, the projects and their results may center on the diagnostic and proposed recommendations reports produced by the project. In these cases, the “clients” are the project sponsors, regulatory agencies and other partners; foreign-educated individuals cannot be considered direct beneficiaries of these reports, although

they are intended to be the ultimate beneficiaries. Other projects producing a central product raise similar problems for the design of a summative evaluation. Although one can evaluate a database, a website or an agency, these are still means to the ultimate end of improving the odds that a foreign-educated individual will find employment in their field in Canada. For example, it may be relatively straightforward to determine if the MCC has made its Evaluating Exam more accessible and whether practice versions are in place and used, but a summative evaluation would be expected to go further and determine the impact on the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials and the labour market outcomes of foreign-educated individuals in the targeted occupation or sector.

5.2 Traditional Control or Comparison Groups not Practical

The design of the FCRP Summative Evaluation faces a major conundrum because the FCRP seeks to effect systemic change and it does not directly target foreign-educated individuals. In this context, designing a summative evaluation around the traditional control or comparison group approach, which compares the results for individuals participating in a program to the experience of individuals who did not participate in the program, makes little practical sense. Foreign-trained individuals are presumably the ultimate beneficiaries, but the FCRP projects do not typically serve them directly and thus do not collect any data at the individual level. Even projects that create databases with individual-level data on foreign-trained newcomers are doing so to assist them at a systemic level. For example, the data held by the IMG database and the National Credential Verification Agency and Physicians Registry should make it easier for IMGs to obtain a license to practice in Canada by enabling regulatory authorities, educational institutes and governments to better understand the process and barriers to entry. But isolating the impact that these databases have on helping IMGs attain licensure is problematic.²⁵

There are methodological approaches to these problems, although none involves what may be termed a robust summative evaluation design such as experimental or quasi-experimental approaches.²⁶ There may be measurable outcomes from the projects, but not of the quantitative nature that will permit the FCRP to unambiguously claim it has enabled a certain number of newcomers to work in their chosen profession in Canada.

²⁵ For example, there is no possible control or comparison group because the databases will cover everyone in the medical field.

²⁶ A few projects, such as the Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council's, will develop models that directly serve individual foreign-trained workers: here traditional summative evaluation models may apply.

One possibility is to explore the feasibility/usefulness of developing comparisons across entities (e.g. regulatory agencies) or occupations/professions.²⁷ This might be done in the context of a case study analysis that examines and compares the experience/success of funding recipients/projects to groups/occupations not participating in the program.

In an effort to determine how likely it will be that agreement holders will be able to report useable data to the FCRP in the future, the evaluators asked whether the project developed performance indicators to monitor progress and report results. Two-thirds of respondents said yes. Also, the evaluators asked if the project had a computerized database to monitor progress and report results. Over half (58%) said yes. Those who said no were typically creating outputs or processes (such as reports) for which there is no incentive to create databases or performance indicators to track results. In conclusion, most projects are capturing data on their progress, which can be used to evaluate individual projects, but a summative evaluation of the program requires a more systematic approach.

5.3 The Possibility of Making Use of the Monitoring System

The monitoring system the FCRP has in place, especially with the improvements suggested by the performance measurement review, will give a good indication of the potential of the FCRP to bring about systemic change. If each project is required to submit a set of precise indicators (e.g., how many employers, regulators, educational institutions, etc. received the tools and processes created with the project) the monitoring data will provide a good overview of what was produced and how the products were used by occupation. Implementation projects that create and apply the tools and processes to improve credential recognition could be required to evaluate their effectiveness. These evaluations, or better yet, the raw data from these evaluations, could be used to help demonstrate the potential impact of the FCRP in each occupation.

5.4 The Possibility of Making Use of Surveys

Surveys may be able to play a role in a summative evaluation. An employer survey in targeted sectors could get at issues of awareness and use of tools and processes created by the FCRP, along with number of immigrants hired and employers' views/perceptions/experiences regarding whether they are better able to solve identified skills shortages through hiring of foreign-trained workers. FCRP projects could be required to keep and share lists and contact information of all employers that received their outputs. The formative evaluation of the Sectoral Partnership Initiative strongly recommended a survey of employers as critical to the summative evaluation stage "...because this method offers to provide information across a wide range of issues of importance to the evaluation, and is the only reasonably cost-effective way to assess the role of the sector councils in the human resources practices of client firms/organizations and other changes in the participating sectors..."

²⁷ The possibility of using this type of approach was suggested by one of the peer reviewers of the Formative Evaluation.

Similarly a survey of regulators in various occupations could be considered to determine their awareness and use of tools and processes created by the FCRP, their assessment of the usefulness of the products, their estimate as to how many individuals the new products may have helped, etc. FCRP projects could be required to keep and share lists of targeted regulators. A survey of educational institutions might also be considered for the same reasons.

The Sectoral Partnership evaluation suggested that the use of relevant Statistics Canada survey data would permit evaluators to objectively assess "...the extent to which longer-term outcomes are being achieved in sector council-supported sectors, as compared to sectors without sector councils, and to estimate the extent to which the sector councils may have contributed to those outcomes..." In the case of the FCRP, however, timing is an issue because it will likely take years for the FCRP projects to bring about measurable effects – and additional years to get Statistics Canada data to demonstrate them.

On a smaller scale, it might be possible to use a survey to reach the ultimate beneficiaries (foreign-trained individuals) to determine outcomes such as whether they are working in their field, how long it took, what obstacles they faced and still face, what resources they used and so on. Findings could be used to infer whether and how the FCRP projects helped. A key problem will be finding a representative sample. CIC may have lists of newcomers to Canada, however keeping track of this mobile group of immigrants would be difficult. Those implementation projects funded by the FCRP that test their products with individual newcomers could be asked to share their contact lists with HRSDC for research purposes. "Informed Consent" provisions would have to stipulate that these lists could be shared with HRSDC for such research purposes.

5.5 Making Full Use of Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods, such as case studies, key informant interviews, peer reviews, and a review of the tools and processes created by the projects, will have a crucial role in the Summative Evaluation of the FCRP. In particular, they will be needed to provide streams of "supporting evidence" to help document program outcomes and to explore and corroborate the information collected by the monitoring system and the results of any quantitative analysis undertaken for the Summative Evaluation.

5.6 Additional Data for the Summative Evaluation

As the program expands or extends into other areas, challenges to the summative design will grow (including more occupations/professions to cover and problems of timing with some projects long finished and others incomplete). As new projects are funded, however, the FCRP has the opportunity to refine its expectations of funded agencies in terms of summative data to be shared. For example, the contracts could specify that the project keep computerized records of target groups (such as internationally educated professionals, employers, universities and regulators) and these records be made available for research purposes

at the time of the Summative Evaluation of the FCRP.²⁸ Project managers would have to ensure their target groups are informed their data may be shared for the purposes of evaluation and that consent has been granted for such sharing. Projects could also be required to submit a precise set of indicator data related to the program's performance measures (e.g., how many employers, regulators, educational institutions, etc. received the tools and processes created with the project), so that the monitoring system will provide a good overview of what was produced and how the products were used by occupation.

²⁸ The type of information would be useful to identify members of focus groups, key informants and, possibly, for surveys.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section highlights the main conclusions regarding the program objective, program design and delivery, and performance measurement strategy for the FCRP. In addition, it provides some lessons and recommendations drawn from the Formative Evaluation.

6.1 Some Overall Conclusions

The FCRP has progressed towards the accomplishment of its objectives and outcomes, especially for the three originally targeted occupations.

- The program is strong in ensuring the proper foundation is laid by identifying that the problem is thoroughly understood and all the important stakeholders involved before proceeding with potential solutions. This diagnostic work ensures the partners develop an understanding of the current situation (e.g., present workforce, number of affected newcomers, barriers to integration, problems with credential recognition, recruitment and retention issues, how various key players are currently addressing recognition of foreign credentials, best practices) before attempting to develop and implement an action plan. The diagnostic work also gives program managers assurances that they are making the right investments, minimizing risks, and learning more about what works and what does not.
- The program's partnership and targeted approach is practical and aligned with the complex Canadian context of the program. Typically, contribution programs are careful to ensure the terms and conditions of the program are met before funding a project, but the FCRP distinguishes itself by the attention it pays to moving the program's mandate forward through its projects. The program works to get the stakeholders together and funds them to run each project as a consortium. The emphasis on partnerships is more efficient and, to the extent the partners buy in, more effective in bringing about the kind of systemic change the program seeks to effect.
- Despite the initial delay in launching the program, 35 projects were funded or approved for funding as of September 2005. One-quarter of these projects targeted the three regulated professions identified as occupational priorities for the initial stage of the program: nurses, doctors and engineers. The three occupational priorities are furthest along to the implementation stage. Also, the early evidence suggests that these efforts will be able to pay off in terms of improving foreign credential assessment and recognition processes, and achieving greater continuity across the country.

The FCRP has made inroads with its partnership approach.

- The FCRP's use of a partnership approach was cited as its main strength by many informants. The program is strong in getting stakeholders to work together for the diagnostic, recommendations and implementation phases. This includes bringing key players together from all jurisdictions to learn how the jurisdictions are dealing with foreign credential recognition and to generate pan-Canadian approaches. The partnership approach can be expected to yield increased standardized and systemic approaches to lowering barriers.

- In addition, much of the policy work within the FCRP involves horizontal leadership. Policy staff have the responsibility to initiate negotiations with the provinces leading to a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Although negotiations with the provinces have been slow, two years of negotiations have yielded two agreements (with Manitoba and British Columbia) – and negotiations with other provinces were progressing at the time of the evaluation.

The FCRP has put in place safeguards against overlap/duplication.

- Within the federal government, ITWI coordinates the efforts of the 15 agencies involved in recognition of foreign credentials and in order to control for overlap/duplication. The key informants felt that ITWI performs this function well.
- Between the federal and provincial governments there is greater potential for, or at least the perception of, overlap/duplication of effort. As noted above, however, the FCRP is dealing bi-laterally with every province in an attempt to coordinate efforts and to foster standardization across the jurisdictions.

For the most part, the FCRP has established relevant and measurable performance indicators.

- The review of the performance measurement strategy found that the strategy is generally appropriate. The logic model is consistent with the mandate of the program and is internally consistent. For the most part, the performance indicators link to the results identified in the logic model and are measurable.
- Although little performance data had been generated at the time of the evaluation, FCRP is building a performance measurement database. Also, the program appears to use what results information it does have, and ensures that funded projects link clearly to the results FCRP is trying to achieve.

There are, however, some program shortcomings that need to be recognized/addressed in the near future.

- The review of the performance measure identified a number of areas that should be improved to ensure consistent and meaningful performance measurement. For example, the FCRP needs to provide a more precise definition of each of its performance indicators.
- Operational priority has been the development of proposals and their approval. As the number of proposals increases, staff will need to pay increased attention to whether the projects are delivering what was promised. Relatively little performance data have been generated thus far, but procedures need to be put in place to ensure that performance data are routinely collected and that these data are routinely used by management.
- At the time of the evaluation, the program had not yet settled on a definitive means of determining what professions/occupations to focus on in the future.
- Data from COPS/NOC were to have been key in determining what occupations to focus on (after the original three professions), but the FCRP was still awaiting these data at the time of the evaluation.

- The work the FCRP is doing takes a lot of time. Systemic change takes time and effort, but it is likely to be more effective in the longer run than dealing with each immigrant on a one-on-one basis. At the same time, however, the federal government's mandate is limited in that many of the issues surrounding credential recognition are under the purview of the provinces. It must also be stressed that the problem and hence the solutions go well beyond the recognition issue. For example, even with the implementation of a thorough fast-track system to assess foreign physician credentials, the limited number of residency positions for foreign-trained doctors means the queue for licensure remains long.

6.2 Lessons and Recommendations

- The recommended improvements should be made to the performance measurement strategy as soon as possible.
- The FCRP program is designed to foster systemic change, and the FCRP will need to continue to manage expectations of the program to maintain its focus.
- COPS/NOC have not been able to give the program the detailed data needed at a regional level for planning purposes. Measures need to be put in place such that FCRP gets priority in getting the data it needs from COPS/NOC.
- It may be appropriate to consider other approaches to identifying future occupational priorities. Other grant and contributions programs use a Request for Proposals (RFP) model to determine what to fund. The FCRP has not used RFPs because it implies abandoning the proposal development strategy that has set it apart to this point, and because increased human resources would be needed to deal with an increased number of proposals. But if the FCRP fails to develop analytically sound criteria for targeting and project selection, an RFP process may help to identify or at least assist in prioritizing project selection.
- With respect to comments about funding pressures, FCRP was required to fund Labour Mobility projects. Labour Mobility had no designated source of funds, and the FCRP was identified as a funding source under the rationale that newcomers, like Canadians, face obstacles to working in various provinces because of differing provincial policies respecting licensure. While the Labour Mobility Program was certainly related to FCRP interests, this type of funding decision can detract from the FCRP objective of fostering systemic change. Similarly, FCRP was approached to fund bridge-to-work and overseas pilot projects. While these pilot projects may help to inform future policy development and decision-making, the re-allocation of funds may affect achievement of program objectives.
- The FCRP should develop ways to increase the sharing of project results. Possibilities might include periodic conferences to share results, and placing summaries of each project on its website.