



Summative Evaluation of the Canadian Council on Learning

FINAL REPORT

Submitted to:
Canadian Council on Learning
215-50 O'Connor Street
Ottawa, ON
K1P 6L2

EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES INC.
September 30, 2008

EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Ottawa Office

359 Kent Street, Suite 300

Ottawa, Ontario

K2P 0R6

Tel: (613) 235 7215

Fax: (613) 235 8498

E-mail: pobox@ekos.com

Toronto Office

480 University Avenue, Suite 1006

Toronto, Ontario

M5G 1V2

Tel: (416) 598 8002

Fax: (416) 598 2543

E-mail: toronto@ekos.com

www.ekos.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Acronyms	iii
Executive Summary	v
1. Overview of the CCL and Evaluation Context	1
1.1 Defining Lifelong Learning	1
1.2 Profile of the CCL.....	1
1.3 Evaluation Issues and Objectives.....	5
2. Evaluation Design and Methodology	7
2.1 Evaluation Methods	7
2.2 Limitations	11
2.3 Implications	11
3. Relevance	13
3.1 Need for CCL	13
3.2 Alignment of Mandate with HRDSC	15
4. Success	17
4.1 Short-Term Outcomes	17
4.2 Medium-Term Outcomes	24
4.3 Potential for Achieving Long-Term Outcomes.....	29
5. Cost-Effectiveness	31
5.1 Overlap or Duplication.....	31
5.2 Proposed Alternatives to CCL.....	32
6. Implementation of Recommendations from Formative Evaluation	37
7. Conclusions and Recommendations	39
7.1 Conclusions.....	39
7.2 Recommendations.....	40

APPENDIX A: Logic Model for the CCL

APPENDIX B: Evaluation Matrix

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABLKC	Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre
AERC	Aboriginal Education Research Centre
AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
CCL	Canadian Council on Learning
CESC	Canadian Education Statistics Council
CHN	Canadian Health Network
CIHI	Canadian Institute for Health Information
CLI	Composite Learning Index
CMEC	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
FNAHEC	First Nations Adult Higher Education Consortium
HRDSC	Human Resources and Social Development Canada
KC	Knowledge Centre
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRI	Policy Research Initiative
PSE	Post Secondary Education
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WG	Working Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROFILE OF THE CCL

The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that is governed by, and accountable to, a 12-member Board of Directors. It is intended to be an objective, authoritative, and practical source of relevant information for all Canadians regarding the broad spectrum of lifelong learning. The CCL was created in 2004 following a series of nationwide consultations on innovation. Consultations conducted heard from a broad range of stakeholders including the provinces and territories, Aboriginal organizations, early childhood and literacy organizations, municipalities, and policy research think tanks. Overall more than 50 organizations made presentations. The CCL is funded primarily through a five-year grant administered by the Department of Human Resources and Social Development (HRSDC) in the amount of \$85 million.

EVALUATION ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

In March 2004, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) entered into an agreement with the CCL to provide a grant to support the CCL. The terms of the agreement regulating the use of the grant, which expires on March 31, 2009, require the conduct of formative and summative evaluations of CCL's performance prior to the expiry of the grant. The purpose of this study was to conduct a summative evaluation of CCL. This evaluation covered the operations of the CCL from the date of the start of the agreement, April 1st, 2004 up to March 31, 2008. Specifically, the evaluation addressed the CCL's rationale and relevance; success and outcomes; and cost-effectiveness and alternatives.

EVALUATION METHODS

This evaluation made use of multiple lines of evidence to address the evaluation issues:

Survey of Stakeholders: The purpose of this study was to examine stakeholders' perceptions of the Canadian Council on Learning. An online survey was undertaken with stakeholders to examine a number of issues including: views and use of CCL publications; knowledge exchange with stakeholders; familiarity and views on CCL Knowledge Centres; and views and experience with CCL partnerships. A total of 898 stakeholders received the survey and 253 completed the questionnaire, for a response rate of 30 per cent. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 5.2 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

Key Informant Interviews: A total of 208 stakeholders were contacted for the interview, and 104 agreed to be interviewed. Potential interview respondents were identified according to seven categories developed by the Working Group and represent a wide range of stakeholders.

Document and File Review: The document and file review was structured around the evaluation matrix. Each document reviewed was analysed against the evaluation matrix and the relevant information required to respond to the evaluation questions was extracted. The type of documents reviewed included the formative evaluation performed by the Centre for Public Management Inc, various CCL research reports, action plans, presentations, and business plans.

Literature Review: The purpose of the literature review was to address evaluation issues related to relevance of and alternative delivery approaches to the CCL. The primary focus of the literature review was on identifying, summarizing and synthesizing information relating to models of learning research and knowledge exchange organizations in other jurisdictions as well as to Canadian organizations with similar functions to the CCL in other fields, such as health. Documents and information reviewed comprised materials describing the rationale and institutional arrangements of the organizations in question such as the CCL founding documents, OECD materials, CMEC publications, PRI documents on research capacity in Canada and other documents.

Expert Panel: With guidance from the WG as well as from Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, EKOS convened a panel of four national and international experts to inform the following evaluation questions: Need for a national organization such as the CCL to develop and share knowledge about learning; and possible alternatives to the CCL to achieving the same outcomes. Although experts were recruited based on familiarity with CCL and some background information on CCL was provided, familiarity with CCL and its operating environment varied. This meant that the ability of experts to propose viable alternatives varied. We note that none of the experts recruited have any formal affiliation with CCL, nor have they received any research funding from CCL.

KEY FINDINGS

Relevance

While the available literature concerning the need for a pan-Canadian organization to produce, synthesize, and disseminate knowledge on learning is quite limited, evidence provided by key informants and experts indicates that such an organization is necessary. Although there are some who question the need for another organization focused on learning in Canada, the CCL continues to be relevant and to fulfill an identified need in Canada. There is a need for an independent and national organization that conducts research, identifies knowledge gaps, brings together data and disseminates information on lifelong learning.

As the key funding source for CCL, there is a need for the mandate of CCL to align with the strategic policy and priorities of Human Resources and Social Development Canada. The evidence collected suggests a good alignment with these policies and priorities.

Success

Evaluation findings indicate that the CCL has been successful in identifying knowledge gaps, creating knowledge exchange networks, creating partnerships, improving the volume, quality and relevance of research and information on learning, and increasing the volume and quality of learning research exchanged. The CCL is, however, facing some challenges to its long term success. The most significant challenges pertain to effectively engaging various stakeholders such as provincial and territorial governments, clearly articulating its mandate, role and responsibilities to stakeholders (including policy-makers) and Canadians, and to issues concerning organizational development and securing federal funding.

Cost-effectiveness

The CCL is the only existing Canadian organization with a mandate to provide a national and independent perspective in the analyses, interpretation and in the presentation of research on lifelong learning, and according to the majority of key informant interviewees, and the literature review, much of what the CCL does complements the work of other organizations. According to those interviewed, the work of the Knowledge Centres, the competitive bidding process, and internal oversight imposed by CCL management have served as strong safeguards against overlap and duplication, and in the correction of such activities when they occur.

While alternative funding models and arrangements for conducting learning research exist both nationally and internationally, it is unlikely that they would be able to achieve the same results as the CCL (i.e. independent and innovative research and dissemination of information). Alternative approaches, however, that include the strengthening or expanding of existing CCL structures such as the Knowledge Centres and stakeholder networks, and the redoubling of efforts to improve the focus of the organization in research and communications activities would benefit the CCL as it moves forward with its mandate of promoting and disseminating knowledge on learning.

Implementation of Recommendations from the Formative Evaluation

Overall, while the CCL has taken measures to address the recommendations made by the formative evaluation, more work needs to be done to properly measure their achievement. Some variations exist with regards to the extent of the success of the measures taken, but overall the interviewees consulted believe that the efforts of the CCL to respond to the recommendations have yielded significant results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The CCL must more clearly articulate and communicate its mandate with respect to learning knowledge in Canada. The mandate of the CCL should articulate the CCL's role in producing synthesizing and disseminating knowledge to stakeholders (including policy-makers) and Canadians.
- 2) The CCL should continue to sustain and strengthen the Knowledge Centres and stakeholder networks by expanding the ability of the Knowledge Centres to include the sponsoring of more research, and further promoting linkages with stakeholders across the country. Developing learning centres or Knowledge Centre sub units across the country may help the regionally based Knowledge Centres further fulfill their mandate and become more inclusive and pan-Canadian in their operations.
- 3) The CCL should continue efforts to improve the focus of the organization in its research and communications activities and continue to search for ways to properly measure achievement, including tracking the reach and effect of its research and communications efforts by conducting periodic surveys of stakeholders.
- 4) The CCL should continue in its efforts to collaborate with CMEC particularly in areas of formal education such as kindergarten to grade twelve learning. The CCL's relationship with CMEC could be complementary if the two organizations found a way to work with each other's strengths for policy development (i.e. the CCL as a knowledge creation and mobilization organization and CMEC as a policy agency).
- 5) In order to better respond to the information needs of its stakeholders and users of its publications, CCL should consult stakeholders and users of its publications on their information needs (i.e., how CCL publications could better respond to needs).

1. OVERVIEW OF THE CCL AND EVALUATION CONTEXT

This section provides a brief overview of the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and a description of the context for the summative evaluation.

1.1 DEFINING LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning evolved as an educational strategy in the 1970's through the efforts of UNESCO, the OECD and the Council of Europe. It was a response to the fact that while individuals learn throughout life, the provision of education was limited largely to the early phase of life and dominated by formal education. There was a perceived need to provide a "second chance" to those who did not benefit from educational opportunities available during childhood and youth. The CCL defines lifelong learning as a process that involves the development of knowledge, skills, and values throughout all stages of a person's life – from the early childhood years through adulthood. As well, learning is not just an intellectual process, but one that involves all areas of life, including a person's role in the community, performance in the workplace, personal development and physical well-being.¹ Other sources such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development validate this definition.²

1.2 PROFILE OF THE CCL

The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that is governed by, and accountable to, a 12-member Board of Directors. It is intended to be an objective, authoritative, and practical source of relevant information for all Canadians regarding the broad spectrum of lifelong learning. The CCL is funded primarily through a five-year grant administered by the Department of Human Resources and Social Development (HRSDC) in the amount of \$85 million.

The CCL was created in 2004 following a series of nationwide consultations on innovation. Consultations conducted by the Public Policy Forum heard from a broad range of stakeholders including the provinces and territories, Aboriginal organizations, early childhood and literacy organizations, municipalities, and policy research think tanks. Overall more than 50 organizations made presentations.

¹ Canadian Council on Learning, The 2007 Composite Learning Index: Helping Communities Improve their Quality of Life, May 2007, page 3.

² http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_38465013_1_1_1_1_00.html, July 24, 2008

a) CCL's Mandate and Objectives

According to the funding agreement with HRSDC, the purpose of the grant is to support the CCL to promote and support evidence-based decision making in all areas of lifelong learning through fulfilling the following objectives:

- Inform Canadians regularly on Canada's progress on learning outcomes through such means as, but not limited to, the following:
 - ◇ A roadmap of the learning information system from early childhood to adult learning and workplace training;
 - ◇ A comprehensive, integrated pan-Canadian set of indicators that measure progress on outcomes across the continuum of lifelong learning;
 - ◇ The filling of key learning knowledge, information and data gaps; and
 - ◇ The preparation and dissemination of regular and accessible information and reports targeted to the range of users of learning information.

- Promote knowledge and information exchange among learning partners, through such means as, but not limited to, the following:
 - ◇ Partnering with existing organizations with expertise in the different areas of lifelong learning to build on and complement their work, including the development of 'what works' learning networks, virtual networks, symposia, conferences and workshops;
 - ◇ Supporting effective practices in all areas of lifelong learning, via analysis, studies and synthesis of information, and dissemination of results; and
 - ◇ Supporting access to data and other learning information among the public, researchers, learning organizations, and governments.

b) Key Activity Areas

In seeking to meet its mandate to identify ways to improve learning and to report on Canada's progress throughout all stages of learning, CCL has organized its efforts under four areas of activity: Research and Knowledge Mobilization, Monitoring and Reporting, Knowledge Exchange and Strategic Initiatives. Each of these key areas of focus is the primary responsibility of a separate CCL Directorate.

c) Organizational Structure

The CCL has established two principal offices, one in Vancouver, British Columbia and the other in Ottawa, Ontario. The Vancouver office of the CCL houses the Directorate for Research and Knowledge Mobilization, and the Strategic Initiatives and Liaison, and Knowledge Exchange. The Ottawa office houses the three Directorates focused on Monitoring and Reporting, Communications and Outreach, and Administration and Management.

d) CCL Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the CCL, consisting of 12 members, is intended to reflect Canada's regional diversity with Board members having a wide range of characteristics, including experience and expertise in the area of lifelong learning and representation from the learning, governmental, non-governmental, business and labour sectors³. In instituting the CCL Board of Directors and its bylaws, emphasis was placed on independence, breadth of scope, and national orientation. After the initial appointment of three members to inaugurate the Board, all subsequent members have been selected by the existing Board, informed by recommendations of a Board nominating committee. While federal and provincial government officials participate extensively in CCL through advisory bodies and joint efforts, they do not serve a decision-making role through membership in the CCL Board.

According to CCL's Business Plan for 2007-2008, Board members are roughly drawn in equivalent numbers from each of Canada's five regions. However, none is appointed as a representative of a particular region, province or area of interest. Further, CCL seeks to select Board members such that there is complementary experience and skills, including private and public sectors and a variety of professional perspectives represented on the Board. The Board meets regularly and is responsible for reviewing and approving key decisions, strategies and activities for the CCL.⁴

e) Knowledge Centres

In order to achieve its mandated objectives while seeking to recognize the linguistic duality of Canada, the diverse cultures and circumstances of Canada's population, and the variety of learning settings, the CCL has identified five key areas of learning in Canada that it believes require urgent attention. To address these five priority areas, the CCL has created Knowledge Centres in five geographic regions of the country to help address the five key priority areas identified by CCL. These Knowledge Centres are:

- Aboriginal Learning – located in the Prairies, NWT and Nunavut;
- Adult Learning – located in Atlantic Canada;

³ CCL Funding Agreement with HRSDC.

⁴ CCL Funding Agreement with HRSDC.

- Early Childhood Learning – located in Quebec;
- Health and Learning – located in British Columbia and Yukon; and
- Work and Learning – located in Ontario.

The Knowledge Centres (KC) seek to operate as national networks and sources of expertise. Each of the five Knowledge Centres has similar governance and organizational structures and each operates under an agreement entered into between the Canadian Council on Learning and a Lead Organization that heads the Knowledge Centre. The Knowledge Centres are required to submit to CCL their strategic business plan and budget for approval and they work directly with CCL's Communication Directorate in the preparation and production of reports and other publications. Each has a regional membership and executive and advisory board drawn from across Canada. The purpose of each KC is:

- **Establishing a national network in their field.** The Knowledge Centres extend the reach and impact of CCL's work far beyond what could be accomplished by one centralized organization. In total they work with approximately 400 members in working groups, consortia, governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop and disseminate knowledge for improving policies and programs that influence the quality of learning in Canada. Through its five Knowledge Centres, intended to be go-to learning places, the CCL has developed an extensive network that engages in ongoing knowledge exchange through a variety of previously unexplored partnerships and collaborations activities (research, monitoring and reporting, round tables/symposia).
- **Supporting CCL's achievement of pan-Canadian research, monitoring and reporting activities.** Each of the Knowledge Centres has worked directly with specific directorates within CCL to advance research and monitoring and reporting activities. This work has been particularly noteworthy of Literacy, Health Literacy, 'Redefining Success in Aboriginal Education', Early Learning (Play), and Adult Learning.
- **Sharing exemplary practices and models.** Each of the Knowledge Centres as part of their Knowledge Exchange work seeks to stimulate dialogue amongst policy makers and practitioners in their specific areas of focus.
- **Undertaking knowledge exchange activities.** The knowledge exchange work of the Knowledge Centres extends beyond simply the dissemination of information and ideas. It supports the development of capacity aimed at providing participants with the ability to translate findings into practice. Each of the Knowledge Centres host an Annual Symposium which provides an opportunity for both the centre as well as CCL to share with participants the results of research and roundtables and identify areas for further investigation. These symposiums frequently involve over 200 participants. In the case of the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre their last Symposium in February, 2008 involved over 400 participants from all across Canada.

The logic model for the CCL describing the linkages between activities, outputs and outcomes may be found in Appendix A.

1.3 EVALUATION ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

In March 2004, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) entered into an agreement with the CCL to provide a grant to support the CCL. The terms of the agreement regulating the use of the grant, which expires on March 31, 2009, require the conduct of formative and summative evaluations of CCL's performance prior to the expiry of the grant. The purpose of this study was to conduct a summative evaluation of the CCL. This evaluation covered the operations of the CCL from the date of the start of the agreement, April 1st, 2004 up to March 31, 2008. Specifically, the evaluation addressed the CCL's rationale and relevance; success and outcomes; and cost-effectiveness and alternatives to the CCL.

The specific questions to be addressed by this evaluation are laid out in the evaluation matrix in Appendix B, along with the indicators and methodologies used to address each issue.

2. EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the methods developed and implemented for the evaluation and a description of the limitations associated with the methods.

2.1 EVALUATION METHODS

This evaluation made use of multiple lines of evidence to address the evaluation issues. The evaluation was guided by an Evaluation Working Group (WG) comprising representatives from HRSDC Strategic Policy and Research (Evaluation Directorate and Learning Policy Directorate) and the CCL. The WG provided guidance in the updating of the CCL logic model and evaluation matrix, as well as feedback on data collection tools and reporting. The following section provides a brief description of the data collection undertaken for this evaluation.

a) Survey of Stakeholders

The purpose of this study was to examine stakeholders' perceptions of the Canadian Council on Learning. An online survey was undertaken with stakeholders to examine a number of issues including: views and use of CCL publications; knowledge exchange with stakeholders; familiarity and views on CCL Knowledge Centres; and, views and experience with CCL partnerships. Participants were identified through the provision of lists of stakeholders by HRSDC and CCL. No further attempt was made at identifying stakeholders beyond those contained in these lists. All stakeholders on these lists were included in the survey. A total of 898 stakeholders received the survey and 253 completed the questionnaire, for a response rate of 30 per cent. The margin of error on a sample of this size is +/- 5.2 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

Prior to beginning full fieldwork the survey was sent to 77 stakeholders for a pre-test. At the end of the pre-test survey, these stakeholders were asked to complete a diagnostic battery of questions which asked respondents to provide an assessment of the questionnaire. No revisions to the questionnaire were necessary based on the pre-test results.

The full survey was then launched. Stakeholders were sent an email invitation requesting their participation in the Summative Evaluation of the Canadian Council on Learning. The survey was administered using a bilingual email invitation and a bilingual questionnaire, installed on a secure website. Stakeholders were sent an email containing a brief description of the survey (in both languages) along with a hypertext link to a survey website and a Personal Identification Number (PIN). In an effort to increase the

response rate for the survey, non-respondents were sent three reminder emails, re-emphasizing the relevance and importance of the survey, and asking them to take the time needed to participate.

The response rate (30 per cent) is in line with the response rates of other online surveys of stakeholders EKOS has conducted. Table 1 outlines the final disposition of the email contacts for this study.

TABLE 1: On-Line Survey of CCL Stakeholders Response Rate

Identified sample	898
Returned emails	77
New emails captured through telephone contact	20
Total usable sample	841
Completes	253
Refusals	588
Response rate (completes divided by usable sample)	30%

As a check on the reliability of the responses, we did an analysis of how stakeholders who completed the questionnaire compare with the identified sample across the categories of stakeholders (e.g., federal officials, CCL partners, etc.). Results of this analysis are outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Completed Surveys vs. Sample Provided

	Completed Survey %	Overall Sample %
Knowledge Centre Management, Board Members and Staff and Committee Members	65.2	52.6
Federal Officials	6.3	7.5
Provincial and Territorial Representatives, including CMEC	4.0	3.3
CCL Partners	2.0	0.9
Learning System Stakeholders ⁵	20.2	31.2

As can be seen, the proportion of stakeholders from each of these categories who completed the questionnaire is largely in line with the proportion in the overall sample, although Knowledge Centre Management, Staff and Committee Members are somewhat over-represented in terms of completed questionnaires, while Learning System Stakeholders are somewhat under-represented.

⁵ The Learning System Stakeholders category including representatives from non governmental organizations, private sector companies, and universities and colleges.

b) Key Informant Interviews

The purpose of conducting interviews was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and opinions of individuals who have had a significant role or experience with the CCL. Interview guides were designed to address all of the pertinent issues and questions outlined in the evaluation matrix. In-depth interviews were completed with a total of 104 key informants. Potential interview respondents were identified through the provision of lists of stakeholders by HRSDC and CCL and according to seven categories developed by the Working Group (WG) which represent a wide range of stakeholders. Interviewees that participated in the survey were excluded from the interview process. These interviewees are broken down as follows:

- CCL Board members (n=12, 8 completed);
- CCL management and staff (n=8, 8 completed);
- Knowledge Centres management, staff and Committee members (n=15, 9 completed);
- Federal Officials from various departments including Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Industry Canada and others (n=61, 23 completed);
- Provincial and territorial government officials including representatives from various departments of education, training and labour policy, and children and youth services (n=41, 22 completed);
- CCL partners (n=17, 7 completed); and
- Other learning system stakeholders including representatives from non governmental organizations, private sector companies, and universities and colleges. (n=54, 27 completed).

A combination of in-person and telephone interviews were conducted. In-person interviews were undertaken in the National Capital Region, Toronto, and Vancouver. Interviews in all other locations were completed by phone. Of the 104 interviews completed, 29 were conducted in-person and 75 were conducted by telephone.

A bilingual introduction letter, along with the appropriate interview guide, was sent to all prospective respondents in advance of the interviews. This letter introduced the evaluation, provided necessary background information, as well as making reference to privacy provisions. The CCL alerted all stakeholders to the evaluation, and so most respondents anticipated being contacted for an interview. A short time after sending the initial email to potential interviewees (one to two days), the EKOS research team contacted potential interviewees to schedule the interview. Up to three phone calls to each potential interviewee were made in order to schedule the interview. This corresponds to up to four contacts (including the initial email from EKOS) with each potential interviewee, after which time the evaluation team considered it a refusal. Interview invitations were sent on April 23, 2008, and interviews were conducted between May 1, 2008 and June 20, 2008.

A brief description outlining the objectives and mandate and other key features of CCL was developed and appended to each interview guide for the purpose of providing background information to interviewees. Interview guides were designed to address all of the pertinent issues and questions outlined in the evaluation matrix and to be an average of 60-90 minutes in duration. Given the broad range of groups that were interviewed, the interview guides were tailored to the seven separate categories of interviewees. Each guide was tailored to reflect the particular knowledge and experience of that respondent group. Wherever possible, the interviewers probed interview respondents for specific examples to support their views, thus increasing the rigour of this methodology.

c) Document and File Review

The document and file review was structured around the evaluation matrix. Each document reviewed was analysed against the evaluation matrix and the relevant information required to respond to the evaluation questions was extracted. The type of documents reviewed included the report on the formative evaluation performed by the Centre for Public Management Inc, various CCL research reports, action plans, presentations, and business plans.

d) Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review was to address evaluation issues related to relevance of the CCL and alternative delivery approaches to the CCL. The primary focus of the literature review was on identifying, summarizing and synthesizing information relating to models of learning research and knowledge exchange organizations in other jurisdictions as well as to Canadian organizations with similar functions to the CCL in other fields, such as health. Documents and information reviewed comprised materials describing the rationale and institutional arrangements of the organizations in question such as the CCL founding documents, OECD materials, CMEC publications, Policy Research Initiative (PRI) documents on research capacity in Canada and other documents.

e) Expert Panel

With guidance from the WG as well as from Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, EKOS convened a panel of four national and international experts to inform the following evaluation questions: Need for a national organization such as the CCL to develop and share knowledge about learning; and possible alternatives to the CCL to achieving the same outcomes. Although experts were recruited based on familiarity with CCL and some background information on CCL was provided, familiarity with CCL and its operating environment varied. This meant that the ability of experts to propose viable alternatives varied. We note that none of the experts recruited have any formal affiliation with CCL, nor have they received any research funding from CCL.

2.2 LIMITATIONS

As with any evaluation, there are a number of limitations to this study. The reader is encouraged to take these into account when reviewing the findings in this summary report. The main limitations associated with this evaluation are:

- The evaluation relies heavily on qualitative methods, with the evidence gathered from these methods involving a large number of respondents with a direct affiliation with the CCL. As a result, both the interview and survey data carries the potential risk of biased opinion from those with a significant stake in the initiative. In an effort to address this weakness, attempts were made to interview a wide variety of stakeholders, including those outside the CCL such as federal and provincial/territorial government officials and other learning system stakeholders. In addition, interview respondents were probed for concrete, illustrative examples of impacts. Further, evidence from interviews was balanced with more objective data (from the documentation review, for example). Finally, the report takes this individual bias into account when reporting on results, noting where there are significant differences in opinion between different types of respondents and including divergent views.
- The limitations on the survey data obtained from stakeholders are similar to that of key informant interviews in that the results indicate a clear difference of opinion based on affiliation with the CCL. About two in three survey respondents were Knowledge Centre management, Board Members and staff and committee members. The analysis sought to balance this bias by presenting both perspectives and balancing the information from the surveys against other data sources.

2.3 IMPLICATIONS

Limitations such as these are not unusual for program evaluations of this type. However, the validity of the overall results was controlled by comparing the results of the various sources of evidence. This approach is based on the principle of multiple lines of evidence, which acknowledges that each methodology has strengths and weaknesses, and that in many instances, one method compensates for the weaknesses of the other.

3. RELEVANCE

This chapter addresses evaluation issues related to the relevance of CCL, including whether the CCL is addressing a need and the extent to which the CCL's mandate is consistent with the priorities of its key funding source, HRSDC.

3.1 NEED FOR CCL

Overall, while the available literature concerning the need for a pan-Canadian organization to produce, synthesize, and disseminate knowledge on learning is limited, evidence provided by key informants and experts indicates that such a national organization is necessary. However, there are some conflicting views as to whether the CCL is the right organization to fill this role.

The document review conducted for this evaluation found that business leaders, employers, educators and public policymakers at the National Summit on Innovation and Learning, initiated by the Government of Canada and sponsored by the Ministers of Industry and Human Resources Development, underlined the need for a national organization that would have the capacity to provide an evidence base for decision-making in the field of learning; and that would provide objective research about what models and practices are effective or promising, and which are not. This was also expressed during extensive consultations conducted for the Government of Canada prior to the inception of the CCL

The Prime Minister's speech at the 2002 National Summit laid out a Five-Point Action Plan on Innovation and related government initiatives. Part of this Plan included a commitment to work with government partners, including the provinces and territories and the private sector, to develop the Canadian Learning Institute (CLI) to create a locus for information and research on learning. Subsequent policy work on the CLI initiative was announced in Budget 2003.

The consultations conducted in 2003 by the Public Policy Forum with representatives of all provinces and territories and of over 50 business and labour, Aboriginal, literacy, early childhood and other organizations on the design of the CLI confirmed strong interest in and perceived need for such an organization to address gaps in knowledge about Canada's learning system to enable better decision-making regarding learning, both at the individual and government level, in working toward a coherent, effective lifelong learning system. Specifically, the 2003 consultations found that:

- As governments, business, labour, individuals, and other stakeholders invest increasing amounts in learning, there was to be a need to **report on progress** and for **accurate evidence-based information** as to what works, to enable people to make better informed decisions with respect to effective education and training practices;

- Whereas there was much learning knowledge generated by various organizations across the country, the knowledge was **not broadly shared**, there was no single organization with the mandate and capacity to report and disseminate the knowledge broadly;
- Similarly, the fact that education in Canada is administered by 13 separate provincial and territorial governments would suggest the need for a **single, national entity** to exchange knowledge and lessons learned across the jurisdictions; and
- Education and training provide countries with the skills needed to compete globally but unlike many of Canada's global trading competitors, Canada had **no national organization** to disseminate knowledge about what works in learning and to measure and report on learning performance.

In addition, learning practitioners such as teachers and curriculum developers are not well-equipped to absorb research knowledge (Levin 2008), a gap that CCL seeks to fill through its knowledge translation activities.

A few interviewees expressed concern about duplication of efforts between CCL and other national learning organisations. Provincial and territorial representatives in particular were more likely to question the need for the CCL in this light. While the majority of these respondents did acknowledge the need for a national body to support the development and dissemination of information related to life-long learning, the majority of this group argued that this work could be carried out by other national organizations such as the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). However, the majority of respondents overall were inclined to argue that the CCL plays an important role in the national educational picture in terms of providing a pan-Canadian body, independent of the federal or provincial government, that provides independent data, analysis and reporting on issues in support of lifelong learning. Organizations like the CMEC and the AUCC were viewed by these respondents as having a more narrow focus, while the CCL supported life-long learning in a variety of ways.

The perspectives of the expert panel support the need for an ongoing pan-Canadian agency, such as CCL, that can promote knowledge generation and exchange about adult learning to inform policy, planning and practice at both and across the Federal and provincial/territorial levels. Experts noted that this is because, as in other countries, societal, community and personal needs for lifelong learning are expanding. Two factors in particular that are expected to affect the need or demand for lifelong learning and thus knowledge and research about lifelong learning were noted:

- With the most aged population profile of any OECD country, Canada has particular needs to encourage and support work-life learning to maintain competent working lives and for longer.
- The diverse demographics of the Canadian adult population means that there are distinctive and diverse ways of participating in adult and life-long learning (e.g., through formal education, evening classes, mentorship, online learning, among many others), as well as a variety of purposes and goals.

In the words of one expert, "there is a need for an ongoing pan-Canadian agency, such as the CCL, that can promote knowledge generation and exchange about adult learning to inform policy, planning and practice at both and across the Federal and provincial/territorial levels". They went on to state that "this agency is necessary to secure greater effectiveness and coherence with adult education provisions, as its settings (e.g. workplaces) and purposes (e.g. lifelong or work life learning) lack access to key national decision-making forums."

3.2 ALIGNMENT OF MANDATE WITH HRSDC

As the key funding source for CCL, there is a need for the mandate of CCL to align with the strategic policy and priorities of Human Resources and Social Development Canada. The evidence collected suggests a good alignment with these policies and priorities.

The CCL mandate of 'improving learning outcomes for Canadians and fostering the growth of a 'pan-Canadian learning architecture' by: (i) informing Canadians about the state of learning; (ii) fostering quality research on learning; (iii) facilitating evidence-based decisions about learning through knowledge exchange; and (iv) becoming Canada's authoritative resource on learning issues – aligns with the 2006-07 HRSDC Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP), which identify a continued need to assess policy and program options to address financial and non-financial barriers to post-secondary education and lifelong learning.⁶ The following year, the 2007-08 RPP identified the need for HRSDC to "foster a culture of lifelong learning" by, amongst other things, facilitating access to education and adult learning opportunities.

Overall, most HRSDC officials interviewed agree that the mandate of CCL aligns well, though not perfectly, with the priorities of HRSDC. A few interviewees feel that any misalignment is not a detriment to the proper functioning of CCL but, instead, essential to properly fulfilling its role as an arm's length, pan-Canadian organisation dedicated to promoting and supporting evidence-based decisions about learning throughout all stages of life. According to one federal official, "The CCL's work does not line up exactly with HRSDC priorities and neither should it," while another official, stating the fact further, responded, "CCL does not need to mirror the [priorities] of the department. They need to meet national needs on monitoring and reporting of learning in Canada."

⁶ http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/0607/hrsdcrhdsc/hrsdcrhdsc03_e.asp

4. SUCCESS

This chapter addresses the success of CCL in terms of its short-term and medium-term outcomes, as well as the potential for achieving its long-term outcomes.

4.1 SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

The short-term outcomes that the CCL has focused on include: identifying and addressing gaps in knowledge about learning; creating effective knowledge exchange networks among stakeholders; creating partnerships with stakeholders; and improving communication to stakeholders and Canadians about the importance of learning. Each of these outcomes is addressed below.

a) Identification and Addressing of Gaps in Knowledge

Overall, there appears to be considerable satisfaction regarding CCL's ability to identify and address these knowledge gaps, according to key informants. However, some concerns were raised regarding whether the CCL is actually identifying new gaps, rather than simply repeating things that have already been said, and if the gaps identified tell the whole story.

Specific knowledge gaps that have been identified by CCL were noted by a majority of interviewees across all categories. These gaps include Aboriginal learning, adult learning, early childhood learning, health and learning, lack of pan-Canadian data on learning, lifelong learning, post secondary education, as well as work and learning. A small minority of interviewees were able to specify gaps that have been identified within these major topic areas. For example, in the area of Aboriginal learning, some noted that CCL specifically identified a knowledge gap related to indicators of success in Aboriginal learning.

When respondents were asked whether CCL has effectively addressed these knowledge gaps, CCL was praised for commissioning research projects to fill existing gaps, analyzing gaps, publishing reports, monitoring progress in the field and bringing stakeholders together to discuss issues. The principal mechanisms used to address these gaps are the CCL's Knowledge Centres, which were created to address five critical challenges identified in an analysis of pan-Canadian gaps and needs in the field of learning. Furthermore, according to the documentation reviewed, there have been ten State of the Field Reviews as of September 2007 that have addressed a host of CCL issues including: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR); French language literacy; e-learning; postsecondary education and adult learning, and early and later childhood learning.⁷ The reviews were done by some Knowledge Centres early on in their

⁷ TAB-018 Research and Knowledge Mobilization Self Study Appendix B p. 25

tenure to develop a better understanding of the issues and concerns in the field that would then serve as the basis for developing work plans for either the KC or working group. These reviews tended to be done by a consultant working under the guidance of either the coordinator of a Knowledge Centre or one of its working groups. Each review identified: best practices to promote learning, major gaps in knowledge/understanding, and the most promising lines of enquiry to address these gaps.

There is considerable satisfaction among interviewees with CCL's work in the area of identifying knowledge gaps about learning. Almost all learning system stakeholders, partners, CCL Board members, as well as CCL management and staff reported that they are highly satisfied. Provincial and territorial representatives, federal officials, along with Knowledge Centre staff and committee members are comparatively less satisfied. In fact, a few provincial and territorial representatives and federal officials said they are not at all satisfied with CCL's ability to identify knowledge gaps about learning. Typically, these respondents brought up one of two issues: that CCL is not identifying any new knowledge gaps; or that CCL is uncovering only partial gaps and that more work remains to be completed. Nevertheless, a majority of respondents suggested that CCL is effectively identifying knowledge gaps through their national outlook on learning issues. In other words, the CCL has been able to bring together information from multiple provinces, whereas previously Canadian matters of learning and education were poorly documented at a national level.

b) Creation of Knowledge Exchange Networks

The engine behind the CCL's knowledge exchange network activities are the Knowledge Centres. In general, the Knowledge Centres are viewed as having successfully fostered ongoing relationships between key stakeholders in the field of learning and have facilitated the exchange of knowledge between these individuals through various activities. However, there is evidence to suggest that some Knowledge Centres have functioned better than others to date.

To address the gap between research and the application of research findings by practitioners or other key stakeholders, CCL's knowledge exchange networks aim to facilitate improved decision-making by fostering and supporting relationships through specific initiatives such as roundtables, dialogues, workshops and other activities that bring together a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., government, academics, researchers, NGOs).⁸ As previously noted, the principle mechanism through which CCL has sought to create knowledge exchange networks is through its Knowledge Centres, which serve as information hubs for stakeholders in specific learning areas. According to the majority of interview respondents, CCL is generally thought to be "*headed on the right track*" in terms of creating effective knowledge exchange networks through the Knowledge Centres. A majority of CCL Board members, management and staff, Knowledge Centre staff and committee members suggested that the Centres have been generally successful in bringing together stakeholders for knowledge exchange. They noted that the five Knowledge Centres support existing networks, help to forge new relationships among stakeholders

⁸ Ibid p. 15

(e.g., business, labour, government, academia, policy, etc.) and bring together an impressive range of individuals through their activities. Others, including CCL's partners, provincial and territorial representatives and learning system stakeholders, pointed to a number of specific approaches taken by the Knowledge Centres to facilitate knowledge exchange with stakeholders. These include setting up committees, working groups, panels, roundtables, consortiums, symposiums and annual conferences.

It was widely suggested by all categories of respondents, including those closest to CCL, that certain knowledge exchange networks function better than others. Networks established by the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre and the Work and Learning Knowledge Centre were commonly viewed as being effective knowledge exchange networks. A number of interviewees consider the leadership structure of the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre effective in reaching out to many different stakeholders with specific interests in Aboriginal learning issues. More specifically, they referred to the six intersecting and multidisciplinary bundles of inquiry that form the foundation of the knowledge exchange activities within the Centre. Each of the theme bundles forms a core of themes and activities which the Centre will attempt to weave together, recognizing a holistic, interrelated and interconnected perspective. Other interviewees, including CCL partners and learning system stakeholders, also cited the Work and Learning Knowledge Centre's development of the Regional Roundtables on Employer Investment in the Workplace as a good approach to bringing together relevant stakeholders and reaching out to non-traditional stakeholders. These Regional Roundtables brought together senior government officials, as well as regional senior representatives from business, labour, colleges/universities and NGOs to identify practical steps that will lead to quality workplace learning, while allowing for a better understanding of various regional views and perspectives on workplace learning.

The knowledge exchange networks associated with Adult Learning Knowledge Centre and Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre are seen as less effective. A few respondents, including CCL Board members and learning system stakeholders, took issue with the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre, which was viewed as focusing primarily on engaging stakeholders located in the Maritimes and not working to bring together stakeholders from across the country. A few federal officials find the Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre problematic due to its emphasis on the research component over the knowledge exchange component. Some also mentioned that this particular Knowledge Centre appeared to be working within the confines of a knowledge exchange network that was previously established by the Centre for Excellence for Early Childhood Development and so had not really created or expanded the knowledge exchange network.

All categories of interviewees expressed varying levels of satisfaction with the volume and quality of information being exchanged. A majority of those who have not been in direct contact with any of the Knowledge Centres, including a number of provincial and territorial representatives and learning system stakeholders, are generally satisfied with the volume and quality of information being exchanged. For others, satisfaction with CCL's performance in this area is tied to their direct experiences with particular knowledge exchange networks. Those who have been engaged in knowledge exchange through the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre and Work and Learning Knowledge Centre, for instance, are very satisfied, while those who have been engaged in knowledge exchange through the Adult Learning

Knowledge Centre, on the other hand, expressed some concern over the volume and quality of information being sent their way.

Interviewees across all categories provided examples of positive impacts resulting from the CCL's knowledge exchange networks. It was very common for interviewees to suggest that certain conferences, workshops and roundtables either would not have taken place or would have been less successful in the absence of CCL's knowledge exchange networks or the Knowledge Centres specifically. In certain cases, the knowledge exchange networks were said to play an important coordinating role, in other instances, they were said to make necessary funding available for these events to take place. Several interviewees also indicated that CCL's knowledge exchange networks foster important relationships between stakeholders, which might not otherwise exist. A minority of interviewees across all categories expressed that CCL's knowledge exchange networks have been effective in helping learning system stakeholders to think differently about certain learning issues.

A number of suggestions for improving knowledge exchange emerged throughout the interviews. Most of these are tied to the concerns expressed by all categories of interviewees concerning CCL's knowledge exchange networks. The following suggestions were made:

- *Increasing awareness of Knowledge Centers* in order to promote further participation in their activities and generate more interest in the research work they do. A minority of stakeholders admitted that they have low awareness of the Knowledge Centres, and a few provincial and territorial representatives share these sentiments.
- *Reaching out to a larger group of stakeholders.* Some suggested that the organization could use the Knowledge Centres to bring together a broader group of stakeholders to the table, including traditional and non-traditional stakeholders. A few provincial and territorial representatives believe it would be beneficial if they were more engaged and CMEC were more involved.
- *Ensuring better coordination of the Knowledge Centres.* Several interviewees, including federal officials, provincial and territorial representatives, and learning system stakeholders, believe there is not enough coordination between the CCL and the Knowledge Centres. Some questioned how well the centres complement the work of the CCL, considering that certain Knowledge Centres are more regionally focused (i.e., the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre). A majority of these interviewees suggested that there is a lack of uniformity in the activities and objectives undertaken by the Knowledge Centres. It was also suggested that knowledge exchange networks would benefit from more cross-fertilization across stakeholders involved in different Centres.

Slightly over half of stakeholders surveyed feel the CCL has been successful in terms of increasing the volume of learning knowledge being exchanged among stakeholders (55 per cent), and the same proportion feel the CCL has been successful in increasing the quality of learning knowledge being

exchanged among stakeholders (55 per cent). Only about one in ten feel the CCL has had little success in either of these areas (8 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively).

Stakeholders are somewhat less likely to feel the CCL has successfully created effective knowledge exchange networks, although nearly half (49 per cent) feel the CCL has been successful in this area, and only 13 per cent feel the CCL has had little success in this area. A fairly large proportion of stakeholders (between 13 per cent and 16 per cent) did not provide a response to these questions.

c) Creation of Partnerships

Amongst those respondents who reported collaborating with the CCL either formally or informally, the vast majority reported that these partnerships had been both valuable and beneficial, with the CCL being a key contributor to their success. Though the evidence strongly indicates that CCL has been successful at creating partnerships, there is also evidence to suggest that additional partnerships could be pursued in the future.

Documents reviewed indicate that CCL has established bilateral agreements with some provinces with respect to structured learning, and is working on similar agreements with others, as well as with school boards and organizations such as the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

CCL's partners, learning system stakeholders, as well as provincial and territorial representatives were asked if their organization had partnered with CCL. Most of these respondents reported that they had collaborated either formally or informally with CCL in some capacity. A majority suggested that their organizations partnered directly with CCL for research studies (e.g., for funding), developing reports, putting together workshops, roundtables, conferences and knowledge exchange forums. A minority of interview respondents said they had worked alongside the organization informally. Some had participated in events where CCL also participated, including meetings pertaining to specific learning issues. Others had gone directly to CCL for research (e.g., data, reports, or with specific research questions). Almost all these respondents considered the partnership they had with CCL both valuable and beneficial, the majority noting that CCL funding had allowed them to undertake valuable research, while providing them with expertise in the field of learning and the opportunity to connect with other stakeholders.

While a minority of key informants across all categories suggested that some of these benefits might still have been attainable in the absence of CCL, they noted that the process would not have been as easy without the money, support and expertise of CCL. Furthermore, a small majority, including a number of provincial and territorial representatives, claimed that they would not have had the same benefits in the absence of the partnership with CCL, noting that in almost all cases, the projects would not have been possible without the resources or funding provided by CCL. One specific example of the potential impact this could have on learning is that ministries of education can access some very high quality research results that they could not have obtained on their own. Those research results help them to refine programs and allocate resources. Another interviewee suggested that "*based on findings, they will also be lobbying for change in policy regarding how teachers teach Aboriginal students*".

Survey results reveal that stakeholders feel that CCL has been fairly successful at creating effective partnerships with stakeholders and other learning organizations, with 42 per cent reporting that the CCL had been successful in this regard, and only 16 per cent reporting that CCL's efforts were unsuccessful. However, the results also reveal that almost half of the organizations surveyed have not partnered with CCL to date. Of those who had, 83 per cent reported that the experience was beneficial to their organization, and 82 per cent reported that they would partner with the CCL again if given the chance. This provides a strong indication that there is the potential for additional partnerships between CCL and other learning organizations in Canada.

d) Communication to Stakeholders and Canadians

Evaluation findings indicate that CCL has had mixed success in communicating with most of its stakeholders, with various respondents reporting that there is room for improvement in terms of both the level of communication and the message being conveyed. There is little evidence of progress made with respect to communicating with the Canadian public.

CCL web site statistics during the period April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008 indicate sustained steady growth in online traffic with 1, 686 average page views per day. However, in November the daily average was significantly higher due to the release of several major reports. During the year, CCL's site recorded over 234, 000 unique visits (17 per cent growth) and 73, 800 document downloads, an increase of 84.5 per cent. There were also more than 265 incoming links from the blogging community, an increase of 44.3 per cent in 2007-2008. As a comparative measure, the Canadian Health Network⁹ (CHN) which provides access to health information to Canadians received 581,000 unique visits in 2001, which increased to 2.3 million unique visits by 2005.¹⁰

To fully understand the opinions of key informants on this issue it is important to bear in mind that to date, CCL communication efforts have focussed primarily on stakeholders. So far, little effort has been made to communicate to Canadians overall.

While most said they have had some exposure to these activities, interviewees across all respondent categories reported that their levels of exposure to CCL's communication and outreach activities have been inconsistent. While CCL partners suggested that they have had considerable exposure to CCL communication and outreach activities, exposure tends to be mixed amongst provincial and territorial representatives, federal officials and learning system stakeholders, with some reporting considerable exposure and others having had very little. Interview respondents tended to base their perspectives on CCL's direct efforts to communicate and reach out to them on a personal level, citing efforts in terms of newsletters and email communications received, information on the website, interaction with Knowledge Centre staff and CCL staff, events put on by CCL (e.g., roundtables and conferences) and invitations to

⁹ The CHN is an Internet portal for health information targeted at Canadians and funded by Health Canada. The CHN was launched in 1999.

¹⁰ Evaluation of the Canadian Health Network, EKOS, 2006

participate in these, published material developed by CCL and media coverage of the organization and its activities. Those who consider CCL effective in communicating to stakeholders and Canadians offer a number of reasons for their perspective, including the attraction of major media, synthesizing of information and making it readily available and the so-called “personal touch”.

Interview respondents who consider CCL less successful in its communication and outreach activities typically brought up two major issues. The first issue revolves around the amount of communication with different groups; a minority of interviewees said they have had “*very minimal exposure*” to CCL communication and outreach activities. Many of these, including certain provincial and territorial representatives and learning system stakeholders, said they feel “*excluded*” by the CCL. Some interviewees, including many of CCL’s partners, were only exposed to specific communication and outreach activities based on their involvement with CCL and had low awareness of CCL’s work beyond their area of involvement. A few others, including provincial representatives and learning system stakeholders located in Vancouver, think they are over exposed to CCL’s communications outreach activities. The second major issue concerns the time the CCL spends on communicating with stakeholders, which is viewed by some respondents as just communicating for communication’s sake. Specifically, interviewees suggested that the CCL was too focused on communicating, rather than on the message being communicated. They explained that the organization has had to spend time getting set up and cannot be expected to start disseminating information without first spending the time to develop substantial materials. In addition, a minority of interviewees reported that they had minimal exposure to CCL outreach activities, to the point where some respondents, provincial and territorial representatives and learning system stakeholders in particular, felt “*excluded*”. Several respondents also pointed to the CCL’s lack of effort to reach out to the Canadian public. We note, however, that the number of unique visits to CCL’s website in 2007 imply that many Canadians are in fact accessing CCL’s website.

Interviewees made several suggestions for improvements, including:

- Communicating consistently with stakeholders, partners and provincial and territorial representatives;
- Communicating with the public; and
- Developing more of its own material to communicate.

Similarly, stakeholders surveyed are fairly positive in their appraisal of communication efforts with stakeholders: just over half rate CCL communication efforts with stakeholders as very successful, and only one in ten rate CCL efforts with stakeholders as unsuccessful. Results are more mixed in terms of CCL efforts to communicate with the general public. Only three in ten rate CCL efforts to communicate with the public as very successful, and roughly the same proportion feel these efforts have been unsuccessful. Stakeholders affiliated with the CCL are more likely to rate CCL communication efforts as very successful with both stakeholders (63 per cent) and the general public (32 per cent). Conversely, stakeholders not affiliated with the CCL are less likely to rate communication efforts as very successful with stakeholders

(40 per cent) and the public (22 per cent). Overall, these results reflect the focus of CCL's communications efforts to date which have been directed with stakeholders rather than the Canadian public.

4.2 MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES

This section addresses the extent to which CCL has made progress in achieving its medium-term outcomes. The medium-term outcomes identified for CCL in its mandate include: increased volume, quality and usefulness/relevance of research and information on learning; increased volume and quality of learning knowledge exchanged among stakeholders and Canadians; and improved dialogue about learning among stakeholders.

a) Improved Volume, Quality and Relevance of Research and Information on Learning

According to the evaluation findings, the CCL has produced a significant amount of information and research on learning. While most respondents viewed these publications as being of high quality, some concerns were raised regarding the perceived relevance and usefulness of some of the information produced, with the possibility of duplication being raised by several respondents.

The CCL documentation provides numerous examples of how CCL has contributed to increasing the volume of research and information on learning. As of September 2008, the CCL has funded 128 projects covering all of its priority theme areas since 2006 totalling over \$7,650,000. The following is a breakdown of projects by priority theme:

- Structured Learning (33)
- Adult Learning (28)
- Early childhood Learning (18)
- Health & Learning (17)
- Aboriginal Learning (17)
- Work & Learning (15)

Currently, CCL has 73 funded projects under its supervision. Six best-evidence syntheses or systematic reviews (an approach to gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing a body of research on a given topic) have been performed to date. Approximately 27 Lessons in Learning reports that have been produced

and published by CCL. Finally, CCL has published 16 articles in academic and professional peer reviewed journals¹¹.

Most interviewees overall felt that the research and information developed by the CCL is at least somewhat relevant and/or useful to themselves or their organization and cited a number of specific examples including the COMPOSITE Learning Index (CLI), ECHO¹², the State of Learning reports, the Educational Report Card, the work done by CCL on Aboriginal learning and the work done by CCL for provincial/territorial government, such as the Ministry of Advanced Education in British Columbia.¹³ Respondents noted that the information produced by the CCL offered a good synthesis of data that may or may not have been already available; identified knowledge gaps; and was well written. However, some respondents offered the opposite view, claiming that the CCL supported the status quo too often, while others felt that the CCL was simply repackaging the research developed by others.

An annual measure of Canadian progress in lifelong learning, the CLI is based on several statistical indicators that reflect the many environments where Canadians learn, including school, at home, at work, or in the community. Through forums, conferences and workshops in Europe, as well as collaborations with interested parties, the CCL is contributing to OECD and European Commission work in the development of European and international CLIs, making CCL a world leader in the development of CLIs.

There are mixed views on whether comparable research and information would be available to respondents in the absence of CCL. While a minority of respondents argued that no comparable research or information would otherwise be available without the CCL, an almost equal proportion simply did not answer the question, while only a few said that this information would be available without CCL. Examples of potential alternative sources included federal government (HRSDC or Statistics Canada, for example), Conference Board of Canada and Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

According to the literature review, three notable federal public organizations conduct and/or sponsor research in the learning field and disseminate the results of that research, like the CCL:

- The Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), through the Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC), in which it is a partner along with Statistics Canada, is focused on producing and disseminating pan-Canadian education and training statistics and research results;

¹¹ Information presented in this paragraph the most recent available as of September 2008.

¹² ECHO is an online assessment tool created by CCL.

¹³ The following are education ministries that have had direct involvement with the CCL: British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Training; British Columbia Ministry of Education; Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth; Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy; Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour; Ontario Ministry of Education; Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services; Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Nova Scotia Department of Education; and, Newfoundland Department of Education.

- Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) which provides strategic advice to federal government on learning and, towards that end, commissions and disseminates research on learning; and
- The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation which distributes university scholarships/bursaries as well as the results of the education research it sponsors. Its research program advances the study of barriers to post-secondary education and the impact of policies and programs designed to alleviate them, with the aim of ensuring that policy-making and public discussion about opportunities in higher education in Canada can be informed by rigorous analysis and empirical evidence.

Of these three, key informants were most likely to view the CMEC as the most likely source of duplication. Provincial and territorial respondents in particular pointed to this possibility.

Survey results reveal that CCL publications are seen as being of high quality by at least two in three of the stakeholders who had consulted them, and only one in ten or fewer rated any of these publications as being of poor quality. All the publications are assigned somewhat lower ratings in terms of their perceived usefulness compared to the overall quality of these publications, although each of the publications is seen as useful by at least half of the stakeholders who consulted them. These results provide some indication that although the CCL's publications are seen as being of high quality, there remains some room for improvement with respect to their usefulness.

b) Increased Volume and Quality of Learning Knowledge Exchanged

Overall, there is a wide variety of information and research concerning lifelong learning available, both in terms of breadth and quality, and this poses a key difficulty for the CCL. While this implies the need for a national organization to synthesize and make this research and data available, there are concerns amongst some stakeholders that the CCL is not fully meeting this need. It is recognized that the CCL's success in this area is quite closely aligned to the effectiveness of individual Knowledge Centres.

Online subscription to CCL's Learning Link publication has increased steadily since October 2006. The latest subscription figures report a membership of 4,030 as of September 5, 2008. In the interest of knowledge exchange, CCL has sponsored a number of workshops, seminars, and other events since its inception. To date, 42 presentations have been made by CCL staff at scholarly and professional conferences since 2005. CCL also collaborates with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) in the hosting of a Knowledge Mobilization (KM) Seminar.

In addition, CCL has undertaken a variety of workshops and presentations in order to increase the number and quality of the research proposals it receives. It has conducted 12 workshops to date dealing with issues related to the process of proposing and implementing thorough research projects.

All but one CCL staff member said that the knowledge exchange networks were having a positive effect on the volume and quality of information produced, but acknowledged that the sheer volume of information could be overwhelming. Amongst other categories of respondents, a minority expressed satisfaction with the volume and quality of knowledge being exchanged, while a small majority felt unable to answer the question. A few respondents acknowledged the key role that the Knowledge Centres play in the production of this information, while a few others praised its comprehensiveness, its relevance to their own work, and its exploratory nature.

A number of concerns, however, were also raised. For example, a few CCL staff members pointed out that the quality and volume of the information exchanged varies, depending on the Knowledge Centre and networks responsible for it. Additionally, other key informants from all categories spoke of the challenges in synthesizing large amounts of information and feeling overwhelmed at times with how much information there is. In the words of one respondent, they "*have vast amounts of information, but could do a better job of focusing more*". In particular, there seem to be some issues with information coming from the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (ABLKC), with a few respondents holding the view that Aboriginal learning issues are complex and sensitive (i.e., traditional versus the formal education system, needs of various groups of Aboriginals), thereby making the work of the ABLKC particularly challenging.

Survey results reveal generally favourable views on CCL knowledge and exchange efforts. Slightly over half of the stakeholders surveyed feel CCL has been successful in terms of increasing the volume of learning knowledge being exchanged among stakeholders and the same proportion feel CCL has been successful in increasing the quality of learning knowledge being exchanged among stakeholders.

c) Improved Dialogue about Learning

Although the CCL has done much to expand dialogue on learning in Canada, there is evidence that some key stakeholders' (i.e., provincial and territorial governments) lack of engagement will prove detrimental to change in the area of lifelong learning over the longer term. In addition, there is evidence that some clarification of the role and mandate of CCL with respect to leadership and facilitating dialogue among stakeholders is necessary.

In an effort to increase the dialogue among learning stakeholders domestically and internationally, the CCL has engaged in a number of partnerships with organizations ranging from universities to NGOs. A review of documentation revealed 31 such partnerships with NGOs over the past two years and seven upcoming National Knowledge Centre Events that will be conducted throughout Canada. Specific examples include:

- The five thematic Knowledge Centres located across Canada ; and

- The publicly available State of Learning report and a series of Thematic Reports related to each learning domain that reflects the CCLs commitment to reporting all progress on learning to Canadians Renewed Strategy for the State of Learning and Thematic Reports.

The level of satisfaction regarding the dialogue on learning resulting from CCL varied considerably, depending on the group of interview respondents. Among CCL Board members, CCL staff and Knowledge Centre staff, responses were entirely positive to this question. A majority, though not large (just over half) of provincial representatives and CCL partners expressed high levels of satisfaction with dialogue. Among federal government respondents and learning stakeholders, however, only a minority feel positive about the dialogue.

Those who were satisfied with the CCL contribution to improvements in the learning dialogue most frequently cited the “people factor,” as the reason for this success, that is to say, CCL’s ability to bring together many stakeholders from many fields to discuss issues upon which they had not previously convened. According to many of these respondents, symposia and conferences, and the Knowledge Centres themselves were particularly effective in accomplishing this.

Another element to this improved dialogue relates to the raised profile of CCL’s work and of learning-related issues in general. CCL has received considerable media coverage, and this, some respondents believe, has incited much needed discussion of the issues. Other respondents cited specific CCL outputs such as the Composite Learning Index, “Too Many Left Behind” and “Let the Children Play: Nature’s Answer to Early Learning” as examples of products that encouraged dialogue about more specific topics related to learning.

On the other hand, those who believe that the CCL had accomplished little in the area of dialogue about learning raised a few key issues. Most frequently cited were concerns surrounding inadequate provincial engagement. Several key informants reported conflicts between the CCL and certain provinces regarding issues related to jurisdictional responsibilities (education is seen as strictly a provincial responsibility), and as a result, a certain level of provincial resistance to the CCL. Other respondents reported that more generally, the CCL had not engaged all potential stakeholders adequately. For example, a federal respondent reported seeing an overrepresentation of HRSDC staff at CCL events, and an under representation of other relevant departments, such as Industry Canada, Privy Council Office, and Finance Canada. A few other respondents noted that success in the area of dialogue has varied from topic to topic. Very few respondents either pointed out that this sort of dialogue was already taking place, or questioned whether this was really the role of CCL in the first place.

This dialogue’s potential to contribute to improved learning outcomes in Canada is far from definite. Only a minority of all respondents clearly expressed a belief that increased dialogue could contribute. Concerns were raised, for example, that without increased provincial buy-in it would be difficult to create real change in the learning system in Canada. Those who do think there is potential to improve learning outcomes identified the following key reasons:

- Informed decision-making at the policy level;
- Demonstration of what works through best practices;
- Putting more knowledge into the hands of grassroots organizations and thereby empowering them to better help those in need; and
- Building of relationships between stakeholders (e.g., academics with lots of knowledge connecting with community organizations with the power to make changes).

4.3 POTENTIAL FOR ACHIEVING LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Although this is a summative evaluation and thus should address and measure the extent to which CCL has achieved its long-term objectives, the nature of the objectives and the measurable change needed would require a longer time period than five years. This has been reflected in the evaluation matrix (see Appendix A) developed in close collaboration with the Evaluation Working Group.

It is clear that so far, while considerable progress has been made on both short and medium-term outcomes, and there is the potential for more progress, that CCL is facing some challenges to its ultimate success. In many cases, challenges pertain to effectively engaging various stakeholders in information about learning, such as provincial governments. Other issues are related to the information itself or the manner in which it is presented.

There is significant overlap or commonality in the contributors and barriers identified across respondent categories. There is also some overlap between contributors and barriers: some factors are identified as both a contributor and potential barrier to success. For example, the fact that CCL has been able to garner support from some provincial and territorial governments is identified as a contributor, while the reticence or lack of support from other provinces is noted as a key barrier. A number of contributors to CCL's success were identified repeatedly by a significant number of interview respondents across each category. These include:

- Expertise of CCL staff and leadership;
- CCL's independence from government;
- Support of stakeholder organizations;
- Support of some provincial governments; and
- Proactive communications.

Key barriers to success identified by interview respondents across respondent groups include:

- Jurisdictional issues and lack of collaboration;
- Size of mandate and timeframe of funding;
- Uncertainty of future funding; and
- Independence of the CCL hampered by its ties to federal funding.

More specifically, respondents spoke of the perceived strained relationship or lack of collaboration between CCL and CMEC and some provincial governments (e.g., Alberta and Quebec). A few interviewees also noted that CCL's success (e.g., invitations to attend and speak at events), may be perceived as threatening to these stakeholders, especially if they disagree with the presence or mandate of CCL nationally, thus further exacerbating the tense situation.

Furthermore, a few interviewees (particularly a minority of federal and provincial/territorial officials interviewed) feel that CCL has overstepped its boundaries and has duplicated the work or role of other organizations or players. For example, some perceive that CCL has strayed into actively conducting or funding research, when other organizations are already doing this. This is explored further in section 5.1

5. COST-EFFECTIVENESS

This chapter addresses evaluation issues related to the cost effectiveness and alternatives to the CCL.

5.1 OVERLAP OR DUPLICATION

While the CCL is seen as the only existing Canadian organization with a mandate to provide a national and independent perspective in the analyses, interpretation and presentation of research on lifelong learning, views as to whether actual overlap and duplication exist are mixed. The majority of interviewees for this evaluation indicated that the CCL has several safeguards in place to avoid duplication, while describing any overlap as complementary in nature. However, a number respondents, specifically provincial and territorial representatives, raised concerns that duplication may exist, particularly between the CCL and CMEC, suggesting that a closer collaboration between the two may be required.

Based on findings from the literature review, CCL is one of the few organizations that is actively and explicitly concerned with increasing research capacity and synthesizing and digesting results of the research it conducts as well as the research that is conducted by other organizations. The CCL is also the sole organization in Canada concerned with monitoring or reporting on Canada's progress in the learning field nationally. With respect to sponsoring research, another major activity of the CCL, the review indicates that there is no shortage of organizations undertaking this activity in Canada. As such, there is the potential for overlap in two areas – literacy and workplace training, as there are a number of organizations conducting research in these areas. Another potential area for overlap is with regard to Aboriginal learning, which is within the purview of both the CCL and CMEC. Overall, however, the literature review findings indicate there is no other organization as comprehensive as the CCL, which not only sponsors and disseminates research in learning, but also actively reviews and translates learning knowledge and builds research capacity, while covering the breadth of the lifelong learning spectrum.

Almost all CCL Board members, and CCL management and staff, as well as the majority of Knowledge Centre management and staff, federal officials, CCL partners and learning stakeholders interviewed believe there is no significant overlap or duplication between the activities of the CCL and those of federal or provincial/territorial agencies and organizations, or between the activities of the CCL and other non-profit and/or non-governmental agencies or organizations. According to these respondents, much of what the CCL does complements the work of other organizations. Specifically, these respondents see CCL as the only national organization in a position to weave together the data and information collected by other organizations, while at the same time identifying knowledge gaps and presenting information in a new and independent way. Overall, the CCL is viewed as unique in Canada's learning landscape, as it presents a broad, comprehensive and pan-Canadian point of view. While existing NGOs and other government

departments were viewed as doing pieces of work, the CCL's role was to "connect the dots on a national scale", as one respondent noted.

These respondents also cited a number of measures that were seen as helping to avoid overlap and duplication between the research sponsored by the CCL and work conducted by other organizations. Respondents noted that the CCL avoided duplicating the work of others by simply engaging and consulting with such a wide variety of stakeholders, while at the same time identifying learning gaps. In particular, interviewees often cited the Knowledge Centres themselves as excellent vehicles that had brought stakeholders together, fostered communication and, as a result, avoided duplication. As one respondent noted "the CCL does not operate in a bubble". In addition, CCL management and staff cited the competitive bidding process for research funding as helping to lower the possibility of duplicating research. According to these respondents, the Research and Knowledge Mobilization Directorate evaluates proposals based on a number of factors, including whether the research has already been done.

In contrast, most provincial and territorial interviewees, as well as a minority of federal government respondents, believe there is overlap or duplication between the activities of the CCL and those of federal or provincial/territorial agencies and organizations. Examples cited included the work conducted by the Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Development, Service Canada, Statistics Canada, the CMEC and various NGOs. In particular, provincial and territorial interviewees believe there is overlap or duplication between the activities of the CCL and those of federal or provincial/territorial agencies and organizations, but most provided a mixed assessment on whether the CCLs work overlaps or duplicates the work of other non-governmental agencies or organizations. Most of these interviewees believe that the CCL is duplicating the work of CMEC and Statistics Canada, while a few also mention HRSDC. Specific areas where these interviewees believe there is overlap or duplication include data management and Aboriginal learning. A few interviewees, however, do not believe that there is any duplication or overlap with provincial/territorial agencies and organizations such as CMEC, Statistics Canada or HRSDC, and instead describe the relationship as being complementary. One interviewee explained that *"there is certainly no provincial entity that does the work of the CCL"* and that the CCLs researchers do a very good job of finding out what is going on first before moving forward with research.

It should be noted that several CCL partners mentioned that the CCL's relationship with the CMEC could be complementary if the organizations found a way to work with each other's strengths, with the CCL focusing on knowledge creation and mobilization, and the CMEC on policy development.

5.2 PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES TO CCL

Overall, while the evaluation findings indicate that the CCL is generally viewed as the only existing organization that provides information on lifelong learning from a national perspective, some concerns were raised as to whether other organizations constituted possible alternatives. However, it is unlikely that these organizations would achieve the same results as the CCL.

The literature review revealed a wide range of funding models and arrangements for research organizations, both nationally and internationally; however, the review failed to uncover any evidence that suggests a model which would be better or is more appropriate in the Canadian context than the CCL for producing, funding and disseminating learning research. In Canada, there are varying government models for funding and /or disseminating learning and other research that differ from the CCL's arrangement. One example is CMEC which, through the Canadian Education Statistics Council, a partnership with Statistics Canada, funds and disseminates some educational research in addition to its education statistics programs. Another example is the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) which is a non-profit organization providing health system data and analysis and guided by a board consisting of deputy health ministers from provincial/territorial governments and representatives of non-government health groups. Another example is the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Other examples include HRSDC and Statistics Canada, which are directly funded by the federal government to conduct or sponsor research and disseminate the results.

Internationally, many industrial nations have organizations, real and virtual, that perform functions in the learning research field similar to that of the CCL. In some cases, the organization is located within the education department (e.g., New Zealand's Best Evidence Synthesis Programme), while other countries, such as the United Kingdom, fund an independent organization (i.e. the Center for Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice in Education). Many countries also maintain Internet portals that link users to different sources of learning information and research.

The opinions and suggestions of expert panel members on possible alternatives to the CCL varied considerably. The panel members provided a number of suggestions that would lead to improving the CCLs performance or even to the transformation of the CCL as an organization, but did not suggest any existing organizations as viable alternatives. Alternative approaches included: diversifying the sources of funding of the CCL, so that the organization is not entirely dependent on federal government funds; appointing federal/provincial/territorial government representatives to the Board, empowered by significant independence from their respective governments; and, placing more emphasis on sustaining and strengthening Knowledge Centre and stakeholder networks while maintaining fewer and leaner administrative structures.

Key informant interviews reveal that all CCL Board members and the majority of federal officials, CCL partners, and learning system stakeholders interviewed believe the CCL is the only existing organization that can provide a national and independent perspective on lifelong learning, and that the CCL produces innovative research which would not be accomplished by an alternative approach. The majority of provincial and territorial representatives, however, believe that there are alternative approaches to the CCL that could achieve similar results, and most of the respondents that take this point of view also suggest that CMEC is the organization that would best be able to achieve the CCL's objectives. A minority of provincial and territorial representatives believe that the CCL is the only organization capable of providing a national and independent perspective on issues of lifelong learning, and that any alternatives would not be able to achieve the same objectives.

CCL Board members believe that the independence and national scope of the CCL allows it to produce innovative research that could not be produced by any other organization. One interviewee explained that other organizations are limited in scope, lack resources, or face constraints imposed by membership that would not allow them to step in and achieve the mandate of the CCL. Another interviewee explained that an *“alternative approach would end up having to have the same characteristics, which include being a national body that is independent from government, is sustainable and faces the same battles”*. Several Board members also suggested that it is too early to start looking at whether alternatives exist to the CCL given that the organization has only been working on its mandate for three years (i.e. apart from the time it took for the organization to set up and begin operating). A few Board members also explained that if the CCL ceased to exist it would leave behind a void that existed before its creation and that Canada would once again find itself *“in tremendous need to fill the role of bringing information and data together, examining the big picture nationally, identifying gaps and disseminating knowledge and information”*.

Most federal officials do not believe there is an existing organization that has the CCL's capacity and mandate to promote and disseminate knowledge on learning and many indicate that the CCL's approach has been successful; however, the majority did provide a number of suggestions that would lead to improving the CCL's performance or even to the transformation of the CCL as an organization. Several interviewees suggested that the CCL's future success depends on better cooperation and collaboration with the provinces. Several interviewees also suggested that the CCL might want to look at alternative sources of funding, such as a mix of governmental and non-governmental grants, in an effort to be more self sustaining and not have to solely rely on federal support. A few federal officials, however, did suggest that there are existing alternatives to the CCL, and that the funds currently used to support the CCL could be better spent elsewhere, such as in support of existing government research agencies or non governmental organizations.

Almost all CCL partners believe that the CCL is the only existing organization that can provide a national and independent perspective on lifelong learning, and that the CCL produces innovative research which would not be accomplished by an alternative approach. Most interviewees are particularly satisfied with the way the Knowledge Centres have reached out and formed partnerships across the country (i.e. between labour and business, Aboriginal community etc.), and a few respondents suggested that increasing the role of the Knowledge Centres is a way to improve upon the existing structure of the CCL. The majority of learning system stakeholders also believe that the CCL is the only existing organization that can promote and disseminate knowledge on life long learning, and that the CCLs approach has been successful. One interviewee described the CCL as *“a pretty lean organization, with an efficient structure and no major build up of bureaucracy”*.

A few learning system stakeholders, however, believe that there are alternative approaches to the CCL that could achieve the same objectives. One interviewee suggested that the funds the CCL currently receives could be made available to CMEC, while another interviewee preferred more of a partnership between the two organizations, noting that the CMEC could not replace the CCL as it is *“bound by the political decision making process and could not achieve the CCL's mandate on its own”*. An

interviewee also suggested that the CCL should adopt a governance structure resembling the model of the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). According to the interviewee *“with the CIHI model, federal and provincial governments and stakeholders work together in a non partisan fashion”*, and the CCL needs to find a way to better include the provinces if it is to be successful. Another interviewee agreed that the CIHI model may be an alternative approach to the current CCL structure, but believes that CIHI is better suited for an organization that does implementation, and that CIHI operates under a different set of circumstances and objectives with a much more defined federal/provincial relationship on the issue of health care.

Unlike the other stakeholder respondents, the majority of provincial and territorial representatives believe that there are alternative approaches to the CCL that could achieve similar results, and the majority of respondents that take this point of view also suggest that CMEC is the organization that would be able to achieve the CCL’s objectives. A few interviewees explained that there is a very positive partnership between CMEC and Statistics Canada through the Canadian Education Statistic Council, and that the federal government could build on that relationship with some additional funding. The respondents suggested that the federal government could direct the CCL’s current research funding to CMEC in order to increase and develop CMECs research capacity. A minority of provincial and territorial representatives, however, believe that the CCL is the only organization capable of providing a national and independent perspective on issue of lifelong learning, and that any alternatives would not be able to achieve the same objectives.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Overall, while the CCL has taken measures to address the recommendations made by the formative evaluation, more work needs to be done to properly measure their achievement. Some variations exist with regards to the extent of the success of the measures taken, but overall the interviewees consulted believe that CCL's efforts have yielded significant results.

This chapter explores the extent to which recommendations from the Formative Evaluation have been implemented. Recommendations from the 2006 Formative Evaluation include:

- Strengthening outreach and communications activities by developing and implementing a strategy that will ensure that the products and events produced by the CCL receive adequate exposure amongst stakeholders; and
- Developing performance measures based on the logic model and generally-accepted criteria for good performance measurement.

The document and file review reveals that in response to the first recommendation in the Formative Evaluation, the CCL appointed a Subject Matter Expert (SME) to head up four focus areas: Corporate and internal communications; External stakeholder relations; Media relations; and, Government relations. CCL Board, management and staff members also described a number of measures that the CCL has implemented including:

- Increasing the budget for communications and outreach activities;
- Creating a communications working group (Communications and Outreach Directorate) to develop communications plans and to support consistent and timely messaging, and
- Hiring an individual responsible for media relations.

The document and file review also reveals that in response to the second recommendation that the CCL develop robust performance measures, ten performance indicators to be used in the assessment of progress toward identified outcomes have been developed. The majority of CCL Board, management and staff members interviewed expressed that this recommendation has proven more problematic to address and that the CCL is still working on establishing ways to properly measure achievement. As one interviewee explained *"It is much more difficult to measure the impact of the work the CCL does. For example, while it is easy to measure website traffic, it is much more difficult to measure the*

multiplier effect across the stakeholder community and their own members. Basic statistics are tracked on the number of reports produced, but measuring actual impact is difficult". Interviewees did, however, provide a number of examples of measures that have been taken to address the recommendation including:

- Reports on key aspects of CCL's performance are a regular discussion item at management committee meetings, with the Board, and with other parts of the organization as appropriate.
- Developing corporate goals and annual objectives;
- Evaluating the usage of CCL information by the media;
- Calculating web site statistics .During the period April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008 web site statistics indicate sustained steady growth in online traffic with 1, 686 average page views per day. During the year, CCL's site recorded over 234, 000 unique visits (17 per cent growth) and 73, 800 document downloads, an increase of 84.5 per cent. There were also more than 265 incoming links from the blogging community, an increase of 44.3 per cent in 2007-2008.
- Tracking the number of subscriptions to the CCL newsletter;
- Requiring Knowledge Centres to produce business plans that are supported by logic models;
- Measuring Knowledge Centre impacts and results in an annual process;
- Implementing a performance management process which tracks employee satisfaction and turnover rates; and
- Developing a project based Activity Matrix that allows Board members to gauge the level of activity.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents key conclusions drawn from the evaluation results, along with recommendations for the future.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

a) Relevance

While the available literature concerning the need for a pan-Canadian organization to produce, synthesize, and disseminate knowledge on learning is quite limited, evidence provided by key informants and experts indicates that such an organization is necessary. Although there are some who question the need for another organization focused on learning in Canada, the CCL continues to be relevant and to fulfill an identified need in Canada. There is a need for an independent and national organization that conducts research, identifies knowledge gaps, brings together data and disseminates information on lifelong learning.

As the key funding source for CCL, there is a need for the mandate of CCL to align with the strategic policy and priorities of Human Resources and Social Development Canada. The evidence collected suggests a good alignment with these policies and priorities.

b) Success

Evaluation findings indicate that the CCL has been successful in identifying knowledge gaps, creating knowledge exchange networks, creating partnerships, improving the volume, quality and relevance of research and information on learning, and increasing the volume and quality of learning research exchanged. The CCL is, however, facing some challenges to its long term success. The most significant challenges pertain to effectively engaging various stakeholders such as provincial and territorial governments, clearly articulating its mandate, role and responsibilities to stakeholders (including policy-makers) and Canadians, and to issues concerning organizational development and securing federal funding.

There is also a notable observation that the CCL has only been working towards its mandate for approximately three years (i.e. apart from the time it took to set up and begin operating), and that it may be too early to fully measure and evaluate the CCLs full impact and success.

c) Cost-effectiveness

The CCL is the only existing Canadian organization with a mandate to provide a national and independent perspective in the analyses, interpretation and in the presentation of research on lifelong learning, and according to the majority of key informant interviewees, and the literature review, much of what the CCL does complements the work of other organizations. The work of the Knowledge Centres, the competitive bidding process, and internal oversight imposed by CCL management have served as safeguards against overlap and duplication, and in the correction of such activities when they occur.

d) Alternatives

While alternative funding models and arrangements for conducting learning research exist, it is unlikely that they would be able to achieve the same results as the CCL (i.e. independent and innovative research and dissemination of information). Alternative approaches, however, that include the strengthening or expanding of existing CCL structures such as the Knowledge Centres and stakeholder networks, and the redoubling of efforts to improve the focus of the organization in research and communications activities would benefit the CCL as it moves forward with its mandate of promoting and disseminating knowledge on learning.

e) Implementation of Recommendations from the Formative Evaluation

Overall, while the CCL has taken measures to address the recommendations made by the formative evaluation, more work needs to be done to properly measure their achievement. Some variations exist with regards to the extent of the success of the measures taken, but overall the interviewees consulted believe that the efforts of the CCL to respond to the recommendations have yielded significant results

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

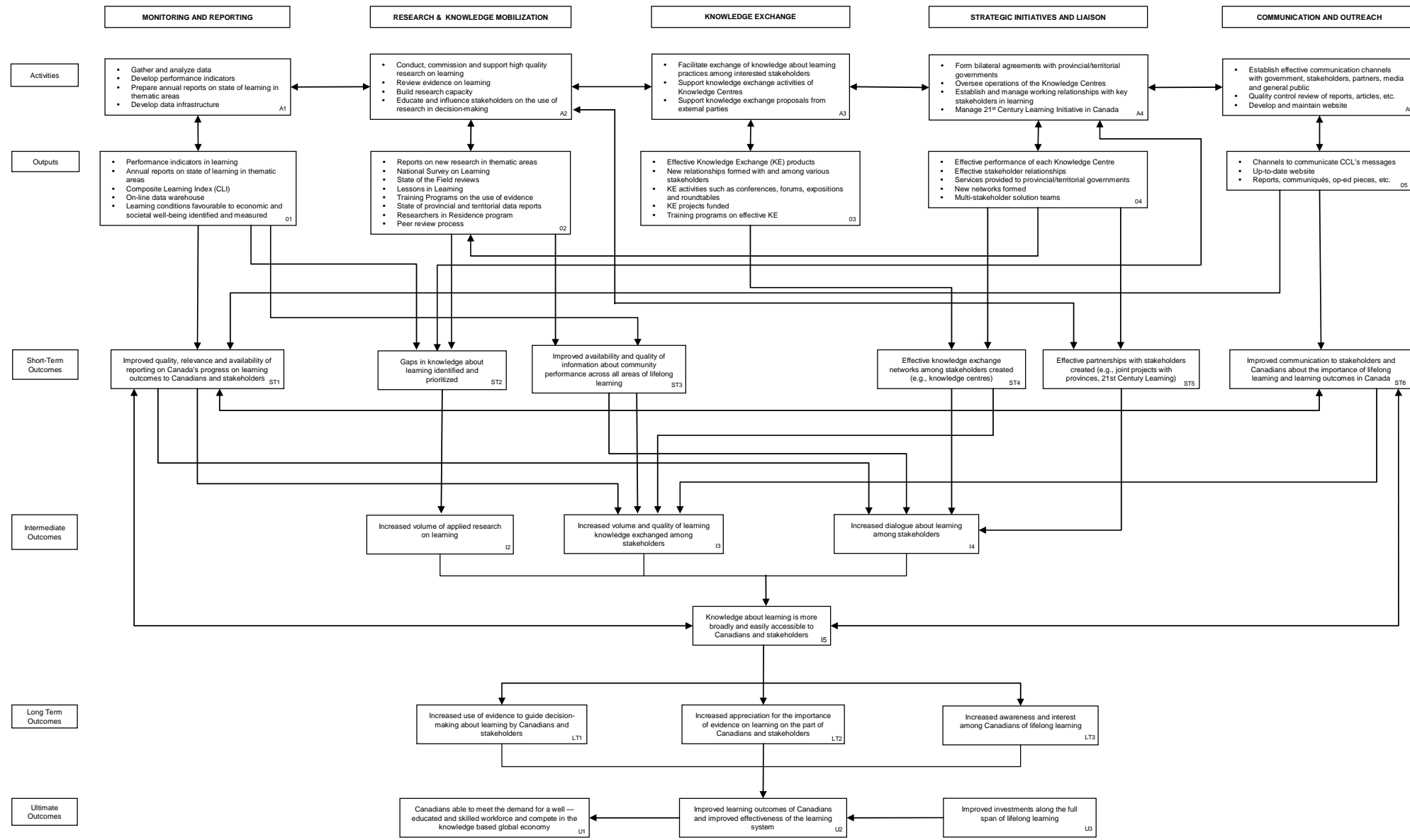
- 1) The CCL should more clearly articulate and communicate its mandate with respect to learning knowledge in Canada. The mandate of the CCL should articulate the CCL's role in producing synthesizing and disseminating knowledge to stakeholders (including policy-makers) and Canadians.
- 2) The CCL should continue to sustain and strengthen the Knowledge Centres and stakeholder networks by expanding the ability of the Knowledge Centres to include the sponsoring of more research, and further promoting linkages with stakeholders across the country. Developing learning centres or Knowledge Centre sub units across the country

may help the regionally based Knowledge Centres further fulfill their mandate and become more inclusive and pan-Canadian in their operations.

- 3) The CCL should continue efforts to improve the focus of the organization in its research and communications activities and continue to search for ways to properly measure achievement, including tracking the reach and effect of its research and communications efforts by conducting periodic surveys of stakeholders.
- 4) The CCL should continue in its efforts to collaborate with CMEC particularly in areas of formal education such as kindergarten to grade twelve learning. The CCL's relationship with CMEC could be complementary if the two organizations found a way to work with each other's strengths for policy development (i.e. the CCL as a knowledge creation and mobilization organization and CMEC as a policy agency).
- 5) In order to better respond to the information needs of its stakeholders and users of its publications, CCL should consult stakeholders and users of its publications on their information needs (i.e., how CCL publications could better respond to needs).

APPENDIX A
LOGIC MODEL FOR THE CCL

CANADIAN COUNCIL ON LEARNING – RESULTS-BASED LOGIC MODEL (Dec. 14, 2007)



APPENDIX B

EVALUATION MATRIX

DRAFT EVALUATION MATRIX – April 11, 2008

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Data Sources
Relevance: Is the Council addressing a need?		
1. Does the Canadian Council on Learning address an actual need? Is an organization such as the CCL needed to develop and share information and knowledge about learning?	› Analysis of rationale/objectives	› Document/file review
	› Opinions of stakeholders and experts on need for an organization to develop and share information at the national level (i.e., would the work of CCL be done in the absence of CCL).	› Key informant interviews › Expert panel
	› Evidence of need for a national organization from other jurisdictions internationally (e.g., US, UK, Australia, NZ, Switzerland, EU, OECD)	› Literature review › Expert panel
2. Is the CCL's mandate consistent with HRSDC priorities	› Alignment of the CCL's mandate with HRSDC priorities.	› Document/file review › Key informant interviews
Success: Short-term Outcomes		
3. To what extent did the CCL achieve its intended short-term outcomes?		
3a. Gaps in knowledge about learning identified and addressed	› # of State of the Field Reviews commissioned by CCL and issues addressed.	› Document/file review
	› Evidence/examples of gaps in knowledge about learning identified by the CCL.	› Document/file review › Key informant interviews
	› Satisfaction with the extent to which CCL has identified knowledge gaps about learning.	› Key informant interviews › Stakeholder survey
	› Satisfaction with how effectively CCL has addressed the knowledge gaps identified.	› Key informant interviews › Stakeholder survey
3b. Effective knowledge exchange networks among stakeholders created (e.g., Knowledge Centres)	› # Knowledge Centre consortia members (Annex 21).	› Document/file review
	› # of KE activities (e.g., conferences, forums, expositions, roundtables).	› Document/file review
	› # of training programs/sessions held on effective KE.	› Document/file review
	› Representativeness of KE networks of CCL stakeholders overall (i.e., any key stakeholders missing?)	› Document/file review › Key informant interviews › Stakeholder survey

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Data Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Perceptions of the extent to which CCL has been successful in creating effective knowledge exchange networks among stakeholders (i.e., extent to which networks function well). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Key informant interviews › Stakeholder survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Results of CCL created knowledge exchange networks among stakeholders that would not otherwise be/have been achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Key informant interviews
3c. Partnerships with stakeholders created (e.g., joint projects with provinces, 21 st Century Learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › # of joint projects between CCL and its stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › # of bilateral agreements signed with provincial/territorial governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › # of collaborations with independent or non-government organizations, federal, provincial and territorial governments in the production of research. (Annex 18) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Nature of the partnerships (examples) created with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review › Key informant interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Results achieved from partnerships that would not otherwise be/have been achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Key informant interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Perceptions on the extent to which CCL has successfully created effective partnerships with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Key informant interviews › Stakeholder survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Extent to which, and reasons why, partnership with CCL is valued by stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Key informant interviews › Stakeholder survey
3d. Improved communication to stakeholders and Canadians about the importance of learning, learning outcomes and progress on learning in Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Media response to CCL reports and press releases/events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Media analysis (CCL conducting internationally, possible assistance from EKOS)

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Data Sources
	› Extent to which CCL is quoted by third parties covered in the media.	› Media analysis (CCL conducting internationally, possible assistance from EKOS)
	› Extent to which CCL reports and experts are trusted by media as credible sources on learning issues and outcomes in Canada	› Media analysis (CCL conducting internationally, possible assistance from EKOS)
	› Prominence of learning issues in media	› Media analysis (CCL conducting internationally, possible assistance from EKOS)
	› # of press releases	› Media analysis (CCL conducting internationally, possible assistance from EKOS)
	› # of hits to CCL website	› Media analysis (CCL conducting internationally, possible assistance from EKOS)
	› Opinions on the CCL website (e.g. usability, ease of navigation, ease of downloading, etc.)	› Stakeholder survey
Success: Medium-term Outcomes		
4. To what extent did the CCL achieve its intended medium-term outcomes?		
4a. Increased volume , quality and usefulness/relevance of research and information on learning.	› # of online journal articles published by CCL and # of hits to articles and # on distribution list	› Document/file review
	› # of funded research projects (Annex 18)	› Document/file review
	› # of reports related to Canada's progress on learning outcomes	› Document/file review
	› # of copies sent/# of hits on website providing data on the progress on learning outcomes	› Document/file review
	› # of proposal writing workshops. (Annex 18)	› Document/file review
	› # of Question Scan topics addressed (Annex 18)	› Document/file review
	› # of Best Evidence Synthesis Reports produced. (Annex 18)	› Document/file review
	› # of Lessons-in-Learning Reports produced (Annex 18)	› Document/file review

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Data Sources
	› # of research articles published in academic and professional journals. (Annex 18)	› Document/file review
	› Overall perception of the quality of CCL research and information products	› Stakeholder survey
	› International recognition and validation of CCL methodology to measuring community performance across all areas of lifelong learning	› Document/file review
	› Relevance (usefulness) of research and information to stakeholders (i.e. extent to which stakeholders are using CCL research and information.	› Key informant interviews › Stakeholder survey
4b. Increase volume and quality of learning knowledge exchanged among stakeholders and Canadians	› # of subscribers to the CCL's electronic publications (i.e., <i>The Learning Link</i> and <i>Lessons in Learning</i>).	› Document/file review
	› # of learning events supported by the CCL	› Document/file review
	› # of hits to the CCL website (particularly the On-line Data Warehouse).	› Document/file review
	› # of presentations at scholarly and professional conferences. (Annex 18)	› Document/file review
	› # of collaborations with independent or non-governmental organizations, federal, provincial, and territorial governments in the dissemination of research. (Annex 18)	› Document/file review
	› Stakeholder satisfaction with the volume and quality of learning knowledge being exchanged.	› Key informant interviews › Survey of stakeholders
4c. Improved dialogue about learning among stakeholders	› # of strategic partnerships with other organizations to work on projects of mutual interest (regional, national, international)	› Document/file review
	› # of knowledge centre consortia members. (Annex 21)	› Document/file review
	› # of Researcher-in-Residence Partnering organizations. (Annex 18)	› Document/file review

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Data Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Evidence/examples of increased dialogue about learning among learning stakeholders attributable to CCL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review › Key informant interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Perceptions of the extent to which CCL facilitated dialogue has the potential to contribute to improved learning outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Key informant interviews
Success: Long-term Outcomes		
5. Have there been any positive or negative unanticipated outcomes as a result of CCL's activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Evidence/examples of positive or negative unintended outcomes as a result of CCL activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review › Key informant interviews › Stakeholder survey
6. What have been the contributors and barriers to success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Key contributors to success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review › Key informant interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Key barriers to success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review › Key informant interviews
Cost-effectiveness		
7. To what extent does the CCL complement or duplicate existing efforts to report on learning outcomes and promote knowledge development and exchange on learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Existence of adequacy of safeguards to minimize overlap and duplication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review › Key informant interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Evidence of overlap or duplication with provincial, territorial, or federal efforts in the area of learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Literature review › Document/file review › Key informant interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Evidence/examples of complementarity with those of the provinces, territories or other federal programs and agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Literature review › Document/file review › Key informant interviews
8. Are there alternative approaches to the CCL that could be more cost-effective for reporting on learning outcomes and promoting and disseminating knowledge on learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identification of alternatives and their pros and cons (i.e., extent to which the work of the CCL could be done by other organizations or agencies). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Literature review › Key informant interviews › Expert panel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › International review of USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, plus some from EU, OECD for lessons learned on cost-effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Literature review › Expert panel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Opinions of experts on possible alternatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Expert panel
Other Issues		
9. To what extent have the areas for improvement identified in the formative evaluation been addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Evidence of changes implemented in response to the formative evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Document/file review › Key informant interviews