



Evaluation of the Skills and Partnership Fund



Program description

The Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF) supports short-term, demand driven, partnership-based projects aiming to support Indigenous participants along the path to employment. Led by Indigenous agreement holders, the projects are designed and delivered in partnership with new or existing public, private, and non-profit sector partners.

The 2016 call for proposals funded a broad range of projects through 2 funding streams:

- the **Innovation stream** funded projects that explored the use of diverse approaches to enhancing the employability of Indigenous individuals experiencing barriers to employment, and
- the **Training-to-Employment stream** funded projects that provided training to help participants fill existing or emerging jobs

The SPF funds projects in all provinces and territories, on and off reserve, and in urban, rural and remote areas.



Evaluation methodology

The evaluation draws from multiple lines of qualitative and quantitative evidence, including:

- a literature review
- a document review
- key informant interviews
- case studies
- labour market outcome analysis, and
- a data assessment

Where possible, given the data and methodological limitations, a Gender-Based Analysis plus lens is applied.



Program funding

In the 5 fiscal years between April 2016 and March 2021, the total expenditures of the program were approximately \$224.5 million.



Evaluation objectives

The evaluation focuses on the 52 SPF projects that were funded through the 2016 call for proposals and covers the 5 fiscal years from April 2017 to March 2022.

The evaluation seeks to:

- provide timely information on challenges, opportunities and best practices relating to program design and delivery
- describe how the SPF is meeting the needs of individuals and communities and clarify the contribution of project partnerships to participants' labour market outcomes
- contextualise findings relating to program performance and provide insight into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the projects and their participants
- assess the data being collected and identify participants' labour market outcomes



Key findings

Overall, the evaluation findings are positive. The evaluation found that the SPF:

- **is relevant:** it responds to well-documented needs; aligns with federal government objectives relating to labour

The full Evaluation of the Skills and Partnership Fund is available at:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations.html>



market development and economic reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples; and is informed by Indigenous partners' insight and lessons learned about labour market integration programs for Indigenous Peoples

- **supports partnerships:** it supported both the maintenance of existing partnerships and the development of new partnerships to improve the labour market outcomes of Indigenous participants across all projects; the cash and in-kind resources commitments of partners accounted for 46% of project resources and amounted to an estimated value of \$176 million
- **supports Indigenous Peoples' labour market integration:** projects served individuals who had weak labour market attachment and who faced a variety of persistent labour market barriers; and the outcome analysis found that these individuals increased their earnings and incidence of employment post-participation
- **is resilient:** for the most part, projects were able to adapt to pandemic related disruptions

The evaluation also found that the program contributes to positive impacts that extend beyond program participants to their families and communities.

Broader impacts include:

- supporting communities' economic, human resources, social and cultural development
- helping participants to access employment opportunities without having to move away from the community
- creating a sense of opportunity and possibility for community members, and
- strengthening families and households



Recommendations

Northern and remote agreement holders and projects

The data assessment and document review identified contextual challenges and vulnerabilities relating to the organizational capacity of agreement holders located in northern and remote regions and to the limited partnership opportunities present in northern and remote areas.

Recommendation 1: Employment and Social Development Canada is encouraged to explore options and take actions to offer further support to SPF agreement holders in rural and remote areas through each stage of the projects.

Data collection and performance measurement

The program is following the best practice of collecting individual-level data. The data collected and reported for projects funded through the 2016 call for proposals was of good quality and integrity overall. The document review, which included reports summarising Indigenous partner engagement findings, found that the data collection and reporting requirements continue to be challenging for some agreement holders.

Moreover, some projects reported on the cash and in-kind contributions they received from their project partners throughout the project. Some also reported on their experience of working with their partners, including the challenges and benefits. This information, particularly when collected across all projects, can be valuable for program and project design and delivery, program management, program evaluation, and performance measurement.

Recommendation 2: Employment and Social Development Canada is encouraged to explore options and take actions to:

- continue to prioritize data integrity, including validating data uploads, and providing support to projects experiencing data collection and reporting challenges; and
- collect consistent partner contribution data across all projects.