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April 2010

Summative Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program

Final Report
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Final Report

*Evaluation Directorate
Strategic Policy and Research Branch
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada*

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List of Acronyms

CA	Contribution agreement
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
DG	Director General
FCR	Foreign credential recognition
FCRO	Foreign Credential Referral Office
FCRP	Foreign Credential Recognition Program
FPT	Federal/Provincial/Territorial
FTI	Foreign trained individual
GC	Government of Canada
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEHPI	Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative
ISA	Immigrant Serving Agency
ISO	Immigrant Serving Organization
KI	Key Informant
MLT	Medical Laboratory Technologist
MRT	Medical Radiation Technologist
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OGD	Other government department
ON	Ontario
PSE	Post-Secondary Education
P/T	Province/Territory
RPP	Report on Plans and Priorities

Executive Summary

Background

A summative evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) was conducted during the spring, summer and fall of 2008. The main objective of the evaluation was to measure the relevance, impacts, and cost-effectiveness of the program. Given the timing of the evaluation in relation to program implementation (2004-05), the measurement of impacts and success focused mainly on the intended immediate and medium-term outcomes of the program. Whereas, the evaluation assessed only “progress” towards intended longer-term outcomes due to the challenges in achieving these outcomes within the four year time frame against which the evaluation was conducted. Rather, these outcomes can be more realistically achieved over a longer period.

Foreign credential recognition is the process of verifying the education, training and job experience obtained in another country against the standards established in Canada in the same occupation/sector. It is one of several factors affecting immigrant labour market outcomes.

The FCRP is a contribution program focusing on three streams: regulated occupations; non-regulated occupations; and horizontal initiatives.¹ The two main objectives of the FCRP are:

- 1) To develop and strengthen Canada’s foreign credential recognition capacity; and
- 2) To contribute to improving labour market integration outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.

These two objectives support the program’s strategic objective: the development of coherent,² transparent, fair, equitable,³ and rigorous⁴ foreign credential assessment and recognition processes to enhance labour market outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.

¹ The integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour market is a horizontal issue that involves several federal departments and other levels of government at various points in the process. Through the FCRP, the Government of Canada works closely with its provincial and territorial partners to ensure that a continuum of systems, processes and supports are in place to facilitate the rapid integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour market. Credential recognition for regulated occupations is mainly a provincial responsibility that has been delegated in legislation to provincial regulatory bodies. For non-regulated occupations, the FCRP works primarily through national sector councils and other national consortia to address credential recognition issues.

² Coherent in this context means consistent across jurisdictions.

³ This includes the concept of accelerated processes.

⁴ Rigour in this context means high standards to preserve quality service and public safety.

Methodology

The design of the evaluation was structured to collect information on each of the evaluation issues using multiple lines of evidence. Where possible, there was a balance between quantitative and qualitative methods, with qualitative methods providing further description and explanation for the quantitative information. Both primary and secondary data sources were used for the evaluation. The methodologies included:

- Literature review;
- Document, website, file, and administrative data review;
- Key informant interviews;
- Occupational case studies of FCRP-funded occupations and non-FCRP-funded occupations;
- Survey of employers in the engineering field; and
- Survey of intended end-users of project information.

Methodological Challenges and Limitations

As with any evaluation, there are challenges encountered in implementing the methodologies which result in limitations for the findings. The main challenges and limitations encountered with the present evaluation included:

- ***Limited awareness of the FCRP among some respondents*** – Awareness of the program varied considerably among respondents. As a result, many evaluation questions and indicators have a considerable proportion of respondents who did not feel adequately aware of or knowledgeable about the program to respond.
- ***Response rate on surveys*** – The response rate on the various surveys was in the low range. Low response rates present a challenge because they are less likely to be representative of the surveyed population. This limits the extent to which survey findings can be generalized to the overall population.
- ***Challenges in both measurements of change or improvement and then attribution of changes to the FCRP*** – In most areas of anticipated outcomes, there was not a baseline measure of these outcomes at the point of implementation of FCRP. As a result, measurements of change or improvement rely on the recall and opinion of current respondents. Similarly, it is not possible to determine the extent to which the FCRP activities have impacted on this change.
- ***Many respondents to the survey of intended users of project information self-identified as partners in the development of informational products/resources*** – This would have likely resulted in a greater awareness of the informational product/resource under consideration.

- ***Coding within the administrative databases*** – Some of the coding of occupations in the project database was not detailed enough to adequately address many of the indicators that depended on analysis by specific occupations.

Rating Scale for Key Informant Interview Responses

The following scale was used in reporting to indicate the relative weight of the responses for each of the key informant interview respondent groups.

- “All/almost all” – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the key informants in the group;
- “Large majority” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of key informants in the group;
- “Majority/most” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of key informants in the group;
- “Some” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of key informants in the group; and
- “A few” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of key informants in the group.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Relevance and Rationale

The FCRP is consistent with Government of Canada priorities.

FCRP supports HRSDC priorities by contributing to the Department’s strategic outcome of “enhanced Canadian productivity and participation through efficient and inclusive labour markets, competitive workplaces, and access to learning”. The program is also consistent with federal government priorities, in particular with the Advantage Canada economic plan, which stresses the importance of welcoming more immigrants who are most likely to succeed in the Canadian economy. Improving the integration of skilled immigrants into the labour market is viewed by the plan as a key element to promote a strong economy.

Based on the evidence, there is a continued need for the program.

The literature review confirmed that a key need of foreign trained individuals is to have their credentials and experience fairly and equitably assessed. The main obstacle encountered by foreign-trained individuals is in the “discounting”, or non-recognition, of their credentials (mainly education) and experience (mainly employment), which is a result of real quality differences, as well as difficulties in assessing foreign credentials. The literature review

also described the proactive engagement of Australia, New Zealand, the European Union and the United Kingdom in addressing foreign credential recognition issues, indicating the importance of similar activities in Canada in order to remain competitive in attracting skilled immigrants.

Most stakeholders believe that an appropriate role for the federal government in addressing foreign credential recognition-related issues is in “coordinating”, “facilitating” and “supporting”.

Most stakeholders believe that the most appropriate roles for the federal government in addressing foreign credential recognition-related issues include a “coordinating”, “facilitating” and “supporting” role, i.e. coordinating key players and initiatives and supporting organizations to address the issue of foreign credential recognition at a national level.

There was a range of perceptions by evaluation respondents in terms of the identification of needs in the foreign credential recognition process and whether the FCRP is meeting those needs, with some indicating the FCRP is consistent with those needs and others indicating the FCRP is not consistent with those needs.

Evaluation respondents representing a range of stakeholders⁵ were asked to identify what they perceived to be the needs of each category of stakeholder in the foreign credential recognition process and whether those needs are being met by the program. Responses fell into three main categories: a) Some of the identified needs were consistent with the program mandate and activities where it was also believed these needs were being met by the program; b) Some of the identified needs were consistent with the program mandate and activities but it was believed these needs were not being met by the program; and c) Some of the identified needs were not consistent with the program mandate.

For instance, many respondents in both regulated and non-regulated sectors perceived that the needs of stakeholders, such as employers and regulatory bodies, are consistent with the objectives and activities of the program, such as the development and support of partnerships to understand and address foreign credential recognition issues and engagement of all levels of government on foreign credential recognition issues. However, it was also believed that that more work could be done to better engage employers and regulatory bodies. It was believed that funded projects could more closely align with employers’ needs, such as providing employers with more information concerning cultural training and integrating foreign-trained individuals into the workplace. Regulatory bodies appear to have needs with respect to understanding foreign credential recognition and have practical difficulties in the assessment process. Improvements would be beneficial to meet the overall needs of regulatory bodies, especially in light of the FCRP’s intended intermediate and longer-term program outcomes of “increased availability and use of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations.”

⁵ Representatives from other federal government departments; provincial/territorial governments; national professional associations and organizations; sector councils; regulatory bodies, educational institutions or organizations; and non-governmental organizations.

The most commonly cited needs identified by stakeholders in relation to foreign trained individuals included language training, bridging programs, cultural awareness and information about foreign credential recognition before arriving in Canada, which are all inconsistent with the objectives and activities of the FCRP. The FCRP does not include the provision of direct service to foreign trained individuals. Rather, foreign trained individuals are considered ultimate beneficiaries of FCRP-funded projects to improve assessment and recognition processes. The needs identified for the key stakeholder groups did not vary a great deal between occupations.

Success

a) Short-term intended program outcomes

Short-term intended program outcome #1 – Increased understanding, consensus, collaboration and commitment among stakeholders and partners on issues and potential solutions related to foreign credential recognition

There is greater understanding among stakeholders and partners on issues related to foreign credential recognition and possible solutions, mainly among immediate stakeholders involved in the development of occupational or sector diagnostiques⁶ and through participation in FCRP-funded projects that have contributed to events such as conferences, roundtables, and workshops. Apart from the occupations under review in the case studies, increased consensus, collaboration and commitment is occurring in part.

Achievement of this outcome appears to be driven by the conduct of FCRP-funded diagnostic studies and participation in FCRP-funded projects that have contributed to events such as conferences, roundtables, and workshops national in scope with attendance by multiple levels of government, and national and provincial/territorial non-governmental organizations.

Short-term intended program outcome #2 – Increased promotion, knowledge sharing and transfer of best practices in developing Pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes

The program has engaged in activities, and has funded activities, each of which have contributed to an increase in awareness of issues related to foreign credential recognition.

The program has engaged in a number of activities that have contributed to greater awareness of issues related to foreign credential recognition. Specifically, this has occurred through FCRP stimulation of foreign credential recognition related dialogue with multiple levels of government and stakeholders. As well, through the funding of research projects (i.e. diagnostiques), awareness of foreign credential recognition related

⁶ According to a continuum of progression outlined by the Program for addressing FCR issues, the diagnostique is an initial step in the process. Occupational or sector “diagnostiques” are usually composed of a situational analysis and the development of recommendations for an occupation/sector.

issues has been increased, particularly among project stakeholders. Similarly, by supporting events aimed at sharing information and best practices related to foreign credential recognition, awareness has increased primarily among event participants. Lastly, results from the Survey of Intended End Users of Project Information, a survey used to gauge level of awareness of informational products (e.g. reports, resources) produced with FCRP funding and reportedly shared or disseminated with end users, indicated awareness levels ranging from somewhat aware to very aware.⁷

The evaluation found that active dissemination mechanisms (such as workshops, presentations at conferences, articles in newsletters) are more effective than passive mechanisms, such as posting information on websites which is what most funding recipients identified as their main intended method of dissemination.

Short-term intended program outcome #3 – Enhanced national coordination among stakeholders and partners on foreign credential recognition

In terms of the degree of national coordination, there are many committees with participation by national level organizations that deal with foreign credential recognition, which consist mainly of FCRP-funded project steering committees. Participation in national level committees that deal with foreign credential recognition is also occurring in non-funded occupations.

Approximately one-half of the FCRP-funded projects had formed steering committees or advisory committees to assist with and provide guidance for the FCRP project and over three-quarters of these were pan-Canadian. National level committees exist in both funded and non-funded occupations. Few⁸ interview respondents were aware of national level committees, with the exception of HRSDC and other government department interview respondents who were able to identify national level committees that they either created or of which they are a member.

b) Medium-term intended program outcomes

Medium-term intended program outcome #1 – Increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations

The FCRP contributed towards an increase in the availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations in targeted occupations and sectors. Of the three regulated occupations to which funding for tool

⁷ These results were based on a question in the survey of end-users of project information about the level of awareness of specific informational products that were reportedly sent to survey respondents, wherein there were three response choices: “very aware”, “somewhat aware” or “not aware”. Each choice was assigned a definition which was explained to respondents, i.e. “very aware” was defined as *heard of it; have reviewed it or used it*; “somewhat aware” was defined as *heard of it; have not reviewed or used it*; and “not aware” was defined as *not heard of it*.

⁸ With respect to responses obtained from the key informant interviews, the following rating scale was used: “all/almost all” reflected the views and opinions of 90% or more of the key informants in the group; “large majority” = 75% to 89%; “majority/most” = 50% - 74%; “some” = 25% - 49%; and “a few” = at least two respondents but less than 25%. This scale is also located in the Executive Summary as well as *Section 2 – Evaluation Methods* of this report (page 9). When combining the results from different interview groups, sometimes the word “many” is used which means “some” respondents from each interview group combined.

development was provided in which projects had been completed, awareness was high among regulatory bodies in one occupation, namely the physician occupation. Awareness of tools was moderate in the other two occupations, namely the medical laboratory technologist occupation and the engineering occupation.

According to the administrative data review⁹, 42% of all funded projects were identified as having the output of foreign credential recognition tools and processes. Of these, 45% (19) were projects that were identified with occupations targeted by the FCRP. These projects are occurring in both regulated and non-regulated occupations. With respect to regulated occupations, the program usually works with national professional associations to effect change in foreign credential assessment tools and processes, who in turn are intended to effect change among regulatory bodies. For the non-regulated occupations, the program works mainly with sector councils to develop assessment tools and processes. The availability of tools and processes for both regulated and non-regulated occupations was largely unknown by most key informant respondents.

While other methodologies were used to assess the availability of foreign credential assessment and recognition tools and processes, the occupational case studies consisted of the main methodology to assess awareness and use of them. The case studies included five FCRP-funded regulated occupations and four non-funded regulated occupations which served as a basis of comparison. Of the funded occupations, three (physicians, engineers and nurses) comprised the three originally targeted and funded occupations at the outset of the program. The other two regulated occupations (medical laboratory and medical radiology technologists) were more recently targeted and funded. The four regulated occupations that did not receive FCRP funding consisted of dentists, teachers, translators and psychologists. One component of the case study methodology consisted of a survey of regulatory bodies. Of the three regulated occupations to which funding for tool development was provided in which projects had been completed, awareness was high among regulatory bodies in one occupation, namely the physician occupation. Awareness of tools was moderate in the other two occupations, namely the medical laboratory technologist occupation and the engineering occupation.¹⁰

Medium-term intended program outcome #2 – Increased standardization of Pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors

Greater movement towards standardization of assessment tools and processes was observed in the physician and engineering occupations, based on the tools and processes developed for these occupations with FCRP funding.

⁹ One of the findings in this evaluation was the inconsistency of coding projects in the FCRP administrative database. For instance, with respect to foreign credential recognition “tools and processes”, there are three different figures depending on whether it is coded as an activity, output or outcome. The results are 21%, 42% and 32% respectively.

¹⁰ These results were based on a question in the survey of regulatory bodies about the level of awareness of specific tools and processes developed with FCRP funding, which used a rating scale wherein respondents were provided with three response choices: “very aware”, “somewhat aware” or “not aware”. Each choice was assigned a definition which was explained to respondents, i.e. “very aware” was defined as *heard of it; have reviewed*; “somewhat aware” was defined as *heard of it; have not reviewed or used it*; and “not aware” was defined as *not heard of it*. Therefore, high awareness means that most respondents for a given occupation indicated very aware, and moderate awareness means most respondents indicated somewhat aware.

That these occupations are two of the originally three funded occupations (nursing is the other) and that they have received funding for multiple projects, including diagnostiques, suggests that this phased approach can contribute to the achievement of the intended program outcome related to increased standardization. On the other hand, the nursing occupation has not engaged in any FCRP-funded tool development projects. As well, there was evidence that standardization is occurring in the four non-funded occupations that were included in this evaluation. Forty-seven percent of FCRP project funding went to non-occupation specific projects.

c) Longer-term intended program outcomes¹¹

As mentioned at the outset, given the timing of the evaluation in relation to program implementation (2004-05), the measurement of impacts and success focused on the intended immediate and medium-term outcomes of the program. With respect to intended longer-term program outcomes, the evaluation assessed only “progress” towards these outcomes due to the challenges in achieving them within the four year time frame against which the evaluation was conducted. The likelihood of achieving these outcomes can be more realistically achieved over a longer period.

Longer-term intended program outcome #1 – Increased use of tools and processes by relevant organizations to assess and recognize foreign trained individuals, resulting from efforts of the FCRP

Significant progress has been made in the physician occupation in terms of increased use of foreign credential assessment processes and tools and processes by relevant organizations as a result of FCRP efforts. With respect to the engineering occupation, while the development and availability of foreign credential assessment tools and processes has been achieved as a result of FCRP funding, at the time of this evaluation there was no evidence of their usage.

Based on the survey of regulatory bodies for occupations which have received FCRP funding for tool development, regulatory bodies in the physician occupation indicated they have adopted the assessment tools/processes developed with FCRP funding. Further, many believed the tools and processes were very useful, relevant, easy to use and adaptable to their context. The response rate among regulatory bodies varied by occupation, ranging from a high response rate for regulatory bodies representing the physician occupation to a low response rate for regulatory bodies representing the engineering occupation. As such, the survey results should be interpreted accordingly. Apart from the survey of regulatory bodies, very little was known in terms of the extent to which there had been increased use of foreign credential assessment tools and processes by relevant organizations as a result of FCRP efforts. Most interview and case study respondents were not aware of the use of assessment processes and tools.

¹¹ The evaluation assessed only “progress” towards intended longer-term outcomes due to the challenges in achieving them within the four year time frame against which the evaluation was conducted. The likelihood of achieving these outcomes can be more realistically achieved over a longer period.

Regulatory bodies representing the four non-FCRP funded occupations also use tools to assess foreign credentials, in which all four indicated the tools they use are useful, relevant, easy to use and adaptable to their context. These four occupations consist of: dentists, teachers, translators and psychologists. It is difficult to indicate why this was the case. One theory could be that perhaps the FCRP has increased awareness of issues related to foreign credential recognition in the broader community of regulated occupations, or that through FCRP-funding for the development of tools and processes in some regulated occupations, spillover is happening in non-funded occupations whereby they are engaging in this type of activity. Perhaps they were developed by the regulatory bodies themselves who responded to the survey, as opposed to a national association representing them, which is the case with FCRP funding.

Longer-term intended program outcome #2 – Reduced barriers to entry into the labour market by foreign trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors

There were conflicting perceptions on the extent to which progress had been made towards the achievement of the longer-term outcome related to the reduction of foreign credential recognition barriers in occupations funded by FCRP.

Perceptions regarding the extent to which barriers have been reduced varied considerably between lines of evidence and among respondents within each line of evidence. They also varied considerably by specific barrier, ranging along a spectrum where some progress has been made on some barriers to no progress has been made on any barriers.

Most respondents representing national organizations felt there has been progress with respect to the fair and equitable treatment of foreign trained individuals and some progress in coherency of foreign credential recognition processes. In the case studies, most funded recipients believed their projects were contributing to reducing all barriers. However, funded recipients' partners and end-users generally believed less progress was made or did not know, with the exception of partners for the non-regulated profession and the trade occupation in which feedback was positive. Respondents in the survey of regulatory bodies representing funded occupations indicated some progress in reducing some barriers, such as those related to fairness, access to information and services and transparency. Representatives from provinces/territories and immigrant serving organizations did not believe any progress had been made on the reduction of any barriers. The opinions of immigrant serving organizations are noteworthy since they are advocates of immigrants in general and would be considered to be knowledgeable of the experiences of foreign trained individuals who wish to have their credentials assessed and recognized in Canada.

Since there are many other actors and activities outside of FCRP influencing these barriers, the evaluation was unable to determine the extent to which the FCRP was able to make direct contributions in these areas or whether progress would have occurred in the absence of FCRP.

Cost-Effectiveness

Design of program

Most interview respondents were of the opinion that the FCRP is an appropriate way for the federal government to find foreign credential recognition solutions in Canada insofar as it engages stakeholders and supports existing national occupation-specific organizations, Many interview respondents also believed that many existing features could be strengthened.

Most interview respondents believed the FCRP is an appropriate way for the federal government to find foreign credential recognition solutions in Canada insofar as it engages stakeholders and supports existing national occupation-specific organizations. It was also believed that contribution agreements are a useful mechanism to undertake projects that enable organizations to develop and/or strengthen their capacity.

There were nonetheless many suggestions for improvement, which consisted essentially of strengthening certain existing features. These consist of the following: having a greater focus on the development of tools and processes and less effort spent on conducting research; the creation of more organizing mechanisms that would encourage collaboration and consensus-building among the key stakeholders; developing closer relationships and conducting consultations with specific stakeholders such as regulatory bodies and immigrant serving organizations; and increased dialogue between federal government departments to address foreign credential recognition-related issues and identify solutions. Many evaluation participants felt that employers would benefit from more attention from the program, including more funding. This was mentioned particularly by respondents from non-regulated/trade occupations. Suggestions for new features included taking a “competencies” approach rather than “credential” approach. Competency-based assessments consider an individual’s ability to apply particular knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to the standard of performance (as opposed to judging skill based on his/her educational or professional degrees or designations). This would be consistent with best practices identified by the literature (below) and would also increase the perceived relevance of the program to non-regulated/trade occupations that focus more on competencies than credentials.

Design of program – best practices from literature review

The literature review revealed various best practices in other countries that could be considered, such a pre-migration foreign credential assessment and recognition in addition to minimum language proficiency requirements, that improved labour market outcomes of foreign trained individuals.

The literature review revealed that some countries have been actively addressing the issue of foreign credential recognition through various mechanisms. The review highlighted best practices that could be considered including those that suggest a closer relationship between foreign credential recognition and immigration policy. For instance, Australia requires a pre-assessment of foreign qualifications prior to immigration, as well as

minimum language proficiency requirements. In New Zealand, pre-assessment of foreign qualifications is not mandatory. However, a greater number of points are awarded to prospective immigrants if this has already been undertaken. Additional points are also awarded if the prospective immigrant was a former student in New Zealand, the occupation is in demand as evidenced by a Skills Shortage list, and has a job offer. These features have improved the employment outcomes of foreign trained individuals in Australia and New Zealand. The European Union recently introduced the Europass, which is an individual portfolio that clearly indicates a person's skills, qualifications and languages, so they can be easily understood throughout Europe. Re-branding the program towards "competencies" and away from "credentials" was also suggested by the evidence.

Areas for Consideration based on Results of Literature Review

- **The FCRP undertake a review of Australia's and New Zealand's foreign credential assessment systems (beyond what was undertaken for this evaluation) in order to explore the possible use of best practices implemented there which have contributed to greater labour market outcomes for foreign trained individuals.**

Exploring features of Australia's and New Zealand's foreign credential assessment systems, such as pre-migration foreign credential assessment, would necessitate negotiations with Citizenship and Immigration. Other best-practices suggested by the literature review to be considered are the use of a central credential agency, positioned within or outside the government, as well as re-branding the program towards "competencies" and away from "credentials." Competency-based assessments consider an individual's ability to apply particular knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to the standard of performance, as opposed to judging skill based on his/her educational or professional degrees or designations. This would also increase the perceived relevance of the program to non-regulated/ trade occupations that focus more on competencies than credentials.

Program duplication

There are mechanisms in place to prevent potential duplication with two other similar federal programs.

The *Foreign Credentials Referral Office* implemented by Citizenship and Immigration, and the *Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative* implemented by Health Canada, were deemed to be sufficiently similar to the FCRP to warrant an in-depth analysis with respect to duplication. The objectives of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office are to provide prospective immigrants and newcomers in Canada with information about the Canadian labour market and credential assessment and recognition processes; to provide path-finding and referral services to help individuals connect to the appropriate assessment bodies; and information to employers to help increase their awareness of the processes and benefits of hiring internationally trained individuals. The Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative aims to reduce barriers so that a greater number of internationally educated doctors, nurses and other health professionals can be assessed and integrated into the Canadian health care system.

The two main objectives of the FCRP are: to develop and strengthen Canada's foreign credential recognition capacity; and to contribute to improving labour market integration outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors. These two objectives support the program's strategic objective which is the development of coherent, transparent, fair, equitable, and rigorous foreign credential assessment and recognition processes to enhance labour market outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.

The analysis revealed that aspects of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office and the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative programs are similar by design to that of the FCRP. For instance, the FCRP and the Foreign Credentials Referral Office have an identical business line, which is to coordinate and collaborate to strengthen foreign credential recognition capacity. According to Foreign Credentials Referral Office documentation, this involves engaging federal partners, provinces/territories, employers and other stakeholders, which is one of the main functions of the FCRP. In addition, the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative aims to reduce barriers so that a greater number of internationally educated doctors, nurses and other health professionals can be assessed and integrated into the Canadian health care system. Many of the projects under this initiative indicated similar objectives as those of the FCRP (e.g. increased standardization of testing across regulatory bodies). In light of this, most key informant groups interviewed for this evaluation, with the exception of immigrant serving agencies, perceived the FCRP and the Foreign Credentials Referral Office to be complementary. Regulatory bodies surveyed for this evaluation also believe there to be overlap.

While there may be similarities between these programs, the evaluation also indicates that duplication is minimized via close working relationships with FCRP and these two other programs. In particular, since 2003, HRSDC has been co-chairing (with Citizenship and Immigration as the other co-chair) an interdepartmental Director Generals' Forum the purpose of which is to ensure coordination between HRSDC, Citizenship and Immigration and Health Canada on the subject of immigrant labour market integration. In addition, while the FCRP and the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative engage in consultations with the same stakeholders, the focus of stakeholder engagement is different. For the Foreign Credentials Referral Office, the focus is primarily foreign trained individuals and providing services to them directly. Whereas for the FCRP, the focus is primarily to effect change among the stakeholders themselves where the ultimate beneficiaries are foreign trained individuals, as the FCRP does not provide services to them directly. At the time same, there are opportunities for greater clarity between the FCRP and Foreign Credentials Referral Office regarding roles and responsibilities in the areas of partnership development, engagement of stakeholders, and enhanced national foreign credential recognition coordination.

Progress in implementing recommendations in formative evaluation

The program has made significant progress with implementing the recommendations in the formative evaluation. An approach to the selection of occupations for targeting investments has been implemented which matches occupations in demand with the labour supply of skilled immigrants.¹² There is concern however with the current mix of investments in terms of not leading, in a timely manner, to the achievement of intended medium- and longer-term program outcomes.

The targeted occupations account for approximately two-thirds of those occupations that show evidence of labour shortages. Almost all of the regulated occupations that are showing signs of excess demand (93%) are being targeted. In comparison, 50% of the non-regulated occupations that are experiencing shortages are being targeted. Therefore, with respect to non-regulated occupations, the process for targeting FCRP investments has met with less success. Further, and of greater concern, is the fact that a large proportion (47%) of project funding supports projects that are not occupation-specific.¹³ This is a concern insofar as investing in non-occupation specific projects may detract from achieving the medium-term intended program outcomes of increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations, as well as increased standardization of Pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors.

The logic model and performance measurement indicators were updated. In addition, two databases were created. However some weaknesses exist with coding. Some progress has also been made towards the sharing of project results. However, some improvements are required. The full implementation of a planned web-based mechanism for sharing project results would respond to this need in part.

Recommendations

- 1. Increase the sharing and dissemination of existing tools and processes across occupations, sectors, and jurisdictions in order to increase the likelihood of their usage.*

There is a role for the federal government in disseminating relevant information across sectors and jurisdictions. The full implementation of the web-based mechanism for sharing project information would also contribute to this. Finally, the program should encourage project funding recipients to include more active dissemination mechanisms to relevant organizations and users of the products (e.g., events and workshops, presentations at conferences, articles in newsletters).

¹² It should also be noted that not all targeted occupations are funded. Some are placed in consideration for future funding.

¹³ Of the 96 CAs reviewed, 43 were not clearly specific to any occupational group.

- 2. Expedite the transition period between investments that focus on diagnostics to investments that focus on the development, dissemination and implementation of foreign credential assessment tools and processes in both regulated and non-regulated trade occupations.***

While diagnostics have been very important to diagnose foreign credential recognition-related needs and highlight potential solutions, the transition from that to tool development, dissemination and usage is not occurring to any great extent apart from the physician occupation, and to a lesser extent, the engineering occupation. Expediting the transition from diagnostic to development of assessment tools and processes could lead to a greater likelihood of achieving the intended medium-term program outcomes of increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations and standardization of pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors.

- 3. The FCRP should develop a strategy for the engagement of employers and ensure that projects are funded that specifically target and support employers' needs with respect to foreign credential recognition.***

Fifty percent of the non-regulated occupations that are experiencing shortages are being targeted by the FCRP. Additional non-regulated occupations should be targeted. There should be increased efforts on the part of FCRP officials, in addition to recipients of funded projects, to raise awareness and understanding of foreign credential recognition among employers and the importance of their role in developing credential/competency recognition tools. Program activities related to foreign credential recognition information sharing/best practices forums and foreign credential recognition events more generally should be better targeted to employers.

- 4. The FCRP should strengthen its role in supporting, facilitating, and coordinating foreign credential recognition related dialogue among multiple levels of government and stakeholders, especially with key stakeholders such as regulatory bodies and immigrant serving organizations.***

Many evaluation participants believed the most appropriate role for the federal government with respect to foreign credential recognition is one of supporting, facilitating, and coordinating foreign credential recognition related dialogue. Therefore the existing engagement by the FCRP of stakeholders should not only continue but be strengthened perhaps through the creation of more organizing mechanisms that would encourage collaboration and consensus-building among the key stakeholders.

Also, based on the evidence, regulatory bodies need to figure more prominently in this dialogue. As they are responsible for assessing foreign credentials, it would stand to reason that FCRP play a large role. As it now stands, with respect to regulated occupations, the FCRP works with national professional associations to effect change in foreign credential assessment processes, who in turn are intended to effect change among regulatory bodies. The evaluation evidence was strong in terms of problems regulatory bodies are encountering with foreign credential assessment, as well as their interest in the FCRP and what it is doing to address these issues. Yet they are not very aware of FCRP

projects. This is an indication that FCRP's focus and investments on national professional associations representing targeted occupations, and the results thereof, may not be reaching the actual bodies that do the credential assessments. The results suggest a possible disconnect between the work of national professional associations and regulatory bodies.

- 5. The FCRP should review its current mix and nature of investments with a view of adjusting its investment strategy in order to increase the likelihood of meeting, in a timely manner, its intended medium and longer-term program outcomes.***

The scope and range of projects is very broad with 46% of projects and 47% of funding being directed to non-occupation specific projects. However, not all of these are expected to contribute to the program's intended medium-term outcomes related to increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations, and the standardization of pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes and tools and processes in targeted occupations and sectors.

- 6. Improve the FCRP communications strategy in order to ensure the mandate of the program is clear to all stakeholders.***

Stakeholders involved in the evaluation were not always clear about the purpose of the program and whether it was meeting foreign credential assessment and recognition needs. Each stakeholder would seem to have a separate role to play in the foreign credential assessment and recognition process. A communications strategy may serve to help stakeholders understand FCRP expectations and their role vis-à-vis the program's mandate.

- 7. Better document the division of roles and responsibilities between the FCRP and the Foreign Credentials Referral Office.***

Specifically, there are opportunities for greater clarity regarding roles and responsibilities in the areas of partnership development, engagement of stakeholders, and enhanced national foreign credential recognition coordination, including exchanging best practices.

- 8. Implement improvements to the project database and approaches to coding of data.***

Specifically, the project database should include data that corresponds to what has actually occurred with FCRP funding, as opposed to the current practice of being based entirely on project proposals and what was planned to occur. Also, the project database should be linked to the most recent version of the program's logic model and associated indicators. Lastly, there should be a breakdown of the non-occupation specific projects.

Management Response

Introduction

The Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) Summative Evaluation was undertaken from April 2008 to April 2009, to fulfill a commitment made in its 2004 Treasury Board Submission. The evaluation was designed to assess the performance of the Program from 2004 to 2008 across three areas: program rationale and relevance, cost-effectiveness, and success in achieving its outcomes.

This Management Response describes the FCR Program's approach to addressing the recommendations from the summative evaluation and is structured as follows: key findings, a brief discussion of Program accomplishments, and Program responses to each of the eight recommendations. While some recommendations are currently being implemented, other planned activities will have to be addressed within the context of recent policy changes and political commitments made on foreign qualification recognition and assessment as agreed upon in November 2009, by all levels of government.

Key Findings

Overall, the Evaluation found the Program to be relevant, cost-effective, and successful in meeting immediate outcomes while progressing well towards targeted long-term outcomes. However, there is relatively slower progress made towards intermediate outcomes beyond the initial investments in the engineering and physician occupations.

Program relevance was assessed by examining the level of consistency between the program, the government and departmental priorities as well as relevance to stakeholder needs. Evaluation results show that there is a continued need for the program.

Key findings and conclusions in this report underscore the important role the Government of Canada plays, through the FCR Program, in coordinating, facilitating and supporting partners and key stakeholders. Results also show that the program has been successful in building a solid foundation for executing current and future investments, and is on the right track to moving the FCR agenda forward.

Findings on cost-effectiveness determined that the FCR Program is an appropriate way for the Government of Canada to find solutions to FCR; and that the design and delivery of the FCR Program is appropriate. The Evaluation assessed the cost-effectiveness across program reach, and design and delivery. The design of the Program has been strengthened by revisions to its performance measurement strategy, logic model and project database. The Evaluation also found the Program implemented effective safeguards that minimized overlap with related Government of Canada programs; the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) and the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative (IEHPI).

In evaluating program success, the evaluation results show that solid progress has been made towards program outcomes, particularly with the immediate outcomes. Also noted is the constant and regular progress being made towards medium to longer term outcomes with the realization and understanding that developing key stakeholder relationships, building consensus, and promoting the uptake of FCR tools and processes take a significant amount of time.

To date, the FCRP has invested in 137 projects representing 27 occupations, 13 sector councils, and 7 provinces and territories. Non-occupation specific investments address FCR-related issues that cut across several occupations and sectors. Such investments tend to be multi-dimensional, cross-occupation projects that include the steps necessary to build partnerships; disseminate information; and, share best practices to advance the FCR agenda.

The summative evaluation findings complement the formative evaluation demonstrating that the FCRP has laid the foundation for consistent FCR processes and regulatory practices, established key relationships and partnerships and built the trust necessary to work towards a common goal. To this end, Budget 2009, through Canada's Economic Action Plan (EAP), announced \$50 million to FCRP and the Foreign Credential Referral Office (FCRO) over two years to develop, with provinces and territories, a *Pan-Canadian Framework (FQR) for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications* and implementation plan. This framework articulates a new vision for governments to take concerted action to improve the integration of immigrants and other internationally trained workers. The principles of the Framework apply to all occupations, however, initial focus will be on a set of 8 regulated occupations by 2010, followed by an additional set of 6 regulated occupations by 2012. FCRP ground work, in part, has been instrumental in the recent development the F/P/T led *Framework* and securing political support from all governments. Although this work is outside the scope of this summative evaluation, the Framework represents a principle-led (consistency, fairness, transparency and timeliness), occupation-based approach to qualification assessment and recognition issues as they represent barriers to labour market integration. These principles are consistent with those that have guided the work of the FCR Program since inception and will help in responding concretely to many of the recommendations in this report.

Recommendations

1. Increased sharing and dissemination of existing tools and processes across occupations, sectors, and jurisdictions in order to increase the likelihood of their usage.

HRSDC agrees with the recommendation. Increased sharing and disseminating of tools and processes from occupational investments contributes to and facilitates the sharing of best practices and lessons learned among key stakeholders. The Program will seek to enhance these practices through ongoing and future planned activities.

Actions taken

- Through contribution agreements, the Program disseminates project results by funding workshops and conferences through various stakeholders. Through the Alliance of Sector Councils, for instance, the Program delivered an FCR 101 workshop to increase awareness of FCR issues in Canada, particularly among employers in the non-regulated sector. With the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education, the Program hosted a conference to showcase best practices in assessment and recognition of foreign trained individuals with representation from various occupational groups.
- As part of on-going enhancements, the FCR Program works collaboratively with the Going to Canada Immigration Portal Initiative on enhancements to the Working in Canada (WiC) Tool. This Tool provides personalized labour market information to foreign trained individuals such as information on which organization can recognize their credentials, their chosen occupation's wages, forecasted demand and current job opportunities. The WiC tool also supports a variety of Government of Canada initiatives like the FCRO information and referral functions, Service Canada's newcomer's segment and 1 800 O-Canada general inquiries service.

Planned Activities

- The WiC Tool will be the principal tool to exchange and disseminate FQR specialized information to key clientele. A new dataset will be incorporated within the Tool that explains specific occupational licensing requirements at the national and provincial levels where possible.
 - Moving forward, the FQR Framework will be a reference point to inform federal/provincial/territorial strategies and investments and other supports to advance FQR and improve immigrant labour market integration. The FPT FQR working group, as a part of its mandate, is developing a detailed work-plan in four areas - information sharing, consultations, gap analysis and metrics and reporting.
 - Where applicable the Program will also capitalize on the FCRO's Pan-Canadian Information Centre that will serve as a platform to share best practices.
2. ***Expedite the transition period between investments that focus on diagnostics to investments that focus on development, dissemination and implementation of foreign credential assessment tools and processes in both regulated and non-regulated/trade occupations.***

HRSDC agrees with the recommendation. It is important to note that Program experience reveals that an effective transition model has to respect the nature of occupations as well as their levels of awareness, readiness to engage, develop or implement FCR tools and processes. Therefore, it is not always possible to expedite investments, however, the Program will endeavour to do so where feasible. Moving forward and given that the Framework implementation is in the early stages, specific supporting activities would be rolled-out in consultation and agreement with provinces and territories through the FQR F/P/T working group.

Actions taken

- To date, the FCRP, through contribution investments, has utilized a phased approach to project development in targeted regulated and non-regulated occupations and sectors as well as non-occupation specific projects.

The program's approach of engagement, diagnostic, tool development, implementation, and follow-up enables the involvement and buy-in of relevant stakeholders to help address emerging priorities and pressures. The Program's experiences to date suggest it takes time and significant funding to ramp-up activities, establish healthy partnerships and to raise general awareness of FCR issues.

- Recipients are initially assessed based on the strength of existing industry partnerships; complexity of industry-specific FCR issues; and alignment with FCR Program priorities and goals, to determine the level of intervention necessary along the continuum. Recipients further along than others are expedited across the continuum. Others may face industry-specific challenges that may limit progress. A lack of sustainable industry partnerships to deliver projects, for instance could easily delay progress. Such operational realities continuously influence the process of program interventions.
- In the early stages of the Program, the financial supports were risk managed within a limited financial envelope and directed toward a small number of occupations. Since then, additional funding has been provided, however, the initial imbalance between existing resources and expected outcomes remains. This greatly influences the number of investments as well as the progress made in each industry.

Planned Activity

- The FCRP will continue to use a phased approach to developing and funding projects. This has been effective in building relationships with multiple stakeholders involved in foreign credential recognition and bringing about the kind of systemic change the program seeks to achieve. This will also be complemented by other planned stakeholder engagement activities integral to implementing and building on the Framework commitments and desired outcomes for the FQR target occupations. The F/P/T joint implementation of the Framework will be key in accelerating investments in target occupations. The Program will also undertake steps to ensure a more efficient transition period between diagnostic and tool development.

- 3. The FCRP should develop a strategy for the engagement of employers and ensure that projects are funded that specifically target and support employers' needs with respect to foreign credential recognition.***

HRSDC agrees and the implementation of this recommendation is already underway. This is evident through the program's current role as the federal lead on implementing the framework that will span the steps and processes that individuals face as they move through the system - The Pathways to Recognition. This involves preparation and pre-arrival supports, assessment, recognition, individual and employer supports and

workforce participation. As part of its outreach strategy with national associations and regulators as well as provinces and territories, the program will explore effective ways of engaging key stakeholder groups including employers, to facilitate the labour market integration of immigrants.

Employers are key stakeholders in the FCR process, considering that most of the occupations in the Canadian labour market are non-regulated (85%), where the employer is the key player responsible for determining whether potential employees possess the appropriate qualifications, training or experience.

Actions taken

- The Program continues to strengthen existing partnerships with Sector Councils/sectoral organisations and national consortia to increase awareness and to support the development of tools and processes for employers to assess and recognize foreign credentials.
- To date, FCRP has made investments with 12 sector councils including 30 projects in the biotechnology, construction, tourism, and electricity sectors. Investments in non-occupation specific initiatives have allowed the program to address issues that cut across occupational or sectoral groups. These investments have been critical in framing the overseas strategy and will become even more important as the Program addresses labour market integration barriers beyond recognition and assessment. The program has invested in 12 projects ranging from a best practices forum to the development of FCR tools.

Planned Activity

- The Program will continue to support overarching initiatives that build partnerships, fostering FQR capacity through the development of innovative projects, tools and products; and, exchanging information on successful FQR practices.
4. *The FCRP should strengthen its role in supporting, facilitating, and coordinating FCR-related dialogue among multiple levels of government and stakeholder, especially with key stakeholders such as regulatory bodies and immigrant serving organizations.*

HRSDC agrees with the recommendation. Supporting, facilitating, and coordinating dialogue is a shared F/P/T responsibility and is critical to engaging industry partners in finding solutions to FCR-related issues. This is why the Program has had a long standing commitment and history to share information and coordinate with multiple levels of government and stakeholders. Such dialogue sets the stage for sustainable collaboration and renewed commitment to FCR. Clearly success depends on partnerships where each has a role to play in making the FCR process work. This is important as qualification recognition for regulated occupations is mainly a provincial and territorial responsibility that has often been delegated in legislation to occupational regulatory bodies. P/Ts are responsible and accountable to supporting and coordinating FCR related dialogue within their respective jurisdictions.

Actions taken

- At the federal level, the FCRP continues to co-chair the interdepartmental Director Generals' Forum with memberships of 5 departments which reviews immigrant integration activities, and ensures policy and program coordination on issues and potential solutions related to FCR. The Program also participates in regular meetings with the Foreign Credentials Referral Office as well as the Internationally-Educated Health Professionals Initiative to exchange information and provide regular operational updates.
- At the provincial/territorial level, the FCR Program has engaged all ten provinces and one territory in discussions regarding strengthening their FCR capacity. More specifically,
 - contribution agreements have been negotiated with three provinces and one territory (British Columbia, Yukon, Saskatchewan and Manitoba)
 - discussions are on-going with Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia
 - the program has hosted two FPT workshops to discuss FCR issues and share best practices
- At an international level, the Program has played a key role in the Government of Canada's commitment to advance Canada-European Union collaboration on FCR and international labour mobility. Progress to date includes:
 - A Canada-EU Study Tour on FCR and labour mobility
 - A roundtable on Modernizing Labour Markets for the 21st Century, co-organized with the Commission for Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities
 - International teleconference in Brussels to announce joint Canada-EU contribution agreements to address mobility and FCR issues

Planned Activities

- As the federal co-chair of the Ad-hoc F/P/T FQR working group, the FCRP will continue to play a lead role in delivering on the commitment to implement the Pan-Canadian Framework as well as facilitating subsequent work with provinces and territories. Through this Framework, governments have identified short and medium term lists of targeted occupations, which represent those areas F/P/T governments agree to collectively focus their efforts to improve foreign qualification assessments and recognition. To support this work, the Program is in the process of developing a joint F/P/T outreach strategy with its stakeholders.
- In coordinating related labour market integration efforts, the FCRP also co-chairs the Labour Mobility Coordinating Group (LMCG) which helps facilitate the coordination of activity across jurisdictions to improve inter-provincial labour mobility under the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT). Internationally-trained workers and Canadians

face obstacles to working in various provinces because of differing provincial policies respecting licensure. Reducing internal barriers to labour mobility continues to be seen as a key factor to addressing FCR issues and as such contributes to improving FCR-related dialogue among multiple jurisdictions and stakeholders.

5. *The FCRP should review its current mix and nature of investments with a view of adjusting its investment strategy in order to increase the likelihood of meeting, in a timely manner, its intended medium and longer-term program outcomes.*

HRSDC agrees with the recommendation and would note that the Program's strategy will continue to evolve. The current strategy has been successful in directing program investments within a limited budget and scope of program terms and conditions in the period covered by the evaluation. Moving forward, the implementation of the FQR framework will require that forthcoming investments be validated by the FQR working group based on the economic cycle, sector readiness, occupational demand and labour supply. The program therefore agrees that continuous enhancements to the program's investment selection strategy are critical to achieving its intermediate and long-term goals.

Actions taken

- The FCR Program's investment selection strategy was developed in response to a recommendation from the 2005-2006 Formative Evaluation. This approach, integrates labour supply and demand trends with related occupational information to track and measure the readiness of sectors and occupations to address FCR issues. The selection strategy, in concert with the existing consultation-based approach, has been successful in directing program investments within a limited budget and scope of program terms and conditions. Over time, this evidence-based approach has proven to be strategic in positioning the Program to deliver projects to many occupations across the continuum of diagnostic, tool development, implementation, and follow-up.

Planned Activities

- Moving forward, the program will enhance its investment strategy to include FQR priority occupations initially as identified in the FQR framework as well as investments in trades professions, non-regulated occupations, employer supports, and non-occupation specific initiatives.
- As part of its outreach strategy, the program will work with P/Ts, and regulatory bodies to identify and address gaps with the aim of meeting the framework's commitments. Concurrently, as the Program adds more occupations, its role and responsibilities increase, such that additional human and financial resources will be required to participate and coordinate F/P/T policy activities; increase monitoring; develop reporting mechanisms and accountability measures; maintain relationships and/or build new partnerships through increased outreach.

- With the renewal of program Terms and Conditions, the FCRP will also focus on activity areas necessary to address the different needs of the non-regulated sector and non occupation specific initiatives, where language fluency, Canadian work experience, professional networks and knowledge of Canadian society and culture often take precedence over the necessity of formal credentials.

6. *Improve the FCRP communications strategy in order to ensure the mandate of the program is clear to all stakeholders.*

HRSDC agrees with the recommendation and will continue to build on existing communication mechanisms and strategies to support awareness and information sharing efforts that advance the FCR agenda. Of note is that the FQR framework has helped to raise awareness of FCR and has positioned the Program to expand its role.

Actions taken

- On an on-going basis, the Program requires that each of its project recipients submit a communication plan that identifies the target group, mechanisms for sharing project information and results with the target group and the greater stakeholder community (e.g. newsletters, meetings, website, mail outs).

Planned Activities

- To support ongoing work and policy development, the Program will dedicate a considerable amount of resources, time and effort to co-ordinate work and liaise with other federal departments, provincial and territorial governments, non-governmental organizations, employer associations, regulatory bodies, Immigrant Serving Agencies and international fora.
- To ensure achievement of joint commitments and desired outcomes specified in the Framework, the Program, in collaboration with the FCRO, has begin to reach out to national bodies to share and disseminate information related to the FQR Framework and to support key occupational groups to meet the Framework commitments.
- A key role of the FQR working group is to undertake joint Consultation and Communication activities to help explain the FQR Framework commitments which are key priority for the Program.

7. *Better documentation of the division of roles and responsibilities between the FCRP and the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO).*

HRSDC agrees with the recommendation. The Program believes it is imperative to have clear lines of accountability, and this is why it has already taken significant actions to implement this recommendation and actively participates in on-going dialogue on FCR issues at the federal level. The FCR Program and the FCR Office are mutually-reinforcing programs that support the Government of Canada's efforts to strengthen FCR processes across the country. While the FCRP provides funding to support the development of structural/systemic changes in the tools and processes that

institutions and sectors use to evaluate and recognize foreign credentials, the FCRO delivers information and referral services directly to individual immigrants.

Actions taken

- In 2007, a Letter of Understanding was established between the FCRP and the FCRO that outlines these respective programs share an interest in improving the integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour market, and they agree to work together to move the FCR agenda forward.
- The FCR Program holds regular meetings with representatives from the FCRO and IEHPI to discuss and exchange information on new and existing activities in order to minimize duplication of effort and to also build on existing synergies. For example, the three programs have begun to engage national regulatory bodies to explain the elements of the FQR Framework and the expected role of the national bodies can play in meeting the commitments.
- The FCRP/FCRO joint Memorandum to Cabinet approved on September 15, 2009 reiterated and confirmed their roles and responsibilities between HRSD and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Planned Activity

- A joint FCRO/FCRP Treasury Board submission is being prepared that will further clarify departmental roles and responsibilities during the implementation of the FQR framework.

8. *Implement improvements to the project database and approaches to coding of data.*

HRSDC agrees and as such the implementation of this recommendation is already underway. Following recommendations from the formative evaluation, the Program developed and implemented a Microsoft Access-based database to capture project information by funding, occupational coverage, and region. This tool is multi-dimensional and provides consistent tracking of project information; creates a baseline for reporting on program investments by occupation; and informs the decision-making process.

Actions taken

- To date, progress has been made in developing the input interface and work continues on upgrading the reporting function to align with the new program developments. Technical and content enhancements to the project database are continuous activities that require timely adaptation to respond to changing Program needs.

Planned Activity

- In collaboration with the IT team, the FCRP database is at the testing phase to test the efficiency of the software, as well as validate content. The new database is set to be released in Spring 2010.

Conclusion

Initial findings from the summative evaluation are positive across relevance, cost-effectiveness and success in achieving intermediate outcomes. The Program will apply these findings to improve its current and future systemic and collaborative approaches to credential recognition and assessment. Since 2003, the activities of the FCRP have evolved and will continue to do so as the program moves forward with the implementation of the FQR Framework. The FQR target occupations, to be implemented through the Framework in a phased approach, represent a renewed opportunity to address foreign credential assessment and recognition related issues in a collaborative and timely manner. While federal, provincial, and territorial support for the Framework demonstrates the advantage of a pan-Canadian approach to FQR, it also highlights challenges of implementing, monitoring and reporting on joint commitments and desired outcomes. Ultimately, additional human and financial (operational and maintenance) supports will position the Program to build on its existing networks and projects, ensure that the target occupations are able to meet the Framework commitments by 2010 and 2012, as well as increase its reach to additional occupations, such as trades, non-regulated occupations and non-occupation specific investments.

The program's scope of activities has increased regarding the delivery of projects and also expanded with respect to strategic activities that support program delivery, such as outreach and monitoring. The challenge is that while Budget 2009 doubled the ongoing program funding, corresponding salary and operations and maintenance costs were not increased proportionately, thus creating additional operational challenges. As the recommendations continue to inform FCRP priorities, effort will be taken to better align program delivery with associated costs necessary to successfully implement the management action plan and support program improvement.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings from the summative evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The evaluation was conducted during the summer and fall of 2008.

1.1 Overview of Foreign Credential Recognition Program

Foreign credential recognition is the process of verifying the education, training and job experience obtained in another country against the standards established in Canada in the same occupation/sector. It is one of several factors affecting immigrant labour market outcomes.

Immigrants arriving in Canada tend to be trained in professional designations associated with high income earnings. However, research studies show that immigrants have weaker labour market outcomes and are at greater risk of poverty than their Canadian born counterparts. One of the major factors attributed to poor labour market integration for immigrants is the existence of systemic barriers in recognizing foreign credentials. Many skilled immigrants are not able to get a job in their chosen field despite the fact that they are coming to Canada with higher qualifications than ever before. In addition, it is taking much longer for them to catch up to Canadians with similar levels of education and expertise resulting in low income levels. Meanwhile, many employers are currently experiencing a shortage of employees with specific skills, which is anticipated to worsen due to demographic changes, namely an aging population.

The FCRP is a contribution program focusing on three streams: regulated occupations; non-regulated occupations; and horizontal initiatives.¹⁴ The two main objectives of the FCRP are:

- 1) To develop and strengthen Canada's foreign credential recognition (FCR) capacity; and
- 2) To contribute to improving labour market integration outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.

These two objectives support the program's strategic objective: the development of coherent,¹⁵ transparent, fair, equitable,¹⁶ and rigorous¹⁷ foreign credential assessment and

¹⁴ The integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour market is a horizontal issue that involves several federal departments and other levels of government at various points in the process. Through the FCRP, the Government of Canada works closely with its provincial and territorial partners to ensure that a continuum of systems, processes and supports are in place to facilitate the rapid integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour market. Credential recognition for regulated occupations is mainly a provincial responsibility that has been delegated in legislation to provincial regulatory bodies. For non-regulated occupations, the FCRP works primarily through national sector councils and other national consortia to address credential recognition issues.

¹⁵ Coherent in this context means consistent across jurisdictions.

¹⁶ This includes the concept of accelerated processes.

recognition processes to enhance labour market outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.¹⁸

In order to meet its two main objectives and support its strategic objective, the FCRP was designed to foster systemic change by providing strategic and financial investments to various stakeholders to develop coherent, transparent, fair, equitable and rigorous FCR processes. This is achieved through the program's main activity of seeking and investing in partnerships with provinces and territories and stakeholders such as regulatory bodies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the private sector in strategic areas that contribute to Canada's social and economic development (See Appendix C – Logic Model, for a complete picture of program activities and intended program outcomes).

One of the main forms of investments is through the financing of contribution agreements (CAs) wherein the FCRP takes a strategic approach. For example, the program targets and invests in occupations and sectors based on several factors such as the current and projected demand for skills in the Canadian labour market, and the supply of immigrants in various occupations and sectors. Investments are also made based on sector readiness to engage and the potential linkages to occupational feeder groups (occupations in a similar field which require fewer qualifications).

Demand for skilled immigrants is assessed based on a review of primary research (such as the HRSDC document entitled "Looking Ahead: A Ten-Year Outlook for the Canadian Labour Market 2006-2015") and other government-supported evidence regarding demand (including the Occupations Under Pressure Lists developed in 2007 by the Temporary Foreign Worker Program at CIC). Efforts are made to understand demand at both national and provincial levels.

With respect to the supply of immigrants in various occupations and sectors, the FCRP used Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) data on skilled immigrants landing in Canada over a three-year period. Data used for this summative evaluation was based on figures from 2003 to 2006, which illustrated that approximately 90% of skilled immigrants self identified in one of 45 occupations (immigrant labour market) (see Appendix A). This is one of several ways to help guide FCRP investments. Not all 45 occupations are funded for investments for a variety of reasons (e.g. lack of readiness of sector). Thus, some occupations are both targeted and funded, while others are targeted but not currently funded. This latter group is placed in consideration for future funding.

The activities eligible for funding under the FCRP are:

- 1. Research, Analysis and Planning (Diagnostic)**

The development of primary research on FCR issues

- 2. Design and Development of Tools**

¹⁷ Coherent in this context means high standards to preserve quality service and public safety.

¹⁸ The components of this objective (coherency, transparency, fairness and equity, and rigour) are underpinning principles that guide the management and administration of the program. Due to their strategic importance, each was explored during the evaluation in terms of the extent to which it continues to pose a barrier to foreign trained individuals. The one exception was the principle of rigour, since rigour is not a barrier, per se.

The creation or enhancement of tools to address FCR issues

3. Development and Dissemination of Information

The development and sharing of best practices and potential strategies to address FCR issues

4. Implementation of Processes to Assess Credentials

The implementation of FCR project results and recommendations

5. Partnership Development

The development and support of partnerships to understand and address credential recognition issues

6. Innovations

Consists of Provision of Services Overseas and Bridge to Work projects which collectively involve providing programs and services to immigrants prior to arriving in Canada; and facilitating the labour market integration of internationally educated professionals by creating opportunities to gain work experience in Canada via mentoring, connection with employers, internships etc.

These six broad activity areas align with the five stages (continuum of progression) of FCRP funded projects: i) engagement of partner and/or stakeholder, ii) diagnostic, iii) tool development, iv) implementation and v) follow-up. Occupational or sector “diagnostics” are usually composed of a situational analysis and the development of recommendations for the occupation/sector.

Responsibility for managing the FCRP lies with the Foreign Credentials Recognition Division, part of the Labour Market Integration Directorate within HRSDC’s Skills and Employment Branch. The Division is responsible for the FCRP, its direction and policy framework, planning and reporting, intergovernmental relations and the management of contribution agreements.

The Government allocated \$68 million to the FCRP for fiscal years 2004-05 to 2008-09. As of fiscal year 2009-10, the FCRP will receive \$8 million ongoing. Through the creation of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) in 2007¹⁹, FCRP received an additional \$5 million (over 2 years) above its current funding of \$68 million, increasing total FCRP allocation to a total of \$73 million over 5 years.

As of September, 2008 FCRP had undertaken 100 projects with 67 completed and 33 in-progress. In addition to making investments in targeted regulated and non-regulated occupations, the FCRP invested in non-occupation specific initiatives to help advance the FCR agenda, and in initiatives that support and provide strategic and horizontal leadership. Forty-six percent of projects and 47% of funding were directed to non-occupation specific projects. Appendix B includes a listing of the funding and number of projects for each occupation.

¹⁹ The FCRO is funded by, and housed at, Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The FCRP logic model, presented in Appendix C, specifies the links between the FCRP's activities, outputs, and outcomes for the three main components: regulated occupations; non-regulated occupations; and horizontal leadership. The FCRP's three core activities which support its strategic objective include:

- Activity 1: Develop and support partnerships (among regulated and non-regulated occupations and sectors, provinces/territories), as well as stakeholders like non-governmental organizations (NGOs), employers and employer associations to understand and address FCR issues;
- Activity 2: Policy and strategy development to understand FCR in the broader context of immigrant labour market integration; and
- Activity 3: Engage all levels of government on FCR issues.

1.2 Evaluation Objectives, Issues and Questions

The main objective of the summative evaluation was to measure the relevance, impacts, and cost-effectiveness of the FCRP. Given the timing of the evaluation in relation to the program implementation, the measurement of impacts and success focused on the intended immediate and medium-term outcomes of the program. The evaluation assessed only “progress” towards the intended longer-term program outcomes.

The following three broad issue areas were addressed by the evaluation:

- Program rationale and relevance (i.e. the extent to which the program is consistent with government priorities and whether the program continues to be relevant to the needs of stakeholders);
- Success (i.e. the extent to which the program has achieved or has made progress towards achieving the desired outcomes identified in the logic model);
- Cost-effectiveness (i.e. the extent to which the program is effective and appropriate and the extent to which the program duplicates other sources of funding).

Based on the evaluation objectives and these broad issue areas (relevance, success, and cost-effectiveness), 16 specific evaluation questions were developed and explored during the evaluation, as illustrated in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1
Evaluation Questions

Issues and Questions
<p>Issue: Program Rationale and Relevance</p> <p>1.1 Is the FCRP consistent with current HRSDC and government priorities?</p> <p>1.2 Does the FCRP address an actual need?</p>
<p>Issue: Success</p> <p>2.1 Is there greater understanding, consensus, collaboration and commitment among stakeholders and partners on FCR-related issues and possible solutions?</p> <p>2.2 Has FCRP funding contributed to the increased promotion, sharing and transfer of knowledge regarding best practices for developing Pan-Canadian FCR processes?</p> <p>2.3 Is there better national coordination among stakeholders and partners on foreign credential recognition issues?</p> <p>2.4 Is there greater standardization of FCR processes and tools in targeted occupation and sectors?</p> <p>2.5 Are foreign credential assessment and recognition processes and tools more widely available among relevant organizations?</p> <p>2.6 To what extent has there been progress with respect to the reduction of FCR barriers to labour market entry for foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors?</p> <p>2.7 To what extent has there been progress, as a result of FCRP efforts, with respect to the increased use of FCR assessment processes and tools by relevant organizations?</p> <p>2.8 Are there unintended or adverse effects resulting from the FCRP?</p> <p>2.9 Has the FCRP been successful in terms of the number of immigrants covered by the occupations it has targeted?</p>
<p>Issue: Cost-Effectiveness</p> <p>3.1 Is the program as it currently exists, and considering the budget allocated to it, the best means of finding FCR solutions in Canada? Are there more effective ways to influence change in the domain of foreign credential recognition?</p> <p>3.2 Have FCRP investments had effects over and above those of other investments?</p> <p>3.3 Is there duplication or overlap in FCRP functions at the national or provincial levels? If so, does this have a negative effect on the program?</p> <p>3.4 What progress has been made regarding the issues identified in the formative evaluation?</p>

2. Evaluation Methods

2.1 Overview of the Approach

The design of the evaluation was structured to collect information on each of the evaluation issues using multiple lines of evidence. Where possible, there was a balance between quantitative and qualitative methods, with qualitative methods providing further description and explanation for the quantitative information. Both primary and secondary data sources were used for the evaluation. The methodologies included:

- Literature review;
- Document, website, contribution agreement file, and administrative data review;
- Key informant interviews;
- Occupational case studies of FCRP-funded occupations and non-FCRP-funded occupations;
- Survey of employers in the engineering field; and
- Survey of intended end-users of project information.

2.2 Literature Review

The main purposes of the literature review were to identify international and national best practices in the area of FCR, explore evidence pertaining to the relevance of the program, identify possible areas of duplication, and identify opportunities for alternative approaches to address FCR and assessment issues. It specifically addressed evaluation questions under the issues of rationale and relevance, as well as cost-effectiveness.

The literature review was composed of three main tasks. First, the literature review completed for the FCRP formative evaluation conducted in 2005 was updated and further built upon. That literature review covered government interventions in FCR in the United States, Australia and the European Union. For this most recent evaluation, New Zealand and the United Kingdom were added, in part because they have point systems for immigration, and they face similar immigration and FCR issues as Canada. Second, research and studies on the subject of FCR in the Canadian context for both regulated and non-regulated occupations were reviewed. Finally, the review included a scan of national and provincial/territorial programs related to FCR in both regulated and non-regulated occupations.

2.3 Document, Website, File and Administrative Data Review

Document review

The document review consisted of systematically reviewing all relevant program policy documentation to address the relevant evaluation questions and indicators. These documents included policy documents, presentations for senior managers, research papers and documents, program guidelines, and general program descriptions.

Provincial/Territorial regulatory body website review

The P/T regulatory body websites for 11 of the 17 regulated occupations targeted by the FCRP were systematically reviewed as part of this evaluation. This review built on the review recently undertaken by the program which was a baseline data gathering exercise. This earlier review included a thorough examination of P/T regulatory body websites for the other six targeted, regulated occupations²⁰.

Contribution Agreement (CA) file review

The individual CA files associated with the FCRP projects approved prior to April 01, 2008²¹ were reviewed and analyzed using a template consisting of a matrix of relevant evaluation indicators (e.g. whether the project funded an event, the scope of funded events, whether the project included a steering or advisory committee, the scope of the steering/advisory committee, the type of occupation(s) targeted by the project, planned modes of dissemination for final products, whether the project had funding from other sources and if so, the sources of other funding). In all, 96 CA files were reviewed and analyzed.²²

Administrative data review

A review of the databases used for the administration of the program was conducted. The FCRP has two administrative databases: a project database and a stakeholder database. Both databases use a Microsoft Access platform and reports are typically developed and tailored at the request of program staff. The consultant team reviewed a paper version of the Access forms and contents of drop down menus in order to provide a description of the tailored reports needed to respond to the evaluation questions and indicators. Data up to and including September 2008 was included in the analysis.

²⁰ As a result, all 17 occupations have been reviewed as part of either this evaluation or the baseline review undertaken by the FCRP.

²¹ Projects approved after April 01, 2008 were considered to be likely not very far along and thus would be of limited use in responding to the evaluation issues and questions.

²² Two CAs were not provided for review by the program during the data collection window.

2.4 Key Informant Interviews

The objective of the key informant interviews was to gather in-depth information including views, perceptions, explanations, examples and factual information that address the evaluation questions. In all, 66 key informant (KI) interviews were conducted (see Table 2.1). The interviews were divided according to the following groups:

- ***Internal HRSDC stakeholders*** (9 respondents) – Respondents were from the FCRP division, as well as those outside the division including representatives from the Sector Council Program, the Labour Mobility Program and the Temporary Foreign Workers’ Program.
- ***Representatives from other federal government departments (OGDs)*** (11 respondents) – The interviewee selection was based on the identification of key federal departments and agencies that have collaborated with the FCRP, including members of the Directors General (DG) Forum, which included seniors officials of Health Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Privy Council Office, Service Canada and Canadian Heritage.
- ***Representatives from provincial/territorial governments*** (12 respondents) – P/T representative interviews were important given the role of this level of government with regulated occupations and the efforts made by FCRP to engage P/T representatives with respect to addressing FCR issues. Only 12 of the targeted 21 interviews were completed. This was largely due to respondents being unavailable during the data collection period, though a small number declined due to lack of awareness about FCRP. Interviews were conducted with representatives from the following P/Ts²³: British Columbia, Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia.
- ***Representatives from national associations and organizations*** (10 respondents) – The FCRP has engaged a number of national associations and organizations with respect to FCR, some of which have received project funding and some of which have not.
- ***FCRP applicants that did not receive funding*** (4 respondents) – A small number of FCRP applicants did not receive funding; almost all were interviewed.
- ***Funding recipients related to non-regulated occupations and those representing non-occupation specific organizations*** (20 respondents) – These interviews were conducted with CA holders and included sector councils (9 recipients), educational institutions or organizations (3 respondents), NGOs at the national level (4 respondents) and regional/local levels (4 respondents). This group of interviewees is referred to as key informants from either “non-regulated occupations” or “non-occupation specific organizations” in the remainder of this report. Of those interviewees from non-

²³ The specific ministries/provincial departments for each P/T include: British Columbia – representatives from Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development; Yukon – Ministry of Advanced Education; Alberta – Department of Employment, Immigration and Industry; Saskatchewan – Ministry of Advanced Education and Employment; Manitoba – Ministry of Advanced Education and Literacy; Nunavut – Department of Education; Ontario – Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Quebec – Ministère d’Immigration et des communautés culturelles; and Nova Scotia – Office of Immigration.

regulated occupations, occupations (or sectors) included: electricity sector; bio-economy/biotechnology sector; trucking sector; aerospace sector; textile sector; aviation maintenance sector; tourism sector; automotive service and repair sector; technicians and technologists; and the environmental sector.

Table 2.1 Summary of Interviews		
Respondent Group	# Targeted	# Complete
Internal HRSDC stakeholders	9	9
Representatives from OGDs	14	11
Representatives from P/Ts	21	12
Representatives from national associations or organizations	10	10
Non-funded FCRP applicants	5	4
Funding recipients in non-regulated occupations and those representing non-occupation specific organizations	32	20
Total	91	66

The following scale has been used in reporting to indicate the relative weight of the responses for each of the respondent groups.

- “All/almost all” – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the key informants in the group;
- “Large majority” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of key informants in the group;
- “Majority/most” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of key informants in the group;
- “Some” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of key informants in the group; and
- “A few” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of key informants in the group.

2.5 Occupational Case Studies

The purpose of the occupational case studies was to assess the extent to which intended intermediate program outcomes were achieved for seven funded occupations, as well as progress towards the intended longer-term program outcomes, especially in terms of the extent to which representatives from the occupations reported they use FCR tools and processes developed with FCRP funding. With respect to intermediate outcomes, the evaluation assessed whether the availability of tools and processes increased as well as their standardization. The case studies also addressed the issues of program relevance and cost-effectiveness. Of the seven funded occupations, five were within regulated occupations, one was within a non-regulated occupation and one was within a trade occupation (Table 2.2). The five regulated funded occupations selected for the case studies

were selected as each had been funded for at least one project related to the activity of tool and processes development. Therefore, there was a higher probability that they had achieved intermediate outcomes and made progress towards longer-term outcomes.

Besides funded occupations, information was also collected on regulated occupations that did not receive FCRP funding which served as a basis of comparison for the funded regulated occupations. Information was collected on four non-funded occupations. Various data collection methods (which are listed below in the next paragraph) were used for all the case studies. Also, Table 2.2 provides a breakdown of funded and non-funded occupations and the data collection methods used for each.

The methods used for the case studies included: document review; in-depth interviews in seven funded occupations including interviews with CA holders, project partners and intended end users (where names for the latter two were provided by CA holders); a survey of regulatory bodies for five funded and four non-funded occupations; in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders in two non-funded occupations.

Table 2.2				
Methodological Details for Occupational Case Studies				
Occupation	Characteristics		Methods	
	FCRP-funded	Regulated	Key Informant Interviews	Survey of Regulatory Bodies*
Physicians	✓	✓	2	(6) 67% response rate
Nurses	✓	✓	7	(8) 40% response rate
Engineers	✓	✓	5	(9) 31% response rate
MLTs	✓	✓	10	(5) 42% response rate
MRTs	✓	✓	6	(4) 36% response rate
Teachers	Non-FCRP funded	✓	4	(9) 33% response rate
Dentists	Non-FCRP funded	✓	1	(5) 42% response rate
Translators	Non-FCRP funded	✓		(5) 63% response rate
Psychologists	Non-FCRP funded	✓		(7) 64% response rate
ICT	✓	Non-regulated occupation	4	Not included in survey as not subject to regulatory bodies
Construction	✓	Trade occupation	8	Not included in survey as not subject to regulatory bodies
MLTs = Medical laboratory technologists; MRTs = Medical radiation technologists; ICT = Information and communications technology * Indicates percent completing all survey questions that applied to them.				

The same scale as for the key informant interviews has been used to indicate the relative weight of the responses for each of the respondent groups and occupations.

2.6 Survey of Employers in the Engineering Field

An online survey was conducted with employers in the engineering field who had more than one employee. The objective of the survey was to assess the need and rationale for the program and the impact, if any, at the employer level of the tools and processes developed in part due to FCRP funding. The engineering field was selected because it was one of the original three occupations targeted and funded by FCRP. It received funding for the highest number of FCRP projects in the regulated occupations, and many of the funded projects pertain to the development of tools and processes. In addition, immigrants in the engineering occupation comprise the highest percentage of skilled immigrants of all occupations.

The survey specifically attempted to determine the extent of the match between activities of FCRP projects and needs as perceived by employers in the engineering field. In particular, respondents were asked to rate various challenges for their firms related to FCR and to indicate the degree of relevance of the FCRP to the FCR-related challenges faced by their firms. Also, respondents were asked to comment on the degree to which they felt barriers facing FTIs in the engineering field had increased or decreased (or stayed the same) since 2004 when the program was established.

The survey utilized a survey frame purchased from Dunn & Bradstreet by HRSDC. The frame included 6,623 records of firms that were classified with a NAICS²⁴ code of 541330 or “Engineering Services”. Forty-five of these 115 records did not possess an indication of firm size in terms of employees. As illustrated in Table 2.3, of these firms, 1,638 or 24.7% were single practitioners with no employees. Approximately one half (49.8%) were small firms of 2-9 employees. One in five firms (19.8%) had 10-49 employees. A small proportion (5.2 %) were firms with 50 or more employees.

Number of Employees	Number of Firms	Percentage	Status
Missing	115	--	Remove
One employee	1,638	24.7%	Remove
2-9 employees	3,244	49.8%	Include
10-49 employees	1,287	19.8%	Include
50-99 employees	170	2.6%	Include
100-499 employees	149	2.3%	Include
500+ employees	20	0.3%	Include

²⁴ NAISC stands for North American Industry Classification System code used by Statistics Canada for categorizing occupations.

Those firms that have only one employee are essentially single practitioners. As a result, they were removed from the frame as they are not employers *per se*. With this exclusion, combined with the records that were missing information on the number of employees, 4,870 firms remained in the survey frame. All firms in the database were invited to participate.

An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to 4,870 firms. A total of 4,150 total eligible contacts responded to this invitation (calculated as the total number of participants in the database minus those without contact information or who had invalid contact information or had moved). The total number of survey respondents was 510, which included 487 eligible survey respondents and 23 individuals who were not eligible to complete the survey. Based on this methodology the response rate for the survey of participants was 510/4150 or 12.3 %.²⁵

It is believed that two key factors affected the response rate:

- 1) The survey occurred over the warm months when engineering firms conduct the majority of their field work; and
- 2) In the absence of e-mail addresses, respondents were sent letters via surface mail (which included a website link and a survey access code). As a result, respondents received the survey invitation when they were not necessarily at their computers and had to remember to complete the survey when they were at their computers. They also had to manually enter the website link into their browsers.

To minimize the impact of any potential response bias, following the completion of the survey, the profile of the respondents was compared to the sampling frame profile. The profiles of the respondents and sampling frame were compared on the provincial/territorial distribution, number of employees and total sales. While the profiles were similar, weighting was implemented to ensure a minimum of variation between the sampling frame profile and survey respondent profile.

Weighting adjustments only correct for observed characteristics captured in the sampling frame. It is possible that the survey respondents may have differed from the non-respondents on other variables not available from the sampling frame database.

The survey instrument employed a number of open and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions included scaled items such as three-point awareness scales, four-point scales (related to the degree of usefulness and comprehensiveness (among others), degree of challenge, degree of familiarity, degree of relevance), and five-point satisfaction and impact scales. The type of scale used depended on the type of survey question.

²⁵ Note that, as with the total eligible contacts, a sub-set of the respondents to the survey may have been ineligible.

2.7 Survey of Intended End Users of Project Information

The objective of the survey of intended end users of project information was to determine the extent to which information (i.e. reports, informational products and resources) from FCRP projects was shared or disseminated. The purpose was to assess to extent to which the intended immediate program outcome of “*increased promotion, knowledge sharing and transfer of best practices in developing pan-Canadian FCR processes*” was achieved. To this end, the survey assessed awareness levels of the information disseminated, as well as the quality and usefulness of the information. End users were defined as those organizations that would be considered users of the information developed with FCRP funding, either within their organization (e.g. to influence policy and/or processes), or for external operations of the organization (i.e. using the information with clients). The survey specifically addressed the projects funded by FCRP, in addition to generic issues and processes addressed in those projects to determine the extent of the match between activities of FCRP projects and needs as perceived by end users.

There was no survey frame or comprehensive listing available of intended end users of project information. As a result, a list of the projects that were coded in the program database as having received project funding for the activity of “development and dissemination of information”²⁶ was extracted and the organizations funded for these projects were contacted and asked to share lists of intended end users. According to the FCRP database, as of September 2008, 42 out of 100 projects had the development and dissemination of information as a primary activity area. Approximately one-half of projects (52%) were not in specific occupations. In all, 10 CA holders conducting projects with topics focusing on five identified occupations²⁷ and five areas that are not specific to any one occupation provided lists of individuals to be invited to participate in the survey. The results of the survey are not representative, nor generalizeable, to the population as a whole. This is due to small sample size, the method of relying on funding recipients to provide lists of end-users, and the fact each questionnaire was tailored for each respondent where both the organization that developed the report/informational product/resource and the name of the report/informational product/resource were embedded in the questionnaire. Thus survey respondents were asked to comment on the particular information (for a particular project) for which they were considered to be an end-user.

A total of 311 names were received from the 10 CAs. After identifying duplicate names (i.e. end users who were identified by more than one CA holder) and removing those who did not have e-mail addresses (and could not be located via a web search) and names of end users from HRSDC,²⁸ there was a total of 248 eligible end users who received the invitation to participate in the online survey. Of those 248, 31 survey invitations could

²⁶ “Information” included reports and resources but could also include the development and dissemination of informational tools.

²⁷ The identified occupations included three regulated occupations (engineers, MRT, and occupational therapists), and two non-regulated/trade occupations (including construction and automotive repair and maintenance).

²⁸ Since HRSDC is the organization that issued the CAs and is also the client for this evaluation, it was deemed inappropriate for individuals from the department to comment on the appropriateness of the products produced with departmental funding.

not be delivered due to incorrect e-mail addresses, leaving a base of 217. Sixty-one individuals completed the survey for a response rate of 28%.

While only 61 individuals completed the survey, 98 individuals began the survey (37 did not complete it). Table 2.4 presents the respondent type of those who started the survey.

Table 2.4 Survey Respondents Broken out by Type		
Respondent Type	N	Percent
Educational Institution	27	28%
P/T Regulatory Body	16	16%
Immigrant Serving Agency	14	14%
National Association	14	14%
P/T Association ²⁹	7	7%
Employer	5	5%
P/T Government	5	5%
Federal Government	6	6%
Other	4	4%
Total	98	100%

Table 2.5 presents the main role of respondents who started the survey with respect to foreign credential assessment and/or recognition.

Table 2.5 Organization's Main Role With Respect to Foreign Credential Assessment and/or Recognition		
Role(s) cited by respondents	Number of Responses*	Percent
Credential assessment/equivalency evaluations	32	39%
Provision of information/referrals to newcomers	21	26%
Provision of educational programs	18	22%
Sector Council	3	4%
Other	8	10%
Total	82	100%

* Note that respondents could identify more than one role, as appropriate. Also, not all who started the survey provided a response to this question.

The survey of intended end users assessed awareness levels of information disseminated by project funding recipients, as well as the quality and usefulness of this information. It also assessed the extent to which the FCRP has contributed to the immediate outcome of enhanced national coordination among partners and stakeholders on foreign credential recognition (FCR) issues. The survey specifically addressed the projects funded by FCRP, in addition to generic issues and processes addressed in those projects, to determine the extent of the match between activities of FCRP projects and needs as perceived by end users.

²⁹ A P/T Association could include an occupation-specific association that is not a regulatory body, an immigrant-serving association at the P/T level, or some other association addressing issues related to FCR.

The survey instrument employed a number of open and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended items included scaled questions such as three-point awareness scales, four-point scales (related to the degree of usefulness and comprehensiveness (among others), degree of challenge, degree of familiarity, degree of relevance), and five-point satisfaction and impact scales. The type of scale used depended on the type of survey question.

2.8 Challenges and Limitations

As with any evaluation, there are challenges encountered in implementing the methodologies which result in limitations for the findings. The main challenges and limitations encountered with the present evaluation included:

- ***Limited awareness of the FCRP among some respondents*** – Awareness of the program varied considerably among respondents. No clear pattern of non-awareness emerged. Those respondents who were not aware varied by occupation and respondent group. As a result, many evaluation questions and indicators have a considerable proportion of respondents who did not feel adequately aware of or knowledgeable about the program to respond.
- ***Response rate on surveys*** – The response rate on the various surveys was generally in the low range. Some of this low response rate may be due to the limited awareness of the program along with the surveys being conducted in the summer and early fall. Low response rates present a challenge because they are less likely to be representative of the surveyed population. This limits the extent to which survey findings can be generalized to the overall population.
- ***Challenges in both measurements of change or improvement and then attribution of changes to the FCRP*** – In most areas of anticipated outcomes, there was not a baseline measure of these outcomes at the point of implementation of FCRP. As a result, measurements of change or improvement rely on the recall and opinion of current respondents. These are qualitative in nature and challenging to substantiate without quantitative measures. Similarly, once a perceived change is assessed, it is not possible with the methods used in this evaluation to determine the extent to which the FCRP activities have impacted on this change. Limited information of program attribution has been collected via opinions and perceptions.
- ***Many respondents to the survey of intended users of project information self-identified as partners in the development of informational products/resources*** – This would have likely resulted in a greater awareness of the informational product/resource under consideration. Note that the term “partner” was not defined on the survey instrument and therefore, the role to which these respondents are referring cannot be determined (e.g. consulted during development, received an early copy to review, used as a pilot site, members of the advisory/steering committee, co-funders).

- ***Limited information on FCR processes on regulatory body websites*** – The review of regulatory body websites produced limited information to assist in addressing the evaluation questions and indicators outlined for this component of the evaluation.
- ***Coding within the administrative databases*** – Some of the coding of occupations in the project database was not detailed enough to adequately address many of the indicators that depended on analysis by specific occupations.

3. Findings Related to Foreign Credential Recognition Program Rationale and Relevance

Findings related to rationale and relevance explored the extent to which:

- The FCRP is consistent with current HRSDC and government priorities;
- The FCRP addresses an actual need of one of the key stakeholder groups (i.e. regulatory bodies, employers, FTIs).

3.1 Consistency with Government Priorities

FCRP is consistent with both HRSDC and Government of Canada (GC) priorities.

In the 2008-09 HRSDC Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP), the Department committed to responding to the growing demand for skilled labour by exploring approaches to facilitate the labour market integration of foreign-trained workers. The FCRP would be viewed as directly contributing to this commitment. As well, the FCRP can be viewed as supporting HRSDC priorities by directly contributing to the strategic outcome of “enhanced Canadian productivity and participation through efficient and inclusive labour markets, competitive workplaces, and access to learning”. These findings were supported through interviews with HRSDC personnel, particularly in regard to the Department’s focus on labour market development and its mandate to support the labour market outcomes of immigrants.

Furthermore, the document review demonstrated consistency between the program’s ultimate outcome of enhanced labour market outcomes of FTIs in targeted occupations sectors and GC priorities. The issue of FCR in particular had been more explicitly stated in GC priorities and policy budget documents prior to 2006. More recent statements of GC priorities can be linked to FCR in a more general manner and to enhanced labour market outcomes more directly. Most significantly, the FCRP can be considered to assist in upholding the Advantage Canada labour market principles of labour market efficiency, and improved quality and quantity of Canada’s workforce. The Advantage Canada economic plan (November 2006) stresses the importance of welcoming more immigrants who are most likely to succeed in the Canadian economy. The plan also speaks to improving the integration of skilled immigrants and foreign-trained Canadians into the labour market as key elements to promote a strong economy. Commitments were made in subsequent budgets and Speeches from the Throne to continue the implementation of Advantage Canada. With the continued emphasis on Advantage Canada, FCRP logically continued to have a role in improving the integration of skilled immigrants into the labour market. Many key informants from HRSDC mentioned Advantage Canada when speaking to the issue of program consistency with federal government priorities.

At a more general level, the literature review identified a number of negative impacts stemming from the “discounting,” or non-recognition, of foreign credentials. These include significant income gaps between immigrants and native-born Canadians,³⁰ large economic costs to Canada due to underutilization of skills and learning due to problems with foreign credential recognition (estimated at \$2.6 billion),³¹ and various individual-level impacts including not being able to find employment (discouraged worker effect) and the individual well-being of immigrants.³² Furthermore, the literature review described the proactive engagement of Australia, New Zealand, the EU and the UK in addressing FCR issues, indicating the importance of similar activities in Canada in order to remain competitive in attracting skilled immigrants.

An analysis of all lines of evidence reveals that, by supporting projects that are designed to stimulate systemic change and build FCR capacity across the country, FCRP has the potential to reduce labour mobility barriers, facilitate labour market adjustments, and contribute to increased economic opportunity for foreign-trained individuals (FTIs) through labour market integration. This finding was strongly supported by case study respondents (particularly CA holders) and key informant interviewees from all respondent groups.

A review of CAs confirmed that all funded projects were designed to support FCRP objectives including the development and strengthening of Canada’s FCR capacity, and contributing to the improvement of labour market integration outcomes of foreign trained individuals.

Thus, FCRP-funded projects are consistent with HRSDC and federal government priorities.

³⁰ Studies that document and/or review the literature on the declining economic position of immigrants include Aydemir and Skuterud 2005, Ferrer and Riddell 2008, Frenette and Morissette 2003, Hiebert 2006, Picot and Sweetman 2005, Reitz 2006, and Zietsma 2007.

³¹ Reitz, Jeffrey. 2001b. Immigrant skill utilization in the Canadian labour market: implications of human capital research. *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 2: 347- 78

³² Studies that document immigrant-level impacts include: Schellenberg, G. and H. Maheux. 2007. Immigrants’ perspectives on their first four years in Canada. *Canadian Social Trends*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada; and Bauder, H. 2003. Brain abuses, or the devaluation of immigrant labour in Canada. *Antipode*, 35: 700-717. Grant P.R. 2005. The Devaluation of Immigrants’ Foreign Credentials: The Psychological Impact of this Barrier to Integration into Canadian Society. Final Report to the Prairie Metropolis Centre. Grant P.R., Nadin S. 2007. The credentialing problems of foreign trained personnel from Asia and Africa intending to make their home in Canada: A social psychological perspective. *Migration and Integration*. 8: 141-162.

3.2 Consistency with the Perceived Roles for the Federal Government

Respondents were asked to comment³³ on what they perceived to be an appropriate role for the federal government to play in the area of FCR. Respondents were not asked to limit their comments to the FCR Division within HRSDC, or even to limit comments to HRSDC itself. Therefore, some of the perceived roles highlighted below fall outside the objectives and activities of the FCRP, HRSDC, and potentially the federal government with respect to jurisdictional issues. However, this does not mean that the FCRP is not playing an appropriate role.

The evaluation results indicate that some of the perceived roles identified for the federal government in the area of FCR were consistent with the objectives and activities of the FCRP. One of the most commonly cited roles for the federal government was a coordination role by bringing the key players together, including P/Ts, via funding of national conferences; hosting an annual federal/provincial/territories workshop; encouraging joint initiatives and cross jurisdictional projects; and identifying synergies between the various jurisdictions in Canada (e.g. in meetings with relevant stakeholders). Many respondents from the case studies and the key informant interviews (including some respondents from P/Ts) highlighted this role.

Another role, consistent with the objectives and activities of the FCRP, mentioned by case study respondents and key informants (from most respondent groups) is FCRP's support to organizations in addressing the issue of FCR in their occupations at a national level. Specifically, the development of national level occupational FCR standards and FCR processes, the creation of national assessment tools, and implementation of national systems were all cited.

Respondents also suggested several roles that are not consistent with the objectives and activities of the FCRP. One of these roles was the provision of funding to develop bridging programs for FTIs. The FCRP currently funds many projects such as bridging program pilots and guidelines (such as those in the medical radiation technologist occupation) and curricula (e.g. remedial training based on results of self-assessments). Regulatory bodies in both funded and non-funded occupations cited a federal role of this nature, as did end users in the case studies. This is noteworthy since end-users of products are supposed to be benefiting, and regulatory bodies are responsible for conducting the actual foreign credential assessments and granting/not granting recognition. As such they would theoretically be best positioned regarding familiarity with FCR issues. Some respondents suggested funding be provided directly to educational institutions to be able to provide bridging programs. A few respondents suggested funding be provided directly to FTIs to enrol in bridging programs and a few other respondents suggested increased access to education for FTIs.

³³ With respect to responses obtained from the key informant interviews, the following rating scale was used: "all/almost all" reflected the views and opinions of 90% or more of the key informants in the group; "large majority" = 75% to 89%; "majority/most" = 50% - 74%; "some" = 25% - 49%; and "a few" = at least two respondents but less than 25%. This scale is also located in the Executive Summary as well as *Section 2 – Evaluation Methods* of this report (page 9). When combining the results from different interview groups, sometimes the word "many" is used which means "some" respondents from each interview group combined.

Another example of a role that is inconsistent with the objectives and activities of the FCRP suggested by many respondents was that there be a federal government role to provide FCR-related information to FTIs, particularly when they are still overseas. End users in case studies, respondents from non-funded occupations, and key informants from national organizations mentioned this role. This role is also consistent with international best practices outlined in the literature review. While inconsistent with FCRP's objectives and activities, this role is consistent with the mandate of the Foreign Credential Referral Office³⁴ (FCRO) of CIC (a federal government department). Another role for the federal government mentioned by end users, while inconsistent with the FCRP, is consistent with settlement programs of other federal departments (and provincial governments), is that of providing language training to FTIs.³⁵

3.3 Consistency with the Perceived Needs of Key Stakeholders

In order to assess the extent to which the program addresses an actual need, the needs of key stakeholder groups, as specified by respondent groups, were solicited within each line of evidence based on the anticipated level of knowledge of the respondent groups. Key stakeholders for whom FCR needs were identified included employers, regulatory bodies, assessment bodies and educational institutions. As stated in the Introduction section (Overview of FCRP), in order to meet its two main objectives³⁶ and support its strategic objective,³⁷ the FCRP was designed to foster systemic change by providing strategic and financial investments to various stakeholders to develop coherent, transparent, fair, equitable and rigorous FCR processes. This is achieved through seeking and investing in stakeholders such as regulatory bodies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the private sector in strategic areas that contribute to Canada's social and economic development. As a follow-up, respondents were asked to consider the extent to which the FCRP is consistent with, or addresses, the key needs identified (this was asked only in relation to employers and regulatory bodies).

Respondents were also asked to identify the needs of FTIs with respect to FCR, which are also included below. This was thought to be important, despite that the FCRP does not offer services directly to FTIs, as they would be the ultimate end-users or beneficiaries of the standardized assessment and recognition processes.

As with the findings in Section 3.2 regarding the perceived roles for the federal government, the findings below reflect the view of respondents when asked to identify the main needs of the various stakeholder groups with respect to FCR. Again, respondents

³⁴ According to the CIC website, the Foreign Credentials Referral Office provides information, path-finding and referral services to help foreign-trained workers succeed and put their skills to work in Canada more quickly.

³⁵ CIC offers two language training programs for immigrants, including the Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program and the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) initiative.

³⁶ 1) To develop and strengthen Canada's foreign credential recognition (FCR) capacity and 2) contribute to improving labour market integration outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.

³⁷ The development of coherent, transparent, fair, equitable, and rigorous foreign credential assessment and recognition processes to enhance labour market outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.

were not asked to limit their comments to align with the objectives and activities of FCRP. Therefore, many identified needs highlighted below are outside the scope FCRP's objectives and activities. This does not mean that the FCRP is not addressing the needs of the key stakeholder groups.

Findings in this section are organized by the perceived needs of each key stakeholder group, as identified by respondent group.

FCR-related Needs of employers

An analysis of the evidence compiled from the evaluation revealed four main areas of need for employers in relation to FCR.

The most commonly cited need of employers was related to their overall mindset and attitude towards hiring FTIs. There was a general impression that employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), need to have increased awareness about the positive contributions that can be made by FTIs and that they do not represent the high levels of risk that it is believed employers currently perceive. These views were held by CA holders in some case study occupations (including the non-regulated occupation, the trade, and two of the three regulated occupations that had originally received funding, i.e. engineering and physicians) and some key informants from HRSDC, other government departments, respondents representing funded non-regulated occupations, and respondents that had applied for funding but had been turned down. An analysis of those who held this view suggests that respondents in the non-regulated occupations/trade highlighted this need since determining the appropriateness of the qualifications of a potential employee rests entirely with the employer in these occupations. In response to this identified need, many key informant respondents felt that employers require programs and/or tools to encourage them to hire FTIs.

The second most commonly cited need was simply the need for more qualified workers. This need varied by occupation since not every occupation is experiencing an acute shortage of qualified workers, but was voiced by case study respondents in the majority of funded occupations and one of the non-funded occupations. The shortage of qualified professional engineers was one of the largest identified challenges facing the engineering profession: over one half (55%) of all respondents to the survey of employers in the engineering profession indicated this is currently a "moderate" or "large" challenge for their firm (particularly for larger firms). Moreover, according to the survey, FTIs represent an important source of highly skilled labour for Canadian engineering firms; nearly one half (45%) of all respondents reported that their firm employed some foreign trained professional engineers. This is particularly the case for firms with over 25 employees, with 92% reporting employing some FTIs. Overall, 16% of the professional engineering staff was foreign trained, a percentage that has increased over the past four years.

The hiring information provided by the survey of employer respondents demonstrated a need for improved processes for the recognition of foreign trained professional engineers' credentials. Just under one quarter (22%) of the survey respondents stated they had foreign trained professional engineers who applied for work who would have been hired

but they were unable to offer them a position because they were not fully licensed. This problem was more prevalent among the firms with larger numbers of professional engineering staff. In addition, just under one quarter (22%) of the survey respondents stated they had foreign trained professional engineers working as technicians and technologists because they had difficulty getting their credentials recognized. This was particularly the case for larger firms.

A third need for employers identified in many qualitative lines of evidence was the need to better understand FCR and assessment processes, and (in the case of regulated occupations only) familiarity with regulatory bodies. This finding was confirmed in the survey of employers in the engineering field where over one third (37%) of all respondents indicated that understanding the credentials of engineers who have been trained outside of Canada is a “moderate” or “large” challenge for their firm (this increases to over two-thirds for larger firms). The capacity (i.e. tools, HR, processes) to conduct credential and/or competency assessments was also raised as a need for some employers (mostly in non-regulated occupations). Also, where employers were not responsible for conducting the credential/competency assessments themselves (i.e. in regulated occupations), it was mentioned that employers needed access to reliable and objective credential, qualification and language assessments and to feel confident relying on the assessments of others.

The fourth need identified in interviews and the survey of employers was to provide employers with more information concerning cultural training and integrating FTIs into the workplace. One-third of the respondents to the survey of employers in the engineering field stated that integrating foreign trained engineers with their firm was a “moderate” or “large” challenge. More specifically, it was mentioned in interviews with respondents in funded non-regulated occupations that employers required greater awareness concerning the need to provide support and training to FTIs, including language, culture, and technical skills training.

Degree of consistency with FCRP objectives and activities

Many of the identified needs of employers are directly related to the program objective “to contribute to improving labour market integration outcomes of FTIs in targeted occupations and sectors.” These needs can be addressed through the program activity of seeking and investing in partnerships with stakeholders (such as the private sector) in strategic areas that contribute to Canada’s social and economic development.

These needs can also be addressed through the funding of projects that aim to raise awareness and understanding of FCR. Projects that are expected to develop credential recognition tools can also directly address some of the key needs of employers. In addition, projects related to FCR information sharing/best practices forums and FCR events more generally would also relate to the identified employers’ needs identified above, including changing their mindset about hiring FTIs and the integration of FTIs into the workplace. While there is a need for qualified workers in some occupations, most notably in the engineering profession, the program responds to this need indirectly by addressing the systemic barriers facing qualified FTIs (e.g. fairness and equity, coherency, transparency, access to information, complexity of the system).

When asked directly, most respondents in all lines of evidence indicated that the program was consistent, at least to some degree, with the needs they had identified. Of those engineering employer survey respondents who were familiar with FCRP, over half (53%) rated the program as relevant to assist in addressing the challenge of understanding the credentials of engineers who have been trained outside of Canada and just under half (47%) rated it as relevant to addressing the challenge of integrating foreign trained engineers within Canadian firms.

However, it appears that improvements can be made in meeting the overall needs of employers, or that greater attention to this stakeholder group may be beneficial. This is particularly the case in the area of improving the overall mindset of employers about the positive contributions that can be made by FTIs and the need to provide employers with more information concerning cultural training and integrating FTIs into the workplace. This seemed to be most notable with funded non-regulated occupations and the trade occupation where it was mentioned in interviews with respondents that employers require greater awareness concerning the need to provide support and training to FTIs, including language, culture, and technical skills training. In fact, some interview respondents from these groups, as well as OGDs, felt that more work could be done to better engage employers and deliver projects that more closely align with the needs of employers.

FCR-related Needs of Regulatory Bodies

Within the context of increasing requests for FCR in all funded and non-funded regulated occupations that participated in the survey of regulatory bodies, it is important to understand and highlight the challenges being faced by regulatory bodies in FCR. These challenges include: lack of understanding FCR/standards and the need for improved processes to assess programs or educational/credit systems in other countries, difficulty in accessing and validating information to conduct assessments, and challenges related to FTIs including language barriers (cited in non-funded occupations only) and better cultural understanding/adoption (cited in two of the three originally funded occupations only). KI respondents (from case studies and interviews) indicated that regulatory bodies needed more capacity to undertake assessments, more tools, and more sharing/closer collaboration among other regulatory bodies and stakeholders. Moreover, regulatory body survey respondents in most funded occupations noted the relevancy of the FCRP in addressing these challenges.

Degree of Consistency with FCRP objectives and activities

Many of these needs could be addressed by FCRP funded projects related to developing and supporting partnerships to understand and address FCR issues in addition to developing tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials, as well as the FCRP activity of engaging all levels of government on FCR issues. However, the evaluation results indicate a considerable lack of understanding about FCR in general on the part of regulatory bodies, as well as practical difficulties in the assessment process. Therefore, it appears that improvements can be made here, as well, in meeting the overall needs of

regulatory bodies, or that greater attention to this stakeholder group may be beneficial. This is especially so in light of the FCRP's intended intermediate and longer-term program outcomes of "increased availability and use of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations." (Please refer to Appendix C – FCRP logic model).

According to the FCRP database, of the 100 funded projects (as at September 2008), 21 projects were coded as under the activity of "implementation of processes to assess credentials". Nearly two-thirds of these (62%) were within the 45 occupations targeted by the FCRP. Of these, seven were in regulated targeted occupations. This is revealing as it indicates a gap in addressing the perceived needs of regulatory bodies. Also of note, a total of six projects coded under "Research, Analysis & Planning" were funded to regulatory bodies of which four were national associations of regulatory bodies and two of which were provincial regulatory bodies. A much higher number of funded projects for this activity was allocated to national professional associations. The results suggest a possible disconnect between the work of national professional associations and regulatory bodies (whose assessment processes members of national associations are subject).

The only commonly cited need that was not addressed by FCRP-funded projects or program-related activities was that related to the challenges experienced by FTIs such as language training and cultural awareness.

FCR-related Needs of Assessment Bodies

Among the minority of respondents who commented on the needs of assessment bodies, identified needs included: common standards/approaches for assessment, more sharing of information, and tools and databases. Respondents were not asked to consider the extent to which the FCRP is consistent with, or addresses, the key needs identified.

FCR-related Needs of Educational Institutions

Among the few who were able to comment, one main need of educational institutions emerged: support to develop training/bridging programs targeted to FTIs. It was mentioned by some that these programs could include greater flexibility than traditional training programs that would allow FTIs to upgrade certain competencies. Respondents were not asked to consider the extent to which the FCRP is consistent with, or addresses, the key needs identified.

FCR-related Needs of FTIs

Based on the literature reviewed, the main FCR-related obstacle encountered by FTIs is the discounting, or non-recognition, of their credentials and foreign work experience.³⁸ Discounting is highest among those who have received all of their education outside of Canada, and for those who are in occupations with relatively low skill levels or in managerial occupations. Overall, foreign work experience is almost completely discounted. Thus, the literature suggests that a key need of FTIs is to have their credentials and experience fairly and equitably assessed.

Respondents to the evaluation did not tend to directly relate the challenge of credential discounting with the need for better assessments. Rather, the needs of FTIs identified by evaluation respondents in all lines of evidence tended to focus on supports for FTIs to overcome gaps in credentials and knowledge. For example, bridging programs and language training were identified as key needs of FTIs. Language training in particular was widely cited by most respondent groups.

Another need commonly mentioned by respondents in many case study occupations and by all KI respondent groups was the need for information, preferably before arriving in Canada, about the FCR process. The results also indicated a need for information in general about what immigrants can realistically expect in Canada, both in terms of regulatory requirements and labour market prospects.

Many respondents in case studies and key informant interviews cited the need for greater cultural awareness of Canadian workplaces on the part of FTIs. Apprenticeships and internships were also suggested as a way of meeting the needs of FTIs, particularly in non-regulated occupations. In addition, competency-based assessments to identify gaps, particularly in non-regulated occupations were identified as a need.

³⁸ Studies that document the discounting of immigrant credentials and that indicate how it varies by different factors include: Alboim, N., R. Finnie, R., and R. Meng. 2005. The Discounting of Immigrants' Skills in Canada: Evidence and Policy Recommendations. *IRPP Choices* 11(2):2-26; Bratsberg B., and Ragan J. 2002. The impact of host country schooling on earnings: a study of male immigrants in the US. *Journal of Human Resources* 37: 63-105; Esses, Victoria, Joerg Dietz, and Arjun Bhardwaj. 2006. The role of prejudice in the discounting of immigrant skills. In *Cultural Psychology of Immigrants*. Edited by R. Mahalingam. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 113-130; Esses, Victoria, Joerg Dietz, Caroline Bennett-Abuayyash and Chetan Joshi. 2006. Prejudice in the workplace: the role of bias against visible minorities in the devaluation of immigrants foreign-acquired qualifications and credentials. *Canadian Issues*. (Spring) 114-118.; Ferrer, Ana, and W. Craig Riddell. 2008. Education, credentials and immigrant earnings. *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 41:186-216; Finnie, R., and R. Meng. 2002. Minorities, cognitive skills, and the earnings of Canadians, *Canadian Public Policy*. 28(2) 257-274.; Pendakur, Krishna, and Ravi Pendakur. 1998. The colour of money: earnings differentials among ethnic groups in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Economics* 31: 518-48. Picot, Garnet, and Arthur Sweetman. 2005. *The Deteriorating Economic Welfare of Immigrants and Possible Causes: Update 2005*. Analytical Studies Branch research paper series. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Business and Labour Market Analysis Division, catalogue no. 11F0019MIE – No. 262.; Reitz, Jeffrey. 2003. Occupational dimensions of immigrant credential assessment: Trends in professional, managerial, and other occupations, 1970-1996. In *Canadian Immigration Policy for the 21st Century*, Edited by Charles Beach, Alan Green, and Jeffrey G. Reitz. Kingston, ON: John Deutsch Institute for the Study of Economic Policy, 469-506.; Schaafsfa, J. and A. Sweetman. 2001. Immigrant earnings: age at immigration matters. *Canadian Journal of Economics*. 34 (No. 4) 1066-1099.; Sweetman, Arthur. 2004. *Immigration Source Country School Quality and Canadian Labour Market Outcomes*. Analytical Studies Research Paper Series. 11F0019MIE – No. 234. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. ; Wanner, Richard. 1998. Prejudice, profit or productivity: explaining returns to human capital amongst male immigrants to Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*. 30 (no. 3) 24-55.

Degree of consistency with FCRP objectives and activities

Respondents were able to identify many key needs of FTIs. However, the FCRP does not aim to provide information, nor language training, directly to FTIs, or to increase the cultural awareness of FTIs. Rather, FTIs are considered to be the intended ultimate beneficiaries of projects that aim to develop tools and improved processes.

Many CA holders and CA partners in most case study occupations felt that their particular project(s) is/was consistent with the needs they had identified for FTIs. As well, most HRSDC respondents believed that FCRP was consistent with addressing the needs of FTIs. This was supported by the views of some KI respondents (including those from HRSDC, OGDs and P/Ts) who indicated that FCRP did not offer programs and services directly to FTIs, but rather worked to improve the processes and the system overall. This suggests that the FCRP is indirectly meeting the needs of FTIs.

Interviews with respondents in funded non-regulated occupations revealed that the concept of “credentials” recognition is inconsistent with current research that emphasizes the recognition of “competencies.”

Summary for the Evaluation Issue – Rationale and Relevance

The FCRP is consistent with both HRSDC and Government of Canada priorities. The literature review described the proactive engagement of Australia, New Zealand, the EU and the UK in addressing FCR issues, indicating the importance of similar activities in Canada in order to remain competitive in attracting skilled immigrants. Some of the perceived roles for the federal government identified by key informants in all respondent groups in the area of FCR, such as coordinating key players and initiatives and supporting organizations to address the issue of FCR at a national level are consistent with the objectives and activities of the FCRP. However, other perceived roles are beyond the purview of the FCRP, such as the provision of funding directly to educational institutions or FTIs for bridging programs, providing information overseas prior to arrival in Canada and providing language training to FTIs.

Furthermore, the most commonly cited needs identified in relation to employers and regulatory bodies were consistent with the objectives of the FCRP. However, it was believed that that more work could be done to better engage employers and that funded projects could more closely align with employers’ needs, such as providing employers with more information concerning cultural training and integrating FTIs into the workplace. Regulatory bodies appear to have needs with respect to understanding FCR and have practical difficulties in the assessment process. Improvements would be beneficial to meet the overall needs of regulatory bodies, especially in light of the FCRP’s intended intermediate and longer-term program outcomes of “increased availability and use of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations.” The most commonly cited needs of FTIs, included language training, bridging program, cultural awareness, and information about FCR before arriving in Canada, which are all inconsistent with the objectives and activities of the FCRP. However, FCRP’s objectives preclude the provision of direct service to FTIs. Rather, FTIs are considered ultimate beneficiaries of FCRP-funded projects to improve assessment and recognition processes. The needs identified for the key stakeholder groups did not vary a great deal between occupations.

4. Findings Related to Foreign Credential Recognition Program Success

FCRP activities and their outputs are expected to contribute to achieving program outcomes. FCRP outcomes vary depending on the timeframe in which they are expected to be achieved. They include immediate, medium-term and longer-term outcomes, collectively contributing to the ultimate program outcome. Please refer to Appendix B (logic model) for a graphical depiction of these outcomes. Given the timing of the evaluation in relation to program implementation (2004-05), the measurement of impacts and success focused mainly on the intended immediate and medium-term outcomes of the program. Whereas the evaluation assessed only “progress” towards intended longer-term outcomes due to the challenges in achieving these outcomes within the four year time frame against which the evaluation was conducted. Rather, these outcomes can be more realistically achieved over a longer period.

4.1 Achievement of Immediate Intended Outcomes

Intended immediate FCRP outcomes include:

- Increased understanding, consensus, collaboration, and commitment among stakeholders and partners on issues and potential solutions related to FCR;
- Increased promotion, knowledge sharing and transfer of best practices in developing pan-Canadian processes; and
- Enhanced national coordination among stakeholders and partners on FCR.

The evaluation findings for the achievement of immediate outcomes since the inception of FCRP are described below.

Understanding, Consensus, Collaboration and Commitment

A large majority of key informants across respondent groups indicated that the greatest progress appears to be in terms of greater “understanding.” Whereas, increased consensus, collaboration and commitment is occurring only in part.

Achievement of this outcome appears to be driven by the conduct of FCRP-funded diagnostic studies and participation in FCRP-funded projects. According to a continuum of progression outlined by the Program for addressing FCR issues, the diagnostic is an initial step in the process. Occupational or sector “diagnostics” were usually composed of a situational analysis and the development of recommendations for the occupation/sector. In order to develop collaboration among stakeholders and partners, the FCRP encouraged diagnostic projects that were proposed by, or had the involvement of, representatives from multiple jurisdictions.

According to the administrative data analysis, approximately two-thirds of these diagnostic projects were implemented by national organizations such as sector councils, national associations of regulatory bodies, or other types of national associations. Two examples include the Canadian Immigration Integration Project and Pan-Canadian Standards in International Credential Evaluation.

The administrative data revealed that FCRP-funded diagnostics have been completed or are underway for over half of the projects (56 projects) covering approximately one-third of the 45 priority occupations targeted by the FCRP.³⁹ In addition, FCRP is supporting diagnostics with five occupations and sectors that are not within the 45 priority occupations being targeted.

Collaboration among stakeholders and partners on FCR-related issues is also facilitated by FCRP projects that have contributed to events such as conferences, roundtables, and workshops. According to the CA review, approximately one-third of projects had some sort of event associated with the project where various stakeholders and partners were brought together to be consulted, advised, and/or provided with information. Over three-quarters of the events were national in scope with a focus on national level information and/or national level consultations, and were often attended by multiple levels of government from many jurisdictions in addition to significant numbers of national and P/T NGOs. Examples of these events include the Pan-Canadian Sector Council and Immigrant Dialogue, Mapping Canadian University Capacity, Expertise and Key Issues, and Comparing Approaches to Recognizing the Skills and Credentials of Foreign-Trained Workers.

Promotion, Knowledge Sharing and Transfer of Best Practices

Based on all lines of evidence, increased promotion, knowledge sharing and transfer of best practices is occurring to some extent. Evidence of progress towards the achievement of this outcome is largely based on the number of projects specifically aimed at this outcome, as well as the results from the survey of end users of project information, in which awareness ranged from somewhat aware to very aware⁴⁰ for the informational product for which the respondents were identified as end users by CA holders. The results of the survey should be placed in context. Of 47 FCRP-funded projects aimed at disseminating information, the number used for this survey was ten (see subsection 2.7 in the Evaluation Methods section).

According to the administrative data, about a third of projects were coded with the output of best practices/lessons learned. A key focus of FCRP investments has been the support of projects designed to develop and share best practices and information about FCR-related issues, as well as the development and dissemination of FCR information in general. FCRP

³⁹ As identified in data provided by CIC relating to the supply of skilled immigrants.

⁴⁰ These results were based on a question in the survey of end-users of project information about the level of awareness of specific informational products that were reportedly sent to survey respondents, wherein there were three response choices: “very aware”, “somewhat aware” or “not aware”. Each choice was assigned a definition which was explained to respondents, i.e. “very aware” was defined as *heard of it; have reviewed it or used it*; “somewhat aware” was defined as *heard of it; have not reviewed or used it*; and “not aware” was defined as *not heard of it*.

supported 33 projects such as roundtables, conferences and workshops that focused on sharing best practices and lessons learned, while 14 projects funded were conferences to discuss issues related to FCR and/or workforce integration of immigrants. Examples include Colleges and Institutions Supporting Immigrant Integration into the Labour Market and Moving Ahead: Assessment of Internationally Educated Nurses.

These projects were pan-Canadian in scope with stakeholders participating from at least three jurisdictions. In almost all cases, representatives from federal, P/T and municipal levels of government participated in these events. In approximately half of the events, national NGOs and PSE institutions participated and in approximately two-thirds of cases P/T and municipal NGOs were participants. There was also reportedly broad attendance at FCRP-funded events, as reported by CA holder respondents, and FCR events in general.

In addition to the roundtables, conferences and workshops, about a third of projects (according to the administrative database) were coded with the output of development and dissemination of information. From the CAs reviewed, most included a plan for dissemination of the project products (e.g. tools, diagnostics, reports). However, there was very little information in the CAs to confirm whether project products were disseminated. The dissemination approach most frequently identified in nearly all CAs was via websites of the CA holders. This was confirmed by CA holders in most regulated case study occupations, one non-regulated case study occupation and most KI respondents from non-regulated occupations. Many CA holders representing most regulated case study occupations and a majority of KI respondents from non-regulated occupations also mentioned that they distributed the product directly via e-mail to lists maintained by their organizations. No clear pattern of dissemination (i.e. models of dissemination) emerged from the evaluation based on whether the project was conducted in a regulated or non-regulated occupation.

CA holders in each case study occupation were of the opinion that there is awareness among the main intended users identified by the CA holders (e.g. regulatory bodies, employers, ISOs and FTIs) of the informational products and resources. Among respondents from funded non-regulated occupations, a few felt that intended users were adequately aware of the processes and tools although a few other respondents were not certain about the level of awareness.

Results from the survey of end users of project information (see section 2.7) indicated moderately high levels of awareness⁴¹ for the informational product for which they were identified as end users by CA holders. This points to progress in this area. Most respondents for 9 out of the 10 products/resources assessed were at least somewhat aware of the informational product/resource and some were very aware. Further, most respondents in 8 out of the 9 products/resources assessed who were aware of the product were aware that it was developed with FCRP funding. However, these results should be treated with caution as the sample size (80 respondents) was very small for a total of 10 products.

The survey of engineering firms suggests that awareness of FCRP project outputs is low among these firms. Awareness levels of FCRP processes and tools were low and direct experience with these processes and tools was extremely low. When asked about specific processes and tools, the level of awareness (including both those who reviewed or used it and

⁴¹ Ibid.

those who only heard of it) for these products ranged from 9% to 19%. The percentage of respondents who actually reviewed or used these products was very low – 1% to 2%. However, these findings for employers are not unexpected since this outcome for FCRP would apply to the regulating bodies rather than the broader population of engineering firms. The survey found that a limited percentage of the respondents (10%) participated in meetings, roundtables, or conferences where the main focus was on foreign credential recognition in the past four years. A small percentage of the respondents (9%) was aware of committees at the national level that examine foreign credential recognition issues on which engineers are represented.

There was very limited awareness among many key informant respondent groups regarding the knowledge sharing that is taking place with FCRP funding. For example, with the exception of respondents from HRSDC, most key informant respondents from all other respondent groups did not provide an opinion on the extent to which forums exist to share knowledge and best practices for developing Pan-Canadian FCR processes, although some respondents from funded non-regulated occupations mentioned that their FCRP-funded project was focused in this area.

National Coordination Among Stakeholders and Partners

The extent to which there is better national coordination among stakeholders and partners on foreign credential recognition issues is less clear. The evaluation results indicate there are many committees with national organization participation that deal with FCR that might be contributing to this outcome. However, the impact of FCRP on participation in these national FCR committees is unclear.

Federal government KI respondents (HRSDC, OGDs) were most aware of national FCR committees. Feedback was positive from these groups in terms of the various horizontal meetings that are held at the federal level including the DG Forum, FCRO-FCRP bilateral meetings, and the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) workshop. While most P/T key informants could not identify a national FCR committee and none mentioned the FPT workshop run by FCRP, P/T government respondents to the survey of end users were most likely to indicate that they sat on an FCR committee (although the number of P/Ts responding to the question was quite small).

The evaluation also found that over half of the respondents to the survey of end users of project information indicated that their organization was a member of a national FCR committee. As well, a large majority (91%) of these respondents indicated that the committee to which they belong is at least “somewhat useful” in addressing FCR challenges (with 61% indicating the committee is “very useful” and 30% indicating the committee is “somewhat useful”). There was also moderately high and broad attendance at FCR events as reported by end users (with at least 75% of respondents of all organization types indicating they had attended an FCR event).

Similarly, participation on national FCR committees was quite high among regulatory bodies in most funded occupations (3 of 5, all of which were originally targeted by the FCRP). However, all the non-funded occupations (4 of 4) also indicated this. Thus, the participation of the original three targeted occupations (nursing, engineering, physicians) suggests that the involvement of regulatory bodies in FCR issues at a national level can be secured with time. However, with the majority of respondents in all non-funded occupations also indicating participation, the impact of FCRP funding is unclear.

KI and case study interviewees were largely unable to cite FCR committees other than their FCRP-funded project's steering or advisory committee. According to the review of CA files, half of the FCRP funded projects developed a steering or advisory committee. Of these, over three-quarters could be considered pan-Canadian in that representation from a minimum of three jurisdictions was represented on the committees. This was accomplished either through the presence of national associations representing multiple jurisdictions, and/or representation from at least three P/T level organizations. Representation on committees often included representatives from varied organizations including universities, NGOs, employers, and immigrant serving agencies. Two examples of projects where committees were formed specifically to support the FCRP-funded project include the Database of Foreign Engineering Institutes (which included representatives from seven of 12 regulatory bodies on the committee), and Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council (CAMC) Prior Learning and Foreign Credential Assessment (which included representatives from the sector council, industry, government and educational institutions).

Summary for Immediate Intended Outcomes

There is a greater understanding among stakeholders and partners on FCR-related issues and possible solutions mainly among immediate stakeholders involved in the development of occupational or sector diagnostics⁴² and through participation in FCRP-funded projects that have contributed to events such as conferences, roundtables, and workshops. Whereas increased consensus, collaboration and commitment is occurring in part.

Increased promotion, knowledge sharing and transfer of best practices is occurring to some extent. Evidence of progress towards the achievement of this outcome is largely based on the number of projects specifically aimed at this outcome, as well as the results from the survey of end users of project information, in which awareness ranged from somewhat aware to very aware for the informational product for which the respondents were identified as end users by CA holders. From the contribution agreements reviewed, most included a plan for dissemination of the project products (e.g. tools, diagnostics, reports). However, there was very little information in them to confirm whether project products were disseminated. The dissemination approach most frequently identified in nearly all CAs was via websites of the CA holders. The survey of engineering firms suggests that awareness of FCRP project outputs is relatively low among employers. There was very limited awareness among many key informant respondent groups regarding the knowledge sharing that is taking place with FCRP funding.

There are many committees with national organization participation that deal with FCR that may be contributing to better national coordination among stakeholders and partners. However, the impact of FCRP on participation in these national FCR committees is unclear since the majority of respondents in all non-funded occupations also indicated participating in national FCR committees.

⁴² According to a continuum of progression outlined by the Program for addressing FCR issues, the diagnostic is an initial step in the process. Occupational or sector "diagnostics" are usually composed of a situational analysis and the development of recommendations for an occupation/sector.

4.2 Achievement of Medium-term Intended Outcomes

This section describes the results for the achievement of the medium-term outcomes. The intended medium-term FCRP outcomes are:

- Increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations.
- Standardization of pan-Canadian FCR processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors; and

Availability of Foreign Credential Assessment and Recognition Tools and Processes

While other methodologies were used to assess the availability of foreign credential assessment and recognition tools and processes, the occupational case studies were the main methodology to assess the extent to which intended intermediate program outcomes were achieved, as well as progress towards the intended longer-term program outcomes, especially in terms of the extent to which representatives from occupations reported they use FCR tools and processes developed with FCRP funding. Only regulated occupations which had been funded for at least one project related to the activity of the development of tools and processes to assess foreign credentials were selected. Of these, three occupations (physicians, engineers and nurses) comprised the three originally targeted and funded occupations at the outset of the program. The other two regulated occupations (medical laboratory and medical radiology technologists) were more recently targeted and funded. Besides funded occupations, information was also collected on four regulated occupations that did not receive FCRP funding (dentists, teachers, translators and psychologists) which served as a basis of comparison for the funded regulated occupations. This methodology consisted of key informant interviews with funding recipients (in the case of funded occupations), their partners and end-users and a survey of regulatory bodies representing both funded and non-funded occupations. In addition, one non-regulated occupation (information and communication technology) as well as a trade occupation (construction) were included in the case study methodology.

Based on a review of program files and project database, FCRP has made a limited number of investments in the development of tools and processes to assess credentials. For regulated occupations, the FCRP usually works with national professional associations to effect change in foreign credential assessment processes, who in turn are intended to effect change among regulatory bodies. According to the administrative data review, 32% of projects were expected to contribute to the FCRP outcome of increased awareness of tools and processes available for employers, regulators and immigrants to assess foreign credentials. Of these, 38% were for projects associated with the targeted occupations for FCRP. The balance included projects focused on non-occupation specific projects being generic in nature. The fact that well under half the projects that focused on increasing awareness of assessment tools and processes were in targeted occupations calls into question the approach for project selection. Further, over one-third (37%) of all projects

that were non-occupation specific went to national associations (mainly national professional bodies). This also calls into question the approach for project selection, seeing as this type of organization is the main vehicle through which the program operates in order to effect change in foreign credential occupational assessment tools and processes. More details regarding the project selection approach are presented below in Section 5.1.

Table 4.1 presents a list of assessment and recognition tools and processes funded by FCRP in the targeted occupations addressed by the case studies. Some of these tools/processes are still in progress.

Table 4.1 FCRP-funded Assessment Tools in Funded Case Study Occupations*		
Occupation	Main Outputs	Status
Physicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized process for verification of credentials Credential Registry 	Completed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item bank – 1000 questions. 5-7 forms of the self assessment made available to clients (including online) 	Completed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Medical Graduate (IMG) Database 	In Progress
Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a job matching and integration service 	In Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A database of foreign engineering degree programs that can be centrally maintained Protocols for the application of the database in the evaluation of International Engineering Graduates (IEGs) for licensure 	Completed
Medical Laboratory Technologists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot of modified Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process 	Completed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of online pilot test 100 question online self-assessment tool (FR & ENG) 	In Progress
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competency-based Assessment and Recognition Model 	In Progress
<p>* As it turned out, the medical laboratory technologist occupation, the nursing occupation and the construction trade, did not actually develop tools and processes to assess foreign credentials. This may speak to the problems with the coding used in the FCRP project database (discussed in more detail further in this report - Performance Measurement and Development of a Database) from which the selection of projects for the case studies was originally based.</p>		

The availability of tools and processes was largely unknown by key informant respondents (outside the case studies) except for respondents from the funded non-regulated occupation.

Based on the results of the case studies, there is very limited awareness of these tools and processes. The availability of tools and processes was largely unknown by key informant respondents except for respondents from the funded non-regulated occupation. Of the three regulated occupations to which funding for tool development was provided, according to the survey of regulatory bodies awareness was high in one occupation, namely

the physician occupation. The majority of regulatory bodies representing this occupation indicated they were very satisfied with the tools/processes. Awareness of tools was moderate among the medical laboratory technologist occupation and the engineering occupation. With respect to the physician occupation, the results are consistent with the program's phased approach for investments whereby early investments develop diagnostiques and recommendations, followed by investments that develop and disseminate tools and processes, and completed with investments that support the full implementation and usage of tools/processes. The moderate awareness among regulatory bodies representing the medical laboratory technologist occupation and the engineering occupation suggests that dissemination of these tools has not been adequate.

In non-FCRP funded occupations, there was a high awareness of FCR tools and processes among regulatory bodies. Little is known however about these tools/processes, as they were not developed with FCRP funding.

Respondents to survey of employers of engineering firms were not very aware of the specific processes and tools targeted to their occupation, although it should be noted that engineering firms were not a key target group for these products and tools (i.e. they benefit from being able to hire foreign trained individuals in the engineering field whose credentials are assessed by regulatory bodies but do not do the assessments themselves).

Standardization of FCR Processes and Tools

Key informants from all respondent groups were largely unable to provide evidence of progress towards the achievement of this outcome due to lack of awareness. Some respondents from each respondent group that did have an opinion believed that the level of standardization and the extent to which provinces and territories have adopted these practices and tools varies significantly by occupation.

The case studies illustrated that the standardization of processes and tools and the contribution of FCRP to this process varied substantially by occupation included in the case study methodology. Based on the review of program documentation and the project database, each occupation within the case studies funded at least one project that was aimed at improving standardization, and CA holders were of the view that progress had been made in this area. However, there is very limited evidence within the case study methodology to support this.

Based on a review of the nature of projects funded and the degree of standardization identified in case study interviews and documents, it can be said that greater movement towards standardization of assessment tools and processes was observed in the physician and engineering occupations, which were two of the three originally funded occupations. While nursing, which was also an originally funded occupation, has not made much

progress towards standardization.⁴³ Also, while the engineering occupation, the other originally funded occupation, has been funded for the development of assessment tools and processes, the survey of regulatory bodies indicated very limited awareness with no usage.

The survey of regulatory bodies raises questions about the impact of FCRP on the change in standardization over the past few years. Respondents in a majority of funded regulated occupations indicated that regulatory bodies in their occupation were more likely to be using similar foreign credential assessment and recognition processes as four years ago. The majority of respondents in all the non-funded regulated occupations had the same view.

The survey of employers in the engineering field did not provide much evidence of change in the standardization of processes and tools since a large majority of respondents could not answer because they simply did not know if there were changes or not. Approximately 22% of respondents believed that various regulatory bodies in their occupation were “somewhat more likely” or “much more likely” to use similar assessment and recognition processes as in other regulatory bodies.

Summary for Medium-Term Intended Outcomes

FCRP has made a number of investments in the development of FCR tools and processes to assess credentials, but there is limited awareness of them. According to the administrative data review, 32% of projects were expected to contribute to the FCRP outcome of increased awareness of tools and processes available for employers, regulators and immigrants to assess foreign credentials. Of these, 38% were for projects associated with the targeted occupations for FCRP. The fact that well under half of the projects that focused on increasing awareness of assessment tools and processes were in targeted occupations calls into question the approach for project selection. Further, over one-third (37%) of all projects that were non-occupation specific went to national associations (mainly national professional bodies). This also calls into question the approach for project selection, seeing as this type of organization is the main vehicle through which the program operates in order to effect change in occupational foreign credential assessment tools and processes.

The availability of tools and processes was largely unknown by most key informant respondents. Of the three regulated occupations to which funding for tool/processes development was provided, awareness was high in one occupation, namely the physician occupation. Awareness of tools and processes was moderate among the medical laboratory technologist occupation and the engineering occupation. In non-FCRP funded occupations, there was a high awareness of FCR tools and processes among regulatory bodies. These occupations consisted of dentists, teachers, translators and psychologists.

Greater movement towards standardization of assessment tools and processes was observed in the physician and engineering occupations, based on the tools and processes developed for this occupation with FCRP funding. There is evidence that standardization is occurring in non-funded occupations as well.

⁴³ It is important to note that the FCRP-funded projects in the nursing occupation were not focused on developing foreign credential assessment or recognition tools. Based on findings from the case study, additional work regarding competencies has occurred (i.e. not funded by FCRP) and the occupation is continuing dialogue around how to standardize while ensuring a consistent level of quality.

4.3 Achievement of Longer-term Intended Outcomes

This section examines the evaluation evidence that assessed progress towards the achievement of FCRP's longer-term outcomes since the inception of FCRP. As stated previously, given the timing of the evaluation in relation to program implementation (2004-05), the evaluation assessed only "progress" towards intended longer-term outcomes due to the challenges in achieving these outcomes within the four year time frame against which the evaluation was conducted. Rather, these outcomes can be more realistically achieved over a longer period.

The intended longer-term FCRP outcomes are:

- Increased use of tools and processes by relevant organizations to assess and recognize foreign-trained individuals, resulting from the efforts of the FCRP; and
- Reduced barriers to entry into the labour market by foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.

Use of tools and processes by relevant organizations to assess and recognize foreign-trained individuals

Apart from the physician occupation, there was no evidence to support the increased use of FCR foreign credential assessment processes and tools by relevant organizations as a result of FCRP efforts. Based on the survey of regulatory bodies for occupations which have received FCRP funding for tool and process development, regulatory bodies in the physician occupation indicated they have adopted the assessment tools/processes developed with FCRP funding. Further, many believed the tools and processes were very useful, relevant, easy to use and adaptable to their context. The regulatory bodies representing four non-FCRP funded occupations also use tools and processes to assess foreign credentials, in which all four indicated the tools they use are useful, relevant, easy to use and adaptable to their context. These four occupations consist of: dentists, teachers, translators and psychologists. It is difficult to indicate why this was the case. One theory could be that perhaps the FCRP has increased awareness of FCR issues in the broader community of regulated occupations, or that through FCRP-funding for the development of tools and processes in some regulated occupations, spillover is happening in non-funded occupations whereby they are engaging in this type of activity. Perhaps they were developed by the regulatory bodies themselves who responded to the survey, as opposed to a national association representing them which is the case with FCRP funding.

Apart from the above, nothing is known in terms of the extent to which there has been increased use of FCR assessment processes and tools by relevant organizations as a result of FCRP efforts. Most key informant respondents in interviews and case studies could not comment on the use of assessment processes and tools. A large majority of the CA holders were unable to provide an opinion. Furthermore, the majority of respondents could not identify the number or percentage of those who have utilized processes and tools developed as a result of FCRP efforts.

FCR Barriers to Labour Market Entry

When addressing reduced barriers to entry into the labour market by foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors, perceptions regarding progress towards reducing five specific barriers over the previous four years (since the inception of the program) were probed during interviews (of which three barriers are directly related to the principles supporting the programs' strategic outcome – fair and equitable treatment, coherency, and transparency):

- 1) Fair and equitable treatment of FTIs with respect to FCR processes, including accelerated processes;
- 2) Access to relevant information and appropriate services;
- 3) Coherency of FCR processes across Canada;
- 4) Transparency of FCR processes; and
- 5) A less complicated system (i.e. a simplified and less disconnected system).

Perceptions regarding the extent to which barriers have been reduced varied considerably between lines of evidence and among respondents within each line of evidence. They also varied considerably by specific barrier, with perceptions ranging along a spectrum where some progress has been made on some barriers to no progress has been made on any barriers.

Many key informant groups were not able to provide an opinion, with the exception of provincial/territorial representatives and those of national organizations, where perceptions were mixed. Most respondents representing national organizations felt that there has been progress with respect to the fair and equitable treatment of FTIs as well as some progress in coherency of FCR processes.

In the case studies, most CA holders believed their projects were contributing to reducing all barriers. However, CA partners and end-users generally believed less progress was made or did not know, with the exception of partners for the non-regulated profession and the trade, in which feedback was positive. Respondents in the survey of regulatory bodies representing funded occupations indicated some progress in reducing some barriers, such as those related to fairness, access to information and services and transparency.

Longer-term outcomes are those that are most removed from the influence of the FCRP, i.e. where the level of attribution is lowest. Thus, in this case, the general lack of awareness of the progress towards these outcomes is not surprising.

Most respondents in the survey of intended users of project information also believed progress had been made, with the exception of representatives from P/Ts and immigrant serving organizations (ISOs). For example, a large majority of the respondents to the survey of end users of project information perceived that progress had been made towards increasing access to relevant information and appropriate services and increasing the fairness and equity of the treatment of FTIs. With respect to the remaining barriers, a majority of the respondents felt that progress had been made in increasing transparency, simplifying the system and finally, increased coherency. Respondents to the survey of regulatory bodies in funded occupations generally felt there had been progress made on

all these barriers. There was limited evidence to link these changes to the impact of FCRP. In fact, regulatory body survey respondents from non-funded occupations also perceived that some progress had been made over the past four years on these barriers, particularly in relation to access to information, coherency of processes, and transparency. The opinions of ISO representatives are noteworthy, since they are advocates of immigrants in general and would be considered to be very in tune with the experiences of foreign trained individuals who wish to have their credentials assessed and recognized.

Due to the low numbers of respondents with sufficient experience with the FCRP, there was no information from the survey of employers on the impacts or role of the FCRP in reducing barriers to labour market entry for foreign trained engineers. In terms of the broader FCR process, approximately one fifth to one quarter of the respondents reported that some progress had been made to the reduction of FCR barriers to labour market entry for foreign trained engineers. Some examples of progress cited were access to relevant information and appropriate services to go through the various steps of the foreign credential assessment and recognition process for engineers; various regulatory bodies were somewhat more likely or much more likely to be using similar foreign credential assessment and recognition processes for engineers as four years earlier; and the recognition process for engineers had become somewhat more or much more transparent as well as somewhat or much more fair and equitable over the past four years. Few (11%) employer respondents believed that over the past four years the foreign credential assessment and recognition process for engineers had become somewhat more or much more simplified.

Summary for the Evaluation Issue – Success

Progress towards Longer-Term Intended Outcomes

Given the timing of the evaluation in relation to program implementation (2004-05), the evaluation assessed only “progress” towards intended longer-term outcomes due to the challenges in achieving these outcomes within the four year time frame against which the evaluation was conducted. Rather, these outcomes can be more realistically achieved over a longer period.

Apart from the physician occupation, there was no evidence to support the increased use of FCR foreign credential assessment processes and tools by relevant organizations as a result of FCRP efforts. Most key informant respondents in interviews and case studies could not comment on the use of assessment processes and tools. Based on the survey of regulatory bodies for occupations which have received FCRP funding for tool development, only regulatory bodies in the physician occupation indicated they have adopted the assessment tools/processes developed with FCRP funding. It is important to note that the regulatory bodies representing four non-FCRP funded occupations also use tools and processes to assess foreign credentials.

In the case of the reduction of FCR barriers to labour market entry for FTIs in targeted occupations and sectors, various lines of evidence produced different results with no clear consistent direction. However, representatives from P/Ts and immigrant serving organizations (ISO) did not believe any progress had been made. The opinions of the ISO representatives are noteworthy, since they are advocates of immigrants in general and would be considered to be very in tune with the experience of foreign trained individuals who wish to have their credentials assessed and recognized. There was also limited evidence to link this outcome to the impact of FCRP.

4.4 Other Findings Related to Success

When asked to comment on the unintended effects of the program, the large majority of key informants identified effects which were in fact intended program outcomes. Some unintended outcomes mentioned by HRSDC respondents included some key lessons learned by the FCR Division, including learning more about the factors influencing labour market outcomes for newcomers and the shifting emphasis from credential recognition to qualification recognition. Some OGD respondents suggested that employers were more open to hiring qualified workers that had not been educated in Canada. A positive unintended benefit identified in the case studies was the use of self-assessment tools, and other tools, intended to be used by foreign trained individuals, that were also being used by Canadian trained individuals.

5. Findings Related to Foreign Credential Recognition Program Cost-Effectiveness

Findings related to cost-effectiveness explored the extent to which:

- The overall design of the program is appropriate; that is, the program as it currently exists, and considering the budget allocated to it, is the most appropriate way for the federal government to find FCR solutions in Canada;
- FCRP duplicates or displaces funding from other programs at the national or provincial levels; and
- Progress has been made against the recommendations listed in the FCRP formative evaluation conducted in 2005.

5.1 Overall Design/Approach to Finding FCR Solutions in Canada

Generally, most respondents from federal and P/T governments and most CA holder and project partner respondents in case studies and interviews felt that the FCRP represented an appropriate way for the federal government to find FCR solutions in Canada.⁴⁴

One of the most commonly cited aspects about the program that respondents considered to be particularly appropriate was the program's efforts to engage the right players (including industry) and to support existing national occupation-specific organizations that are most knowledgeable of what is required and who are more able to make changes to processes. The use of CAs as a mechanism to undertake projects was also considered enabling and helped to develop internal organizational capacity.

It was also mentioned that the FCRP has helped diagnose FCR-related needs and highlight potential solutions. The program was recognized by many as having raised awareness about FCR issues in Canada among key players.

Despite the complex jurisdictional issues facing the program, many respondents applauded the FCRP for playing an appropriate role, particularly one of leadership, and for its work in the development of partnerships, particularly with P/Ts and other federal departments (e.g. through the hosting of the FPT workshop, bi-lateral meetings with the FCRO, the DG Forum).

⁴⁴ Note that respondents were not asked to comment on the extent to which the current program represents the most cost-effective way to find FCR solutions in Canada, but on the appropriateness of the design overall.

Areas for Improvement

While the overall finding from key informants and case study respondents is that the program is well designed, there were many suggestions for improvement. Many of these suggestions in fact emphasize program activities that are already occurring. The feedback, though, is for these activities to occur more often or with a higher profile. For example, many respondents in both the key informant interviews and case studies suggested that there should be a greater focus on the development of tools and processes and less effort spent on conducting research. As well, case study respondents in both funded and non-funded regulated occupations would like to see more organizing mechanisms that would encourage collaboration and consensus-building among the key stakeholders.

Another key area highlighted where the program was currently active but could improve was in conducting consultations and developing closer relationships with certain stakeholders (partnerships was also a theme highlighted in best practices from the literature review). Specifically, better and more engagement of ISOs was cited by many interview respondents including those from federal government, and non-regulated occupations. Regulatory bodies from both funded and non-funded occupations want to see more consultation and better collaboration with them and their counterparts. Also, P/Ts and respondents from non-regulated occupations would like to see closer relationships between the program and P/Ts. Finally, some federal government respondents would like to see increased dialogue between federal government departments to facilitate the development of a “federal force” to address FCR-related issues and identify solutions.

Some areas that are not currently addressed by the program were also highlighted for improvement. Many respondents from both the case studies and interviews felt that employers and FTIs would benefit from more attention from the program. This was mentioned particularly by respondents from non-regulated/trade occupations, but also by a few respondents from regulated occupations. The provision of direct services to FTIs (such as bridge-to-work interventions or apprenticeships/internships) was suggested. However, this is outside the objectives and activities of the program and falls within other federal and P/T jurisdictions.

Also, suggestions regarding the types of projects that are funded were made. In particular, a suggestion for increased funding for project sustainability and funding for replicating successful projects in other communities/jurisdictions was made by CA holders in both regulated and non-regulated/ non-specific occupations (via interviews and case studies). P/T and national organizations also mentioned this suggestion. Also, a few key informants suggested there should be more emphasis on funding projects in non-regulated occupations.

Some key informant interview respondents, particularly those representing non-regulated occupations, suggested that the program should take a competencies approach rather than credential approach. This suggestion is also supported by best practices revealed by the literature review.

Literature Review

The literature review identified a number of possible best practices and/or alternative models for the program (please refer to Appendix D for a more detailed description of the findings regarding international FCR practices and programs). A review of FCR processes in other countries including Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, revealed that some of these countries have been actively addressing the issue of FCR through various mechanisms, including changes to their immigration policies. Some countries (Australia) require a pre-assessment of foreign qualifications prior to immigration, as well as minimum language proficiency requirements, which are intended to enable early employment. There are also bonus points for other items, such as a job offer, having an occupation in demand and being a former international student in Australia. Australia is generally regarded as the world leader in FCR, and has FCR issues similar to those in Canada, which is of interest considering each is a federal country. Each Australian state has a Foreign Qualification Unit which conducts FCR assessments. In addition, Australian overseas migration agents exist in high immigration countries to provide information and referral services (this is also an activity conducted by Canada's Foreign Credential Referrals Office housed in the Department of Citizen and Immigration).

In New Zealand, pre-assessment of foreign qualifications is not mandatory. However, a greater number of points are awarded to prospective immigrants if this has already been undertaken. Additional points are also awarded if the prospective immigrant was a former student in New Zealand, the occupation is in demand as evidenced by a Skills Shortage list, and has a job offer. This point system was implemented in 2003 to increase the labour market participation and outcomes of skilled immigrants. There has been increased emphasis on temporary migration (e.g. as a student first) in order to acquire qualifications for permanent migration. A central credential agency, The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), compares foreign credentials with those of New Zealand and issues a non-binding pre-assessment report. If an application for permanent migration is made, a formal Qualifications Assessment Report is issued.

In the European Union there is free mobility of professionals and tradespeople across countries. However there is a different approach to the recognition of credentials between member countries of the EU where local licensing and certification procedures can inhibit such mobility. FCR is done country-by-country although the EU recognizes the common problem of FCR. The EU recently introduced the Europass, which is an individual portfolio that clearly indicates a person's skills, qualifications and languages, so they can be easily understood throughout Europe.

Many countries have moved away from credential recognition and towards "competency," "skills" and "employment" assessments. A competency-based assessment considers an individual's ability to apply particular knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to the standard of performance as opposed to judging skill based on his/her educational or professional degrees or designations. Direct services to FTIs also feature prominently via bridging programs, internships/co-ops/mentoring, and information on credentials and job prospects. Another main area of best practice is the development of partnerships between departments,

jurisdictions, and countries. For example, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a single pre-migration off-shore assessment process to meet skilled migration and licensing purposes in trade occupations in six priority skills shortage occupations for immigrants from specific countries. Often, partnerships are recognized formally through Mutual Recognition Agreements. Foreign credential recognition is also housed in different government departments depending on the country, e.g. immigration or education departments. In Australia, it is housed in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Given that the FCRP is not involved in designing immigration policy, HRSDC would have to engage in negotiations with Citizenship and Immigration in order to effect changes that are in line with the features listed above.

5.2 Duplication/Displacement by FCRP Funding

Duplication

The document review noted almost two dozen federal programs that contribute to the development of systemic enhancements for the integration of immigrants. Other lines of evidence including the literature review also noted other programs that are involved in “similar functions” as the FCRP, including P/T programs, and programs run by OGDs including CIC and Health Canada. However, of these programs there appear to be only two, according to the evidence from the literature and document reviews, that are related to credential recognition or assessment in some way. As a result, they could be judged to be “similar” to FCRP. These two programs are the Foreign Credential Referrals Office implemented by CIC, and the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative with Health Canada. Each of these programs, and the degree of overlap with FCRP, is described below.

The **FCRO**’s objectives are to provide prospective immigrants and newcomers to Canada with information about the Canadian labour market and credential assessment and recognition processes; and to provide path-finding & referral services to help individuals connect to the appropriate assessment bodies, and information to employers to help increase their awareness of the processes and benefits of hiring internationally trained individuals. It does this by providing orientation sessions in several foreign countries with high numbers of immigrants to Canada, and by providing information at Service Canada Centres in Canada and via the FCRO website. The FCRO is described as responding to Canada’s gaps in foreign credential information-sharing, referral capacity, and institutional FCR capacity, by working closely with government partners, provinces and territories, employers and stakeholders.

The document review identified that some FCRP outcomes are linked directly to the operations of the FCRO. In particular, it appears there is a high potential for overlap between the FCRO and FCRP in activities and outcomes related to partnership development, engagement of stakeholders, and enhanced national FCR coordination (including exchanging best practices). The risk assessment contained in the FCRO RMAF/RBAF does highlight risks pertaining to partnership management. However, the risks are not worded in such a

way to understand the specific implications if they were to be realized. Feedback from key informants from HRSDC and OGDs (including CIC) indicated there are many mechanisms in place to minimize duplication (such as regular meetings, ongoing dialogue and open information sharing) between these programs. Therefore, the degree of overlap that is actually occurring is not clear based on findings in the evaluation. However, there are opportunities for greater clarity regarding roles and responsibilities in the areas of partnership development, engagement of stakeholders, and enhanced national FCR coordination (including exchanging best practices).

The **IEHPI** aims to reduce barriers so that a greater number of internationally educated doctors, nurses and other health professionals can be assessed and integrated into the Canadian health care system. The Initiative has been funding various programs and projects since 2005-06. Agreements have been signed with some P/Ts (e.g. Manitoba, BC, Ontario) to develop and implement specific projects in their regions.

Many of the projects under this initiative indicated similar objectives as those of the FCRP (e.g., increased standardization of testing across regulatory bodies). In fact, another consideration in assessing potential overlap is that some of the recipients of IEHPI funding also have received FCRP funding (e.g., Medical Council of Canada). However, overlap between the IEHPI and FCRP can be characterized as minimal based on feedback from HRSDC and OGD (including Health Canada) respondents which revealed a high degree of coordination, as above, including ongoing dialogue and open information sharing.

At a more **general level**, since 2003, HRSDC has been co-chairing an interdepartmental DG Forum, with CIC as the other co-chair. The DG Forum was formed to focus on immigrant labour market integration. The governance structure of the DG Forum has been adjusted to improve the coordination between HRSDC, Health Canada and CIC.

Most respondents did not perceive a high level of overlap between the programs they identified as “similar” to the FCRP, but rather considered the programs to be complementary. Respondent groups that were more likely to perceive overlap between FCRP and other programs were regulatory survey respondents, and respondents to the survey of intended end users of project information (particularly ISAs). Thus, the findings indicate that while CA holders and key informants do not perceive duplication, respondents who were more removed, and considered to be end-users to some or another, tend to perceive duplication.

Displacement

Very few of the FCRP-funded projects received resources, which were mostly in-kind resources, from other sources. Where resources were received from other sources, the other source was most often reported to be the host organization (i.e. if a national organization received resources from a source other than FCRP, it was from its own organization). When asked directly, CA holder key informants believed that FCRP funding was complementary to other sources and did not have a displacement effect, i.e. many organizations would not take on projects without FCRP funding.

5.3 Progress Against Recommendations in FCRP Formative Evaluation

Mostly, only respondents representing the HRSDC FCRP program were asked about the progress made regarding the recommendations in the formative evaluation. Progress was explored in the following three areas:

- a) Method for selecting occupations for investment;
- b) Clarification of logic model and performance measurement indicators and implementation of a database; and
- c) Sharing of project results.

a) Method for Selecting Occupations for Investments

At the time of the formative evaluation, the FCRP did not have a definitive means of determining what professions/occupations to focus on in the future. Since that time the method for selecting occupations for investment has been refined and additional criteria are now used in the selection process. More specifically, according to the document review⁴⁵, FCRP developed and implemented the Selection Matrix. This document states that this is an analytically sound process to support the FCRP's project selection process and to guide FCR program investments. This process evaluates potential projects (occupations and/or sectors) by cross referencing the availability of skilled immigrants (i.e. supply) with their demand in the labour market and assessing the readiness of the occupation's institutions to tackle FCR (e.g. presence of a national regulatory/professional organization, job prospects, stakeholder buy-in, complexity of activities and long-term employment prospects). The new selection matrix approach:

- Continues with original process activities;
- Utilizes selection criteria based on labour market demand, supply and level of risk;
- Establishes a strategic response to identified labour market requirements;
- Builds on departmental collaboration with CIC and other departments as required; and
- Includes other qualitative data with respect to the readiness of the sector.

The large majority of those who are most familiar with the process (i.e. HRSDC respondents) felt the new approach (including the Selection Matrix) was effective.

⁴⁵ HRSDC, FCRP Presentation "FCR Program's Investment Selection Process: A Strategy for Identifying Future Occupational Investments."

According to the document review,⁴⁶ when considering the key occupations that are demonstrated to be showing signs of excess demand and potential labour shortages, the process for targeting FCRP investments has been met with some success. In terms of the coverage of occupations, the targeted occupations account for approximately two-thirds of those occupations that show evidence of labour shortages. Almost all of the regulated occupations that are showing signs of excess demand (93%) are being targeted by the FCRP. In comparison, only 50% of the non-regulated occupations that are experiencing shortages are being targeted by the FCRP. Therefore, with respect to non-regulated occupations, the process for targeting FCRP investments has met with less success. It should also be noted that not all targeted occupations are funded.

In terms of the coverage of skilled immigrants, according to the document review, by end of fiscal year 2007-08, the FCRP's total investments targeted 53% of the skilled immigrant labour market – a relatively large proportion.

It should also be noted that a large proportion of the project funding supports projects that are not occupation-specific. Of the 96 CAs reviewed, 43 were not clearly specific to any occupational group. This funding included projects that covered a broad spectrum of issues related to FCR, e.g. the development of resources for FTIs in all occupations (e.g. Newcomer Dayplanner), engagement of local communities, and Essential Skills. While these projects may provide some benefit, there is concern in that they may not be leading, in a timely manner, to the achievement of the program's intended medium- and longer-term program outcomes (in the logic model), such as increased availability of and use of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations, and standardization of pan-Canadian FCR processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors.

Areas for Improvement

There was not overwhelming evidence suggesting that the process for selecting occupations is not effective or requires a major overhaul. Minor adjustments were suggested by some respondents, such as access to more up-to-date data, involvement of the P/Ts in the selection of occupations and even greater alignment with the list of occupations included in the CIC Minister's Instructions related to the selection of skilled immigrants for entry to Canada.

However, the fact that only 50% of the non-regulated occupations that are experiencing shortages are being targeted by the FCRP does suggest that greater effort be placed on focusing FCRP investments in targeted non-regulated occupations. In addition, the fact that close to half of CAs funded were not directed to any specific occupational group suggests the need for greater alignment between funded projects and intended intermediate and longer-term program outcomes.

⁴⁶ Strategic Policy and Research Directorate, HRSDC, "Looking Ahead: A Ten-Year Outlook for the Canadian Labour Market 2006-2015."

b) Performance Measurement and Development of a Database

The formative evaluation indicated that FCRP needs to provide a more precise definition of each of its performance indicators. Also little performance data had been generated. Therefore, it recommended that procedures be put in place to ensure that performance data are routinely collected and that these data are routinely used by management.

According to the document review and HRSDC interviewees, since the formative evaluation the program logic model and performance measurement indicators have been revised. In addition, the program has developed and implemented two databases to support performance measurement activities: one for FCRP projects and another for managing stakeholder consultations. These two databases are in Microsoft Access and allow for tailored queries to track projects by status, date, province, organization type, project activity, occupation and funding amount. Tailored queries can also be made based on outputs and outcomes in the program's logic model. However, these tailored queries do not reflect the most recent iteration of the logic model and performance measurement indicators.

Areas for Improvement

Some program personnel indicated that further work is being done to improve the databases, although the specifics regarding the additional work were not provided.

These databases were used in the administrative data and file review methodology to address the evaluation questions. However, a number of structural and coding issues with both databases were observed during the analysis of this data. For example, depending on the type of query, different aggregate numbers would be produced. This is due in part to inconsistent coding, e.g. of organizations. Also, that outputs and outcomes do not reflect the current logic model and performance measurement indicators leads to confusion, so it is recommended to update the database in this regard. The inclusion of fields that would capture which outputs and outcomes had actually been achieved (based on the final reports of projects) is also recommended. In addition, there is no breakdown of projects that are non-occupation specific. Since these projects comprise almost half of all projects, it would be beneficial to include database fields that give an indication of their scope and nature.

c) Mechanisms to Share Project Results

The formative evaluation indicated the FCRP should develop ways to increase the sharing of project results. Some mechanisms are now in place for the program to share the results of funded projects. A list of completed projects can now be found on the FCRP website, including links to CA recipients' websites, but not the FCRP-funded tool necessarily. It was reported during interviews that an improved web-based approach to sharing project results is in progress at this point, but no further details were available

Other specific examples of progress provided by FCRP program personnel during interviews regarding the sharing of project results included: sharing of results consistently with the FCRO, the Sector Council Program, and at the annual FPT workshop, as well as at FCRP-funded FCR conferences. Respondents from OGDs were asked to share their

views about the extent to which FCRP has a system or process to facilitate the sharing of project results. Feedback was not consistent, Some indicated they were aware of the DG Forum, the Working in Canada Tool and FCRP-funded conferences. Others indicated they were not aware of any mechanism at all and specifically mentioned that best practices could be better disseminated and that sharing of project results could be strengthened.

Areas for Improvement

While there is a requirement for every project application to include a dissemination plan, there is no mechanism in place to monitor the extent to which the plan is fully implemented. The project database only collects information insofar as whether a project application included the project activity of disseminating project information.

There is interest in the improved sharing of project results. The full implementation of a web-based mechanism for sharing project results would respond to this need.

Summary for the Evaluation Issue – Cost-Effectiveness

Design of program

Most interview respondents were of the opinion that the FCRP is an appropriate way for the federal government to find FCR solutions in Canada. It is appropriate insofar as it engages stakeholders and supports existing national occupation-specific organizations. It was also believed that CAs are a useful mechanism to undertake projects that enable organizations to develop and/or strengthen their capacity.

There were nonetheless many suggestions for improvement, some of which were not in fact suggestions for new features per se but for strengthening certain existing features and others which were suggestion for new features. Suggestions for strengthening certain existing features consisted of the following: having a greater focus on the development of tools and processes and less effort spent on conducting research; the creation of more organizing mechanisms that would encourage collaboration and consensus-building among the key stakeholders (this was also stressed non-funded regulated occupations); developing closer relationships and conducting consultations with certain stakeholders specifically with regulatory bodies and ISOs (regulatory bodies from both funded and non-funded occupations want to see more consultation and better collaboration with them and their P/T counterparts); and increased dialogue between federal government departments to facilitate the development of a “federal force” to address FCR-related issues and identify solutions.

Many evaluation participants felt that employers would benefit from more attention from the program, including more funding. This was mentioned particularly by respondents from non-regulated/trade occupations, but also by evaluation participants from the regulated occupations. These respondents also suggested the program take a “competencies” approach rather than “credential” approach. Many interview respondents from all categories suggested increasing funding for project sustainability and funding for replicating successful projects in other communities/jurisdictions.

Design of program – best practices from literature review

The literature review revealed that some countries have been actively addressing the issue of FCR through various mechanisms, including changes to their immigration policies. For instance, Australia, which is generally regarded as the world leader in FCR and has FCR issues similar to

those in Canada, requires a pre-assessment of foreign qualifications prior to immigration, as well as minimum language proficiency requirements. These features have improved the employment outcomes of foreign trained individuals. In New Zealand, pre-assessment of foreign qualifications is not mandatory. However, a greater number of points are awarded to prospective immigrants if this has already been undertaken. Additional points are also awarded if the prospective immigrant was a former student in New Zealand, the occupation is in demand as evidenced by a Skills Shortage list, and has a job offer. The European Union recently introduced the Europass, which is an individual portfolio that clearly indicates a person's skills, qualifications and languages, so they can be easily understood throughout Europe. Re-branding the program towards "competencies" and away from "credentials" was also suggested by the evidence, which is consistent with the findings from evaluation participants above.

Program duplication

Of the many similar programs and initiatives identified in the evaluation, only the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) implemented by CIC, and the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative (IEHPI) with Health Canada were deemed to be sufficiently similar to warrant an in-depth analysis. The analysis revealed that these programs are largely complementary and that duplication is minimized via close working relationships with FCRP. With respect to the FCRO, however, there are opportunities for greater clarity regarding roles and responsibilities in the areas of partnership development, engagement of stakeholders, and enhanced national FCR coordination.

Progress in implementing recommendations in formative evaluation

The program has made significant progress with the recommendations in the formative evaluation. An approach to the selection of occupations for targeting investments has been implemented which matches occupations in demand with the labour supply of skilled immigrants.⁴⁷ There is concern however with the current mix of investments. The targeted occupations account for approximately two-thirds of those occupations that show evidence of labour shortages. Almost all of the regulated occupations that are showing signs of excess demand (93%) are being targeted. In comparison, only 50% of the non-regulated occupations that are experiencing shortages are being targeted. Therefore, with respect to non-regulated occupations, the process for targeting FCRP investments has met with less success. Further, and of greater concern, is the fact that a large proportion (47%) of project funding supports projects that are not occupation-specific.⁴⁸ While these projects may provide some benefit, there is concern in that they may not be leading, in a timely manner, to the achievement of the program's intended medium- and longer-term program outcomes (in the logic model), such as increased availability of and use of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations, and standardization of pan-Canadian FCR processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors.

The logic model and performance measurement indicators were updated. In addition, two databases were created. However some weaknesses exist with coding. Some progress has also been made towards the sharing of project results. However, some improvements are required. The full implementation of a planned web-based mechanism for sharing project results would respond to this need in part.

⁴⁷ It should also be noted that not all targeted occupations are funded. Some are placed in consideration for future funding.

⁴⁸ Of the 96 CAs reviewed, 43 were not clearly specific to any occupational group.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Key Findings and Conclusions

Relevance and Rationale

The FCRP is consistent with Government of Canada priorities.

FCRP supports HRSDC priorities by contributing to the Department's strategic outcome of "enhanced Canadian productivity and participation through efficient and inclusive labour markets, competitive workplaces, and access to learning". The program is also consistent with federal government priorities, in particular with the Advantage Canada economic plan, which stresses the importance of welcoming more immigrants who are most likely to succeed in the Canadian economy. Improving the integration of skilled immigrants into the labour market is viewed by the plan as a key element to promote a strong economy.

Based on the evidence, there is a continued need for the program.

The literature review confirmed that a key need of foreign trained individuals is to have their credentials and experience fairly and equitably assessed. The main obstacle encountered by foreign-trained individuals is in the "discounting", or non-recognition, of their credentials (mainly education) and experience (mainly employment), which is a result of real quality differences, as well as difficulties in assessing foreign credentials. The literature review also described the proactive engagement of Australia, New Zealand, the European Union and the United Kingdom in addressing foreign credential recognition issues, indicating the importance of similar activities in Canada in order to remain competitive in attracting skilled immigrants.

Most stakeholders believe that an appropriate role for the federal government in addressing foreign credential recognition-related issues is in "coordinating", "facilitating" and "supporting".

Most stakeholders believe that the most appropriate roles for the federal government in addressing foreign credential recognition-related issues include a "coordinating", "facilitating" and "supporting" role, i.e. coordinating key players and initiatives and supporting organizations to address the issue of foreign credential recognition at a national level.

There was a range of perceptions by evaluation respondents in terms of the identification of needs in the foreign credential recognition process and whether the FCRP is meeting those needs, with some indicating the FCRP is consistent with those needs and others indicating the FCRP is not consistent with those needs.

Evaluation respondents representing a range of stakeholders⁴⁹ were asked to identify what they perceived to be the needs of each category of stakeholder in the foreign credential recognition process and whether those needs are being met by the program. Responses fell into three main categories: a) Some of the identified needs were consistent with the program mandate and activities where it was also believed these needs were being met by the program; b) Some of the identified needs were consistent with the program mandate and activities but it was believed these needs were not being met by the program; and c) Some of the identified needs were not consistent with the program mandate.

For instance, many respondents in both regulated and non-regulated sectors perceived that the needs of stakeholders, such as employers and regulatory bodies, are consistent with the objectives and activities of the program, such as the development and support of partnerships to understand and address foreign credential recognition issues and engagement of all levels of government on foreign credential recognition issues. However, it was also believed that that more work could be done to better engage employers and regulatory bodies. It was believed that funded projects could more closely align with employers' needs, such as providing employers with more information concerning cultural training and integrating foreign-trained individuals into the workplace. Regulatory bodies appear to have needs with respect to understanding foreign credential recognition and have practical difficulties in the assessment process. Improvements would be beneficial to meet the overall needs of regulatory bodies, especially in light of the FCRP's intended intermediate and longer-term program outcomes of "increased availability and use of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations."

The most commonly cited needs identified by stakeholders in relation to foreign trained individuals included language training, bridging programs, cultural awareness and information about foreign credential recognition before arriving in Canada, which are all inconsistent with the objectives and activities of the FCRP. The FCRP does not include the provision of direct service to foreign trained individuals. Rather, foreign trained individuals are considered ultimate beneficiaries of FCRP-funded projects to improve assessment and recognition processes. The needs identified for the key stakeholder groups did not vary a great deal between occupations.

⁴⁹ Representatives from other federal government departments; provincial/territorial governments; national professional associations and organizations; sector councils; regulatory bodies, educational institutions or organizations; and non-governmental organizations.

Success

a) Short-term intended program outcomes

Short-term intended program outcome #1 - Increased understanding, consensus, collaboration and commitment among stakeholders and partners on issues and potential solutions related to foreign credential recognition

There is greater understanding among stakeholders and partners on issues related to foreign credential recognition and possible solutions, mainly among immediate stakeholders involved in the development of occupational or sector diagnostiques⁵⁰ and through participation in FCRP-funded projects that have contributed to events such as conferences, roundtables, and workshops. Apart from the occupations under review in the case studies, increased consensus, collaboration and commitment is occurring in part.

Achievement of this outcome appears to be driven by the conduct of FCRP-funded diagnostic studies and participation in FCRP-funded projects that have contributed to events such as conferences, roundtables, and workshops national in scope with attendance by multiple levels of government, and national and provincial/territorial non-governmental organizations.

Short-term intended program outcome #2 - Increased promotion, knowledge sharing and transfer of best practices in developing Pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes

The program has engaged in activities, and has funded activities, each of which have contributed to an increase in awareness of issues related to foreign credential recognition.

The program has engaged in a number of activities that have contributed to greater awareness of issues related to foreign credential recognition. Specifically, this has occurred through FCRP stimulation of foreign credential recognition related dialogue with multiple levels of government and stakeholders. As well, through the funding of research projects (i.e. diagnostiques), awareness of foreign credential recognition related issues has been increased, particularly among project stakeholders. Similarly, by supporting events aimed at sharing information and best practices related to foreign credential recognition, awareness has increased primarily among event participants. Lastly, results from the Survey of Intended End Users of Project Information, a survey used to gauge level of awareness of informational products (e.g. reports resources) produced with FCRP funding and reportedly shared or disseminated with end users, indicated awareness levels ranging from somewhat aware to very aware.⁵¹

⁵⁰ According to a continuum of progression outlined by the Program for addressing FCR issues, the diagnostic is an initial step in the process. Occupational or sector “diagnostiques” are usually composed of a situational analysis and the development of recommendations for an occupation/sector.

⁵¹ These results were based on a question in the survey of end-users of project information about the level of awareness of specific informational products that were reportedly sent to survey respondents, wherein there were three response choices: “very aware”, “somewhat aware” or “not aware”. Each choice was assigned a definition which was explained to respondents, i.e. “very aware” was defined as *heard of it; have reviewed it or used it*; “somewhat aware” was defined as *heard of it; have not reviewed or used it*; and “not aware” was defined as *not heard of it*.

The evaluation found that active dissemination mechanisms (such as workshops, presentations at conferences, articles in newsletters) are more effective than passive mechanisms, such as posting information on websites which is what most funding recipients identified as their main intended method of dissemination.

Short-term intended program outcome #3 - Enhanced national coordination among stakeholders and partners on foreign credential recognition

In terms of the degree of national coordination, there are many committees with participation by national level organizations that deal with foreign credential recognition, which consist mainly of FCRP-funded project steering committees. Participation in national level committees that deal with foreign credential recognition is also occurring in non-funded occupations.

Approximately one-half of the FCRP-funded projects had formed steering committees or advisory committees to assist with and provide guidance for the FCRP project and over three-quarters of these were pan-Canadian. National level committees exist in both funded and non-funded occupations. Few⁵² interview respondents were aware of national level committees, with the exception of HRSDC and other government department interview respondents who were able to identify national level committees that they either created or of which they are a member.

b) Medium-term intended program outcomes

Medium-term intended program outcome #1 – Increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations

The FCRP contributed towards an increase in the availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations in targeted occupations and sectors. Of the three regulated occupations to which funding for tool development was provided in which projects had been completed, awareness was high among regulatory bodies in one occupation, namely the physician occupation. Awareness of tools was moderate in the other two occupations, namely the medical laboratory technologist occupation and the engineering occupation.

According to the administrative data review,⁵³ 42% of all funded projects were identified as having the output of foreign credential recognition tools and processes. Of these, 45% (19) were projects that were identified with occupations targeted by the FCRP. These projects are occurring in both regulated and non-regulated occupations. With respect to regulated occupations, the program usually works with national professional associations

⁵² With respect to responses obtained from the key informant interviews, the following rating scale was used: “all/almost all” reflected the views and opinions of 90% or more of the key informants in the group; “large majority” = 75% to 89%; “majority/most” = 50% to 74%; “some” = 25% to 49%; and “a few” = at least two respondents but less than 25%. This scale is also located in the Executive Summary as well as *Section 2 – Evaluation Methods* of this report (page 9). When combining the results from different interview groups, sometimes the word “many” is used which means “some” respondents from each interview group combined.

⁵³ One of the findings in this evaluation was the inconsistency of coding projects in the FCRP administrative database. For instance, with respect to foreign credential recognition “tools and processes”, there are three different figures depending on whether it is coded as an activity, output or outcome. The results are 21%, 42% and 32% respectively.

to effect change in foreign credential assessment tools and processes, who in turn are intended to effect change among regulatory bodies. For the non-regulated occupations, the program works mainly with sector councils to develop assessment tools and processes. The availability of tools and processes for both regulated and non-regulated occupations was largely unknown by most key informant respondents.

While other methodologies were used to assess the availability of foreign credential assessment and recognition tools and processes, the occupational case studies consisted of the main methodology to assess awareness and use of them. The case studies included five FCRP- funded regulated occupations and four non-funded regulated occupations which served as a basis of comparison. Of the funded occupations, three (physicians, engineers and nurses) comprised the three originally targeted and funded occupations at the outset of the program. The other two regulated occupations (medical laboratory and medical radiology technologists) were more recently targeted and funded. The four regulated occupations that did not receive FCRP funding consisted of dentists, teachers, translators and psychologists. One component of the case study methodology consisted of a survey of regulatory bodies. Of the three regulated occupations to which funding for tool development was provided in which projects had been completed, awareness was high among regulatory bodies in one occupation, namely the physician occupation. Awareness of tools was moderate in the other two occupations, namely the medical laboratory technologist occupation and the engineering occupation.⁵⁴

Medium-term intended program outcome #2 - Increased standardization of Pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors

Greater movement towards standardization of assessment tools and processes was observed in the physician and engineering occupations, based on the tools and processes developed for these occupations with FCRP funding.

That these occupations are two of the originally three funded occupations (nursing is the other) and that they have received funding for multiple projects, including diagnostiques, suggests that this phased approach can contribute to the achievement of the intended program outcome related to increased standardization. On the other hand, the nursing occupation has not engaged in any FCRP-funded tool development projects. As well, there was evidence that standardization is occurring in the four non-funded occupations that were included in this evaluation. Forty-seven percent of FCRP project funding went to non-occupation specific projects.

⁵⁴ These results were based on a question in the survey of regulatory bodies about the level of awareness of specific tools and processes developed with FCRP funding, which used a rating scale wherein respondents were provided with three response choices: “very aware”, “somewhat aware” or “not aware”. Each choice was assigned a definition which was explained to respondents, i.e. “very aware” was defined as *heard of it; have reviewed*; “somewhat aware” was defined as *heard of it; have not reviewed or used it*; and “not aware” was defined as *not heard of it*. Therefore, high awareness means that most respondents for a given occupation indicated very aware, and moderate awareness means most respondents indicated somewhat aware.

c) Longer-term intended program outcomes⁵⁵

As mentioned at the outset, given the timing of the evaluation in relation to program implementation (2004-05), the measurement of impacts and success focused on the intended immediate and medium-term outcomes of the program. With respect to intended longer-term program outcomes, the evaluation assessed only “progress” towards these outcomes due to the challenges in achieving them within the four year time frame against which the evaluation was conducted. The likelihood of achieving these outcomes can be more realistically achieved over a longer period.

Longer-term intended program outcome #1 - Increased use of tools and processes by relevant organizations to assess and recognize foreign trained individuals, resulting from efforts of the FCRP

Significant progress has been made in the physician occupation in terms of increased use of foreign credential assessment processes and tools and processes by relevant organizations as a result of FCRP efforts. With respect to the engineering occupation, while the development and availability of foreign credential assessment tools and processes has been achieved as a result of FCRP funding, at the time of this evaluation there was no evidence of their usage.

Based on the survey of regulatory bodies for occupations which have received FCRP funding for tool development, regulatory bodies in the physician occupation indicated they have adopted the assessment tools/processes developed with FCRP funding. Further, many believed the tools and processes were very useful, relevant, easy to use and adaptable to their context. The response rate among regulatory bodies varied by occupation, ranging from a high response rate for regulatory bodies representing the physician occupation to a low response rate for regulatory bodies representing the engineering occupation. As such, the survey results should be interpreted accordingly. Apart from the survey of regulatory bodies, very little was known in terms of the extent to which there had been increased use of foreign credential assessment tools and processes by relevant organizations as a result of FCRP efforts. Most interview and case study respondents were not aware of the use of assessment processes and tools.

Regulatory bodies representing the four non-FCRP funded occupations also use tools to assess foreign credentials, in which all four indicated the tools they use are useful, relevant, easy to use and adaptable to their context. These four occupations consist of: dentists, teachers, translators and psychologists. It is difficult to indicate why this was the case. One theory could be that perhaps the FCRP has increased awareness of issues related to foreign credential recognition in the broader community of regulated occupations, or that through FCRP-funding for the development of tools and processes in some regulated occupations, spillover is happening in non-funded occupations whereby they are engaging in this type of activity. Perhaps they were developed by the regulatory

⁵⁵ The evaluation assessed only “progress” towards intended longer-term outcomes due to the challenges in achieving them within the four year time frame against which the evaluation was conducted. The likelihood of achieving these outcomes can be more realistically achieved over a longer period.

bodies themselves who responded to the survey, as opposed to a national association representing them which is the case with FCRP funding.

Longer-term intended program outcome #2 - Reduced barriers to entry into the labour market by foreign trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors

There were conflicting perceptions on the extent to which progress had been made towards the achievement of the longer-term outcome related to the reduction of foreign credential recognition barriers in occupations funded by FCRP.

Perceptions regarding the extent to which barriers have been reduced varied considerably between lines of evidence and among respondents within each line of evidence. They also varied considerably by specific barrier, ranging along a spectrum where some progress has been made on some barriers to no progress has been made on any barriers.

Most respondents representing national organizations felt there has been progress with respect to the fair and equitable treatment of foreign trained individuals and some progress in coherency of foreign credential recognition processes. In the case studies, most funded recipients believed their projects were contributing to reducing all barriers. However, funded recipients' partners and end-users generally believed less progress was made or did not know, with the exception of partners for the non-regulated profession and the trade occupation in which feedback was positive. Respondents in the survey of regulatory bodies representing funded occupations indicated some progress in reducing some barriers, such as those related to fairness, access to information and services and transparency. Representatives from provinces/territories and immigrant serving organizations did not believe any progress had been made on the reduction of any barriers. The opinions of immigrant serving organizations are noteworthy since they are advocates of immigrants in general and would be considered to be knowledgeable of the experiences of foreign trained individuals who wish to have their credentials assessed and recognized in Canada.

Since there are many other actors and activities outside of FCRP influencing these barriers, the evaluation was unable to determine the extent to which the FCRP was able to make direct contributions in these areas or whether progress would have occurred in the absence of FCRP.

Cost-Effectiveness

Design of program

Most interview respondents were of the opinion that the FCRP is an appropriate way for the federal government to find foreign credential recognition solutions in Canada insofar as it engages stakeholders and supports existing national occupation-specific organizations, Many interview respondents also believed that many existing features could be strengthened.

Most interview respondents believed the FCRP is an appropriate way for the federal government to find foreign credential recognition solutions in Canada insofar as it engages stakeholders and supports existing national occupation-specific organizations. It was also

believed that contribution agreements are a useful mechanism to undertake projects that enable organizations to develop and/or strengthen their capacity.

There were nonetheless many suggestions for improvement, which consisted essentially of strengthening certain existing features. These consist of the following: having a greater focus on the development of tools and processes and less effort spent on conducting research; the creation of more organizing mechanisms that would encourage collaboration and consensus-building among the key stakeholders; developing closer relationships and conducting consultations with specific stakeholders such as regulatory bodies and immigrant serving organizations; and increased dialogue between federal government departments to address foreign credential recognition-related issues and identify solutions. Many evaluation participants felt that employers would benefit from more attention from the program, including more funding. This was mentioned particularly by respondents from non-regulated/trade occupations. Suggestions for new features included taking a “competencies” approach rather than “credential” approach. Competency-based assessments consider an individual’s ability to apply particular knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to the standard of performance (as opposed to judging skill based on his/her educational or professional degrees or designations). This would be consistent with best practices identified by the literature (below) and would also increase the perceived relevance of the program to non-regulated/ trade occupations that focus more on competencies than credentials.

Design of program – best practices from literature review

The literature review revealed various best practices in other countries that could be considered, such a pre-migration foreign credential assessment and recognition in addition to minimum language proficiency requirements, that improved labour market outcomes of foreign trained individuals.

The literature review revealed that some countries have been actively addressing the issue of foreign credential recognition through various mechanisms. The review highlighted best practices that could be considered including those that suggest a closer relationship between foreign credential recognition and immigration policy. For instance, Australia requires a pre-assessment of foreign qualifications prior to immigration, as well as minimum language proficiency requirements. In New Zealand, pre-assessment of foreign qualifications is not mandatory. However, a greater number of points are awarded to prospective immigrants if this has already been undertaken. Additional points are also awarded if the prospective immigrant was a former student in New Zealand, the occupation is in demand as evidenced by a Skills Shortage list, and has a job offer. These features have improved the employment outcomes of foreign trained individuals in Australia and New Zealand. The European Union recently introduced the Europass, which is an individual portfolio that clearly indicates a person’s skills, qualifications and languages, so they can be easily understood throughout Europe. Re-branding the program towards “competencies” and away from “credentials” was also suggested by the evidence.

Areas for Consideration based on Results of Literature Review

The FCRP undertake a review of Australia’s and New Zealand’s foreign credential assessment systems (beyond what was undertaken for this evaluation) in order to explore the possible use of best practices implemented there which have contributed to greater labour market outcomes for foreign trained individuals.

Exploring features of Australia’s and New Zealand’s foreign credential assessment systems, such as pre-migration foreign credential assessment, would necessitate negotiations with Citizenship and Immigration. Other best-practices suggested by the literature review to be considered are the use of a central credential agency, positioned within or outside the government, as well as re-branding the program towards “competencies” and away from “credentials.” Competency-based assessments consider an individual’s ability to apply particular knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to the standard of performance, as opposed to judging skill based on his/her educational or professional degrees or designations. This would also increase the perceived relevance of the program to non-regulated/ trade occupations that focus more on competencies than credentials.

Program duplication

There are mechanisms in place to prevent potential duplication with two other similar federal programs.

The *Foreign Credentials Referral Office* implemented by Citizenship and Immigration, and the *Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative* implemented by Health Canada, were deemed to be sufficiently similar to the FCRP to warrant an in-depth analysis with respect to duplication. The objectives of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office are to provide prospective immigrants and newcomers in Canada with information about the Canadian labour market and credential assessment and recognition processes; to provide path-finding and referral services to help individuals connect to the appropriate assessment bodies; and information to employers to help increase their awareness of the processes and benefits of hiring internationally trained individuals. The Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative aims to reduce barriers so that a greater number of internationally educated doctors, nurses and other health professionals can be assessed and integrated into the Canadian health care system.

The two main objectives of the FCRP are: to develop and strengthen Canada’s foreign credential recognition capacity; and to contribute to improving labour market integration outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors. These two objectives support the program’s strategic objective which is the development of coherent, transparent, fair, equitable, and rigorous foreign credential assessment and recognition processes to enhance labour market outcomes of foreign-trained individuals in targeted occupations and sectors.

The analysis revealed that aspects of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office and the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative programs are similar by design to that of the FCRP. For instance, the FCRP and the Foreign Credentials Referral Office have an identical business line, which is to coordinate and collaborate to strengthen foreign credential recognition capacity. According to Foreign Credentials Referral Office documentation, this involves engaging federal partners, provinces/territories, employers

and other stakeholders, which is one of the main functions of the FCRP. In addition, the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative aims to reduce barriers so that a greater number of internationally educated doctors, nurses and other health professionals can be assessed and integrated into the Canadian health care system. Many of the projects under this initiative indicated similar objectives as those of the FCRP (e.g. increased standardization of testing across regulatory bodies). In light of this, most key informant groups interviewed for this evaluation, with the exception of immigrant serving agencies, perceived the FCRP and the Foreign Credentials Referral Office to be complementary. Regulatory bodies surveyed for this evaluation also believe there to be overlap.

While there may be similarities between these programs, the evaluation also indicates that duplication is minimized via close working relationships with FCRP and these two other programs. In particular, since 2003, HRSDC has been co-chairing (with Citizenship and Immigration as the other co-chair) an interdepartmental Director Generals' Forum the purpose of which is to ensure coordination between HRSDC, Citizenship and Immigration and Health Canada on the subject of immigrant labour market integration. In addition, while the FCRP and the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative engage in consultations with the same stakeholders, the focus of stakeholder engagement is different. For the Foreign Credentials Referral Office, the focus is primarily foreign trained individuals and providing services to them directly. Whereas for the FCRP, the focus is primarily to effect change among the stakeholders themselves where the ultimate beneficiaries are foreign trained individuals, as the FCRP does not provide services to them directly. At the time same, there are opportunities for greater clarity between the FCRP and Foreign Credentials Referral Office regarding roles and responsibilities in the areas of partnership development, engagement of stakeholders, and enhanced national foreign credential recognition coordination.

Progress in implementing recommendations in formative evaluation

The program has made significant progress with implementing the recommendations in the formative evaluation. An approach to the selection of occupations for targeting investments has been implemented which matches occupations in demand with the labour supply of skilled immigrants.⁵⁶ There is concern however with the current mix of investments in terms of not leading, in a timely manner, to the achievement of intended medium- and longer-term program outcomes.

The targeted occupations account for approximately two-thirds of those occupations that show evidence of labour shortages. Almost all of the regulated occupations that are showing signs of excess demand (93%) are being targeted. In comparison, 50% of the non-regulated occupations that are experiencing shortages are being targeted. Therefore, with respect to non-regulated occupations, the process for targeting FCRP investments has met with less success. Further, and of greater concern, is the fact that a large proportion (47%) of project funding supports projects that are not occupation-specific.⁵⁷ This is a concern insofar as investing in non-occupation specific projects may detract

⁵⁶ It should also be noted that not all targeted occupations are funded. Some are placed in consideration for future funding.

⁵⁷ Of the 96 CAs reviewed, 43 were not clearly specific to any occupational group.

from achieving the medium-term intended program outcomes of increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations, as well as increased standardization of Pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors.

The logic model and performance measurement indicators were updated. In addition, two databases were created. However some weaknesses exist with coding. Some progress has also been made towards the sharing of project results. However, some improvements are required. The full implementation of a planned web-based mechanism for sharing project results would respond to this need in part.

Recommendations

1. Increase the sharing and dissemination of existing tools and processes across occupations, sectors, and jurisdictions in order to increase the likelihood of their usage.

There is a role for the federal government in disseminating relevant information across sectors and jurisdictions. The full implementation of the web-based mechanism for sharing project information would also contribute to this. Finally, the program should encourage project funding recipients to include more active dissemination mechanisms to relevant organizations and users of the products (e.g., events and workshops, presentations at conferences, articles in newsletters).

2. Expedite the transition period between investments that focus on diagnostics to investments that focus on the development, dissemination and implementation of foreign credential assessment tools and processes in both regulated and non-regulated trade occupations.

While diagnostics have been very important to diagnose foreign credential recognition-related needs and highlight potential solutions, the transition from that to tool development, dissemination and usage is not occurring to any great extent apart from the physician occupation, and to a lesser extent, the engineering occupation. Expediting the transition from diagnostic to development of assessment tools and processes could lead to a greater likelihood of achieving the intended medium-term program outcomes of increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations and standardization of pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes and tools in targeted occupations and sectors.

3. The FCRP should develop a strategy for the engagement of employers and ensure that projects are funded that specifically target and support employers' needs with respect to foreign credential recognition.

Fifty percent of the non-regulated occupations that are experiencing shortages are being targeted by the FCRP. Additional non-regulated occupations should be targeted. There should be increased efforts on the part of FCRP officials, in addition to

recipients of funded projects, to raise awareness and understanding of foreign credential recognition among employers and the importance of their role in developing credential/competency recognition tools. Program activities related to foreign credential recognition information sharing/best practices forums and foreign credential recognition events more generally should be better targeted to employers.

- 4. The FCRP should strengthen its role in supporting, facilitating, and coordinating foreign credential recognition related dialogue among multiple levels of government and stakeholders, especially with key stakeholders such as regulatory bodies and immigrant serving organizations.***

Many evaluation participants believed the most appropriate role for the federal government with respect to foreign credential recognition is one of supporting, facilitating, and coordinating foreign credential recognition related dialogue. Therefore the existing engagement by the FCRP of stakeholders should not only continue but be strengthened perhaps through the creation of more organizing mechanisms that would encourage collaboration and consensus-building among the key stakeholders.

Also, based on the evidence, regulatory bodies need to figure more prominently in this dialogue. As they are responsible for assessing foreign credentials, it would stand to reason that FCRP play a large role. As it now stands, with respect to regulated occupations, the FCRP works with national professional associations to effect change in foreign credential assessment processes, who in turn are intended to effect change among regulatory bodies. The evaluation evidence was strong in terms of problems regulatory bodies are encountering with foreign credential assessment, as well as their interest in the FCRP and what it is doing to address these issues. Yet they are not very aware of FCRP projects. This is an indication that FCRP's focus and investments on national professional associations representing targeted occupations, and the results thereof, may not be reaching the actual bodies that do the credential assessments. The results suggest a possible disconnect between the work of national professional associations and regulatory bodies.

- 5. The FCRP should review its current mix and nature of investments with a view of adjusting its investment strategy in order to increase the likelihood of meeting, in a timely manner, its intended medium and longer-term program outcomes.***

The scope and range of projects is very broad with 46% of projects and 47% of funding being directed to non-occupation specific projects. However, not all of these are expected to contribute to the program's intended medium-term outcomes related to increased availability of tools and processes to assess and recognize foreign credentials among relevant organizations, and the standardization of pan-Canadian foreign credential recognition processes and tools and processes in targeted occupations and sectors.

- 6. Improve the FCRP communications strategy in order to ensure the mandate of the program is clear to all stakeholders.***

Stakeholders involved in the evaluation were not always clear about the purpose of the program and whether it was meeting foreign credential assessment and recognition needs. Each stakeholder would seem to have a separate role to play in the foreign credential assessment and recognition process. A communications strategy may serve to help stakeholders understand FCRP expectations and their role vis-à-vis the program's mandate.

7. *Better document the division of roles and responsibilities between the FCRP and the Foreign Credentials Referral Office.*

Specifically, there are opportunities for greater clarity regarding roles and responsibilities in the areas of partnership development, engagement of stakeholders, and enhanced national foreign credential recognition coordination, including exchanging best practices.

8. *Implement improvements to the project database and approaches to coding of data.*

Specifically, the project database should include data that corresponds to what has actually occurred with FCRP funding, as opposed to the current practice of being based entirely on project proposals and what was planned to occur. Also, the project database should be linked to the most recent version of the program's logic model and associated indicators. Lastly, there should be a breakdown of the non-occupation specific projects.

Appendix A: List of Targeted Occupations

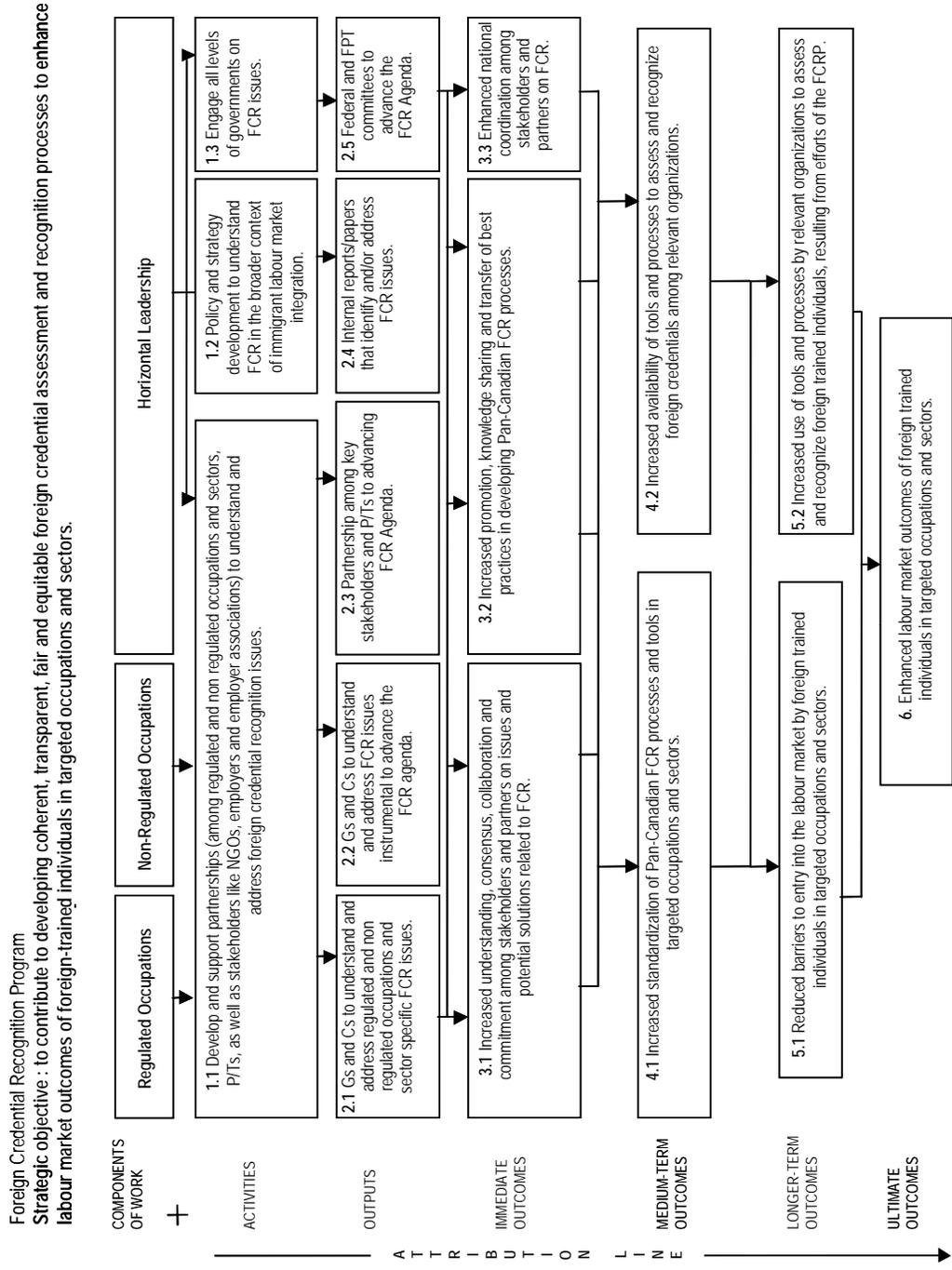
Occupations in bold have received FCRP funding.

Regulated Occupations	Unregulated Occupations	Skilled Trades
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engineers 2. Engineering technicians 3. Accountants / Financial Auditors 4. Teachers 5. Doctors 6. Translators 7. Pharmacists 8. Medical Laboratory Technicians 9. Registered Nurses 10. Architects 11. Veterinarians 12. Geologists & Geochemists 13. Lawyers 14. Physiotherapists 15. Dentists 16. Social Workers 17. Medical Radiation Technicians 18. Psychologists 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Computer Programmers 2. PSE Teachers and TA's 3. Sales, Marketing and Advertising Managers 4. Business Sectors Professionals 5. Financial Investment Analysts 6. Chemists 7. Technical Sales Specialists 8. Economic Development Officers and Market Researchers 9. Investment Managers 10. University Professors 11. Information Systems Analysts 12. Biologists and Scientists 13. Secretaries 14. Administrative Officers 15. Banking/ Credit Managers 16. Purchasing Agents 17. College/ Vocational Instructors 18. Agricultural Representatives 19. Social Policy Researchers & Consultants 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Industrial Electricians 2. Electrical Power Line and Cable Workers 3. Motor Vehicle Mechanics 4. Welders 5. Electricians 6. Carpenters 7. Millwrights & Industrial Mechanics 8. Heavy-Duty Equipment Mechanics

Appendix B: FCRP Funding and Number of Projects by Occupation

Occupation	Total Number of Projects*	% of Total Projects	Total Funding	% of Total Funding	Targeted Occupation	Non-Occupation Specific
NON-OCCUPATION SPECIFIC	46	46.0%	\$26,831,802.00	47.4%		Yes
<i>Total for Non-Occupation Specific</i>	46	46.0%	\$26,831,802.00	47.4%		
REGULATED OCCUPATIONS						
Accountants	1	1.0%	\$135,839	0.2%	Yes	
Architects	2	2.0%	\$536,010	0.9%	Yes	
Cardiology Technologists & Technicians	1	1.0%	\$146,509	0.3%		
Engineering Technicians and Technologists	2	2.0%	\$337,464	0.6%	Yes	
Engineers	7	7.0%	\$3,969,177	7.0%	Yes	
Medical Laboratory Technologists	4	4.0%	\$1,061,856	1.9%	Yes	
Medical Radiation Technologists	2	2.0%	\$589,420	1.0%	Yes	
Midwives	2	2.0%	\$108,677	0.2%		
Nurses	2	2.0%	\$94,210	0.2%	Yes	
Occupational Therapists	3	3.0%	\$680,485	1.2%		
Pharmacists	1	1.0%	\$1,447,105	2.6%	Yes	
Physicians	5	5.0%	\$4,945,324	8.7%	Yes	
Physiotherapists	2	2.0%	\$446,940	0.8%	Yes	
Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses	1	1.0%	\$550,319	1.0%	Yes	
Respiratory Therapists	1	1.0%	\$499,836	0.9%		
Social Workers	1	1.0%	\$11,000	0.0%	Yes	
<i>Total for Regulated Occupations</i>	37	37.0%	\$15,560,171	27.6%		
NON-REGULATED OCCUPATIONS						
Administrative staff	1	1.0%	\$315,836	0.6%	Yes	
Automotive Repair and Service	1	1.0%	\$389,326	0.7%	Yes	
Aviation	1	1.0%	\$1,591,464	2.8%		
Biologists and Related Scientists	3	3.0%	\$990,005	1.7%	Yes	
Environmental practitioners	1	1.0%	\$1,034,328	1.8%		
Financial Managers	1	1.0%	\$614,243	1.1%	Yes	
Information Technology	2	2.0%	\$2,863,480	5.1%	Yes	
Tourism	4	4.0%	\$4,046,231	7.2%		
Trades	2	2.0%	\$2,099,906	3.7%	Yes	
Trucking	1	1.0%	\$235,840	0.4%		
<i>Total for Non-regulated Occupations</i>	17	17.0%	\$14,180,659	25.0%		
TOTAL	100	100.0%	\$56,572,632	100.0%		
*Source: FCRP Administrative Database						

Appendix C: FCRP Logic Model



Appendix D: International FCR Practices

International FCR Practices

This overview of international experiences with FCR has been included to provide some context for the FCRP evaluation. Since Canada is competing with other countries for skilled immigrants⁵⁸ and other countries are proactively engaging in FCR to attract and retain immigrants, there are potential lessons to be learned from the international experiences. This section presents a brief summary of each of the countries reviewed, namely Australia, United States (US), European Union (EU), United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand (NZ). The vast majority of relevant international literature on FCR experiences is from these countries.

Australia⁵⁹

Australia is generally regarded as the world leader in FCR and has FCR issues remarkably similar to those of Canada. Prior to immigrating, potential skilled immigrants declare their intended occupation, choosing from the *Skilled Occupation List* that is based on current skill shortages in Australia. At this point, they also provide proof of their qualifications including English proficiency through a standardized test. Prior assessment and pre-and post-immigration services do not guarantee FCR by regulatory bodies, educational institutions or employers, and this two-phased process has created confusion for many skilled migrants. General success in integrating skilled immigrants is often attributed to pre-immigration assessment and a demanding selection policy. The system, however, has been criticized for its complexity. As indicated by the Australian Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2006, p.42): “*The plethora of visa types, each with different conditions, makes the process of applying to migrate a very daunting prospect ... the complexities involved in determining an appropriate visa may therefore represent a hurdle from the outset for some individuals seeking skills recognition.*”

Various FCR activities and projects were described in the literature reviewed. These included:

- Implementation of a national Australian Skills Recognition Information (ASRI) website established in 2006 to help skilled immigrants navigate the maze of pre-and post-immigration requirements.

⁵⁸ Gera, S. and T. Songsakul. 2005. *How is Canada Faring in the Competition for Internationally Mobile Skilled Workers?* Skills Research Initiative Working Paper 2005 D-06. Ottawa: Industry Canada.

⁵⁹ The Australian system is described in Construction Sector Council. 2006. *Foreign Credential Recognition: How it Works Outside of Canada: An International Comparison of the FCR Process.* Ottawa: Construction Sector Council. Australian Joint Standing Committee on Migration. 2006. *Negotiating the Maze: Review of Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing.* Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia Birrell, Bob, Leslyanne Hawthorn and Sue Richardson. 2006. *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories.* Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia. Salt, John. *Skilled Migration: The UK and Australia.* 2006. In *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories.* Bob Birrell, Leslyanne Hawthorn and Sue Richardson. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.

- The development and implementation of the National Policy of Internal Mutual Recognition for mutual recognition of qualifications across jurisdictions. This has reportedly enhanced internal mobility and facilitated FCR.
- The development and implementation of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) which was established to standardize qualifications across institutions and regions within Australia. Foreign credentials are then compared to that internal, national standard.
- The implementation of Overseas Qualification Units (OQUs) that exist in most Australian states to provide FCR at a nominal fee for those who have already migrated.

A number of types of partnerships developed for approaches implemented to address FCR issues. For example, Australian overseas migration agents exist in high immigration countries with three coordinated national organizations providing referral services. Another example of partnerships is the work the national government has done to set up a series of partnerships via Overseas Qualification Units in various states to assist immigrants with FCR and to serve an advocacy role with respect to state regulatory bodies.

An example of partnership development between national departments is the partnership between the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). This partnership facilitates FCR by identifying, approving and monitoring about 34 professional bodies and two general regulators as assessing authorities and by providing an overseas qualifications recognition service to the state assessing authorities.

As an example of partnering to determine priorities, in 2006, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a single, pre-migration off-shore assessment process to meet skilled migration and licensing purposes in all trade occupations in six priority skills shortage occupations for intending immigrants from five specific countries. As well, they agreed to a single national registration scheme for health professionals and a national process for FCR of overseas trained doctors.

Not all of the impacts of partnerships are deemed to be positive. The many partnerships that exist between agencies involved in pre-immigration FCR for immigration purposes, and in post-immigration FCR for licensing purposes, have led to confusion for potential immigrants. To mitigate this, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship launched the one-stop ASRI web-site service mentioned previously that provides information on the requirements for immigration to Australia.

New Zealand⁶⁰

New Zealand is a unitary state without state/provincial jurisdictional issues over FCR. Survey evidence indicates FCR to be only a “moderate” issue for skilled immigrants (Australian Joint Committee on Migration 2006 p. 198).

Prospective immigrants first complete a self-assessment with respect to such factors as health, English language, employability and qualifications or experience. These are verified and points awarded with additional points for specific recognized qualifications. English language proficiency is strongly emphasized. Bonus or extensive points for specific skills include:

- former international students with New Zealand qualifications that would therefore be readily recognized;
- occupations in demand or of expected future growth as evidenced by the Skills Shortage List;
- job offers;
- qualifications which are already recognized in New Zealand; and
- NZ work experience.

These aspects of the point system introduced in 2003 have resulted in a reallocation of skilled immigrants away from countries like China and India where FCR is an issue, and towards countries like the UK and South Africa where FCR is not as much of an issue. Prior to the point system of 2003, “immigrants admitted under New Zealand’s general skills category in the 1990s had not performed well in terms of labour market participation and outcomes ” (Bedford 2006, p. 245) with limited evidence suggesting that such improvements are occurring after the point system (p. 247).

The regulatory body for regulated professions (not *positioned* within the government) provides a more in-depth assessment that also includes competencies and work experience.

Birrell, Hawthorn and Richardson (2006, p.155) conclude: “Australia and New Zealand ... have adopted tightly prescribed selection criteria in the past decade based on pre-migration screening for age, English language ability, occupations in demand, and credential recognition. The aims (*objectives*) are clearcut: minimal cross-subsidization of

⁶⁰ The New Zealand system is described in detail in Australian Joint Standing Committee on Migration. 2006. *Negotiating the Maze: Review of Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Bedford, Richard. 2006. Skilled Migration in and out of New Zealand. Appendix in *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories*. Bob Birrell, Leslyanne Hawthorn and Sue Richardson. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia Birrell, Bob, Leslyanne Hawthorn and Sue Richardson. 2006. *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia. Business Council of British Columbia. 2007. *Labour Market Needs, Immigrant Programs, Foreign Credential Recognition and Employment: LIFE in Ireland, New Zealand, Australia and Canada*. Vancouver: Business Council of British Columbia. Construction Sector Council. 2006. *Foreign Credential Recognition: How it Works Outside of Canada: An International Comparison of the FCR Process*. Ottawa: Construction Sector Council. Walker, J. 2007. International approaches to credential assessment. *Canadian Issues* (Spring) 21-25.

migrants labour market adjustment, with skilled employment secured in the early period of settlement.” ... This strategy (that of Australia and New Zealand) is justified by the research findings....”

There has been an increased emphasis on temporary migration *activity* as a stepping stone to acquire the qualifications and FCR for permanent migration.

New Zealand has a similar dual procedure as Australia of pre-assessment for immigration purposes (but voluntary in NZ with extra points awarded if assessment done prior to immigrating) and post-assessment if necessary by a separate regulatory body for certification or licensing.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) compares foreign credentials with those of New Zealand and issues a non-binding Pre-Assessment Report. If an application is made, a formal verified Qualifications Assessment Report is issued. For applicants who will need professional registration, a list of accredited foreign institutions is available. If the applicant’s institution is on that list, qualifications need not be assessed. Otherwise the NZQA provides an assessment.

Earlier, doctors who were allowed in by the immigration process, often did not have their credentials recognized by the licensing body, leading to a “doctors driving taxis syndrome”. Now both the immigration process and licensing process are conducted at the same time to avoid this problem.

European Union⁶¹

There is a different approach to mobility and recognition of credentials between member countries of the EU. There is free mobility of professionals and tradespeople across countries within the EU although local licensing and certification procedures can inhibit such mobility.

FCR is done country-by-country although the EU recognizes the common problem of FCR. Skilled workers from outside the EU often enter via a work permit system which requires a pre-arranged job and an employer statement of having the skills necessary to do the job. Less skilled workers entered in larger numbers after the expansion of the EU to include eight Eastern European countries in 2004. FCR may not have been a major issue for them in part because they often did not have foreign credentials to evaluate and the severe labour shortages may have accommodated their employment.

The EU recently introduced the Europass, which is an individual portfolio that clearly indicates a person’s skills, qualifications and languages, so they can be easily understood throughout Europe.

⁶¹ The E.U. system is described in Construction Sector Council. 2006. *Foreign Credential Recognition: How it Works Outside of Canada: An International Comparison of the FCR Process*. Ottawa: Construction Sector Council. Salt, John. Skilled Migration: The UK and Australia. 2006. In *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories*.

The *Europass Portfolio* consists of five documents detailing an individual's skills and competencies. These documents include:

- *Europass CV* prepared by the individual and includes standardized information on such factors as personal characteristics, work experience, education, training, skills and competencies;
- *Europass Language Passport* prepared by individual identifying standardized language skills with respect to listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing;
- *Europass Mobility* prepared by education or training institution recording the persons education or training acquired in other countries;
- *Europass Certificate Supplement* records the qualifications gained through vocational training; and
- *Europass Diploma Supplement* records higher education acquired.

Some countries require the activity of language testing before entry.

United Kingdom⁶²

The UK currently has a complex system of employment related migration with about 50 different ways to enter the country as a worker or student. With respect to immigration, the emphasis is on fitting immigration with occupational demands and filling skill shortages, as well as work experience, all of which facilitate FCR. Entering as a worker generally requires an employer sponsor and evidence of qualifications. There is a two-stage process with immigration clearance assessed offshore and employment qualifications assessed in the UK. Currently, there is pressure to move to a single interface procedure.

Recently, there has been an increased emphasis on temporary migration (especially for international students who would thereby have established credentials) as a stepping stone for permanent immigration.

Another recent shift in focus or activity has been to place emphasis on work permits issued to immigrants already in the UK: "*The system is now one which turns foreigners already living in the country, perhaps as visitors or with a work permit already, into permitted foreign workers rather than one bringing in labour currently living abroad.*"(Salt 2006, p.270)

⁶² The UK system is described in Construction Sector Council. 2006. *Foreign Credential Recognition: How it Works Outside of Canada: An International Comparison of the FCR Process*. Ottawa: Construction Sector Council. Australian Joint Standing Committee on Migration. 2006. *Negotiating the Maze: Review of Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia Birrell, Bob, Leslyanne Hawthorn and Sue Richardson. 2006. *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia. Salt, John. Skilled Migration: The UK and Australia. 2006. In *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories*. Bob Birrell, Leslyanne Hawthorn and Sue Richardson. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.

The activities under the Highly Skilled Migration Program involves points and phased transitions, initially for one year, with the expectation of permission for a further three years after which permanent immigration may be granted. “*The scheme rewards those with significant past earnings and work experience and while not involving a labour market test, the applicant is required to demonstrate reasonable prospects of securing work...*” (Salt 2006, p. 266)... *Individuals need to demonstrate that they will be able to continue their chosen career in the UK and also provide evidence that they scored 75 points or more in five areas in addition to age: education qualifications; work experience, past earnings; achievement in the chosen field ... there is a mandatory entry clearance requirement for this route i.e., and applicant cannot be made on arrival in the UK*”. These types of activities should either facilitate FCR or make it unnecessary/ redundant.

FCR can be done in advance through the partnership the government has developed with the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC). For a small fee, the NARIC provides FCR for 183 countries, comparing them with UK qualifications and recommending future study or professional development to fill specific gaps. A partnership with an equivalent body for trades has also been established.

FCR for the UK can also be done through the partnership the UK has with other countries via their membership in the EU. This partnership for FCR involves the recognition of the EU Europass system and other EU initiatives related to FCR.

United States⁶³

U.S. government is fairly “hands off” with respect to FCR (generally regarded as a private sector issue). FCR is not a major issue in the US since most skilled migrants are on-shore, employed and likely to have studied in an American institution. As well, the flexibility of the U.S. labour market enables immigrants to pursue a broad range of career paths.

The Department of Education provides activities that only involve links to FCR services, common search engines, and the complex array of state regulatory agencies which have jurisdiction over the professions and trades. The Federal government does not assess foreign credentials.

The National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Academic Credentials provides standards to assist FCR. Also, the United States Network for Education Information (USNEI) portal provides links to credential evaluation services and to the array of state regulatory agencies in the professions and trades.

A number of studies which have made international comparisons made specific comparisons with Canada. For each of these studies, the main points made from these comparisons are contained below, along with, where relevant, potential implications for the FCRP.

⁶³ The US system is described in detail in Australian Joint Standing Committee on Migration. 2006. *Negotiating the Maze: Review of Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Construction Sector Council. 2006. *Foreign Credential Recognition: How it Works Outside of Canada: An International Comparison of the FCR Process*. Ottawa: Construction Sector Council. Walker, J. 2007. International approaches to credential assessment. *Canadian Issues* (Spring) 21-25.

1. Walker (2007)⁶⁴

Compared to New Zealand, the Canadian system:

- Is more complex because of jurisdictional issues;
- Does not have a central credential assessment agency *positioned* within or outside of government;
- Does not give extra points for pre-immigration FCR; and
- Does not provide an abundance of pre-arrival information.

Potential implications for FCRP: The multiple jurisdictional issues are recognized by the FCRP and are the basis for ensuring that projects, where possible, have an impact on FCR becoming more coherent, rigorous and less complex across the jurisdictions. Due to jurisdictional considerations, setting up a central credential assessment agency may be difficult. However, the FCRP works in partnerships with national professional associations in the attempt to make systemic improvements to FCR. With respect to awarding points for pre-immigration FCR, Citizen and Immigration is responsible for awarding points to prospective immigrants. Whereas the FCRP is housed in HRSDC. As such, it may be beyond the purview of the FCRP. Negotiations or a partnership between HRSDC and CIC may be required in this regard. While the FCRP does not itself provide, pre-arrival information to potential immigrants, the Foreign Credentials Referrals Office (housed at CIC) does.

2. Construction Sector Council (2006)⁶⁵

After making comparisons with other countries that are proactively addressing FCR, this study suggests the following international best-practices and lessons-learned regarding FCR:

- Utilize pre-migration skills assessment;
- Have FCR done by “independent competent authorities” presumably *positioned* outside of government;
- Consider the activity of setting of minimum language standards as done, for example, in Australia and even more stringently in New Zealand;
- Consider standardized tools to foster mobility like the Europass portfolio *activity* including validating non-formal and informal learning;
- Utilize competency assessments *activities*;
- Foster international Mutual Recognition Agreements *activities*; and
- Streamline the process, remove duplication and close the gap between immigration and employment assessment.

⁶⁴ Walker, J. 2007. International approaches to credential assessment. *Canadian Issues* (Spring) 21-25.

⁶⁵ Construction Sector Council. 2006. *Foreign Credential Recognition: How it Works Outside of Canada: An International Comparison of the FCR Process*. Ottawa: Construction Sector Council.

Potential implications for FCRP: While pre-immigration skills assessment is not mandatory, a few FCRP funded projects permitted potential immigrants to have their skills assessed prior to their arrival (e.g. MCC self-assessment tool). While the work completed in partnership with national professional organizations has potentially assisted in credentials being more competently assessed, assessments are generally not conducted by independent competent authorities. While the FCRP does not have as its mandate the ability to “set standards”, there has been work completed on language tools and essential skills. Working in partnership with national professional organizations, the FCRP has made some very limited progress (only in a few occupations) to develop standardized tools to assess and recognize credentials. FCRP has also invested in projects related to prior learning assessments and recognition (PLAR) and processes for recognizing both formal and in-formal learning. Finally, while FCRP has funded projects that streamline the process for FCR, it does not have the mandate to close the gap between immigration and employment assessment. Negotiations would have to be undertaken between HRSDC and Citizenship and Immigration.

3. Australian Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2006)⁶⁶

This document criticizes Canada’s emphasis on general “human capital” where applicants are valued for their flexibility and adaptability as opposed to ability in a specific trade or profession: “Canada has maintained this human capital approach despite the widening gap in employment outcomes between migrants and non-migrants, the lower than expected employer acceptance of migrant credentials and the more stringent credential based procedures of regulatory bodies. Major costs of this approach, compared with Australia’s *activity* of screening of skilled migrants, are lower employment outcomes and underutilization of migrant skills, with a resultant shortfall in productivity gains than would otherwise occur.” (p. 202). They imply that Canada would be better served by *activities* involving:

- more emphasis on skills based on specific trades or professions rather than general human capital, and
- pre-immigration assessments of those skills.

Potential implications for FCRP: The FCRP does not have the mandate to address the concerns with the general “human capital” model of immigration. Negotiations would have to be undertaken between HRSDC and Citizenship and Immigration. However, some FCRP funded projects consist of pre-immigration assessment of skills.

⁶⁶ Australian Joint Standing Committee on Migration. 2006. *Negotiating the Maze: Review of Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

4. Birrell, Hawthorn and Richardson (2006)⁶⁷

Birrell, Hawthorn and Richardson (2006) highlight Canada's emphasis on a general "human capital" model where applicants are valued for their flexibility and adaptability as opposed to qualifications in a specific trade or profession or "tightly prescribed credentials" (p. 152) with "qualifications and experience treated as equal" (p. 152). Hence Canada obtains a high proportion of educated professionals but with qualifications that may not be in demand or recognized by regulatory bodies once in the country.

- No *activity* involving minimal thresholds are required in areas like language, or employer sponsorship or occupational demand so that deficiencies in certain areas are allowed to be "made up" by qualifications in other areas
- No *activity* involving mandatory offshore pre-screening and little actual off-shore pre-assessment
- Not geared to shortages or business cycle conditions
- Increased competition from growing number of educated Canadians

Authors conclude: (p. 155): "Australia and New Zealand ... have adopted [*activities* involving] tightly prescribed selection criteria in the past decade based on pre-migration screening for age, English language ability, occupations in demand, and credential recognition. The aims [*objectives*] are clearcut: minimal cross-subsidization of migrants labour market adjustment, with skilled employment secured in the early period of settlement." ... This strategy [that of Australia and New Zealand] is justified by the research findings... The scale of flows has not been jeopardized, with increasingly positive outcomes secured. Canada's human capital model, by contrast, maintains more liberal entry procedures at the cost of migrants' delayed labour market entry and greater risk of de-skilling."

Potential implications for FCRP: The issues raised by these authors focus nearly entirely on Canada's immigration policy, based on the general "human capital model". Given that the FCRP is not involved in designing immigration policy, HRSDC would have to engage in negotiations with Citizenship and Immigration in order to effect changes that are in line with the features listed above. However, the FCRP uses a selection matrix model to determine which occupations to target for eventual funding. While the occupations selected are not geared to the business cycle, the FCRP does select occupations which are deemed to be in demand (based on internal HRSDC research) which it cross references with the availability of skilled immigrants who have identified themselves in these occupations.

⁶⁷ Birrell, Bob, Leslyanne Hawthorn and Sue Richardson. 2006. *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.

5. Gera and Songsakul (2005⁶⁸)

These authors outlined various areas of immigration in Canada that they considered need to be addressed. These include

- Canada does relatively poorly in attracting foreign students and temporary workers.
- Canada also performs poorly in terms of losing many of its immigrants to OECD countries.
- Canada performs seventh out of 18 developed countries in what Richard Florida labeled the “creative class index” – workers whose function is to create new ideas, new technology or new content, including scientists, engineers, architects, artists, business, finance and law. In descending order the countries above Canada are Ireland, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain. Florida emphasizes the link between the percentage of foreign-born workers and the rise of the creative class and Gera and Songsakul confirm that link.
- Slow processing time *activity* (up to 18 months for high volume countries like China and India) can be a significant barrier for immigrants into Canada compared to countries like Germany and the UK and especially Australia which have significantly reduced the processing time.
- Canada’s poor performance in attracting temporary workers who can more easily make the transition to permanent immigration is in part attributed to “a slow and cumbersome validation [of a job offer and documenting the fact that it will not have a negative effect on Canadian workers] is a major impediment to competitive recruitment of high-skilled foreign workers.” (p. 23).
- They endorse initiatives “in pursuing a more active, bilateral program of regulatory cooperation aimed either at approaches towards mutual recognition to certification, accreditation, and other deterrents to the cross-border movement of the high-skilled workers, or an agreeable way to reducing the impact of differences in labour market and similar regulations.” (p. 25, 26).

Potential implications for FCRP: The issues raised by these authors focus on Canada’s poor performance on various indicators of immigration policy. From their analysis, it is challenging to see the extent to which FCR itself plays a role in this poor performance. Clearly some of the issues are outside of the mandate of FCRP (slow processing time, attraction of temporary workers). The authors do indicate that they endorse initiatives that support regulatory cooperation. This is one of the main activity areas of FCRP through its work with national level professional bodies and P/Ts to promote greater coherency of FCR processes.

⁶⁸ Gera, S. and T. Songsakul. 2005. *How is Canada Faring in the Competition for Internationally Mobile Skilled Workers?* Skills Research Initiative Working Paper 2005 D-06. Ottawa: Industry Canada.

6. Hawthorne (2007)⁶⁹

This research study criticizes Canada for following a general human capital model emphasizing general education and experience and intakes that are largely independent of the business cycle with the hope that they can flexibly adjust to a changing labour market. She states (p.3): “Canadian selection criteria admits Principle Applicants (PAs) with limited or no host country language skills, non-recognized qualifications, and in fields of minimal labour market demand on an equal basis to those with more immediately sought after attributes.” In contrast, Australia abandoned the human capital model around 1996, emphasizing *activities* involving specific skills that are in short supply, language fluency, and pre-immigration assessment of qualifications.

Hawthorne uses 2001 Census and other data to compare labour market outcomes for professionals in 10 qualification fields between Australia and Canada when the states of the economies were otherwise similar. She concludes (p. 18):

- “Far greater proportions of new arrivals in Australia now than in Canada secure fast, access professional or managerial status, earn high salaries, and use their credentials in work. In the process, unprecedented numbers are avoiding the labour market displacement typically associated with select birthplace, language, age and gender-related groups [...]
- The human capital model of selection has proven flawed – delivering Principal Applicants lacking the ‘knowledge economy’ attributes employers sought (sophisticated English language ability, recognized credentials, and qualifications in fields associated with buoyant labour market demand) [...]
- In terms of credential recognition, economic applicants qualified in regulated fields have been required to [undertake the *activity* to] apply for pre-migration screening by the relevant Australian national or state licensing body (typically a three month postal process) – a strategy designed to avoid years of forced labour market displacement due to non-recognition of skills.”

Potential implications for FCRP: The issues raised by this author focus nearly entirely on Canada’s immigration policy, which is based on the general “human capital model”, a model which Australia abandoned in 1996. Given that the FCRP is not involved in designing immigration policy, HRSDC would have to engage in negotiations with Citizenship and Immigration in order to effect changes that are in line with the features in Australia listed above.

⁶⁹ Hawthorne, L. 2007a. *Labour Market Outcomes for Migrant Professionals: Canada and Australia Compared*. Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration, Human Resources and Social Development and Statistics Canada.

7. Hawthorne (2008)⁷⁰:

Reiterates her view that Canada's immigration policy based on the general human capital model emphasizing general education and experience is inferior to Australia's with its emphasis on *activities* associated with specific skills that are in short supply, language fluency, and pre-immigration assessment of qualifications. She argues that the recent reforms of 2002 in Canada still continued this emphasis by a variety of *activities*:

- Treating all foreign credentials as essentially equal in spite of the evidence that there are considerable differences in the extent to which they are recognized;
- No mandatory requirement for language testing or minimal levels of language competency in spite of the evidence of the importance of language in economic assimilation; and
- Substantial points still allocated to work experience in spite of the evidence that foreign work experience is not well rewarded in the Canadian labour market, especially if acquired from non-OECD countries.

Hawthorne highlights that in response to the poor employment situation of many highly educated immigrants in Australia with foreign credentials, Australia shifted its immigration policy in the mid 1990s to incorporate the following *activities* (p. 5):

- Rigorous expansion of pre-migration English language testing
- Mandatory credential assessment
- Added points for occupations in demand along with degree-level qualifications related to specific rather than simply generic professional fields
- Bonus points for specific credentials that provide evidence of such credentials already being recognized:
 - former international students who have credentials recently completed in Australia;
 - recent continuous Australian experience or international experience in a professional field; and
 - persons with a genuine job offer in an occupation in demand.

She cites the recent comprehensive review of Birrell, Hawthorne and Richardson (2006) as having “confirmed the effectiveness of these policy initiatives in delivering superior labour market outcomes” (p.5) and she compares that to the Canadian evidence that consistently shows worsening labour market outcomes for immigrants in spite of their higher education and general qualifications.

⁷⁰ Hawthorne, L. 2008. The impact of economic selection policy on labour market outcomes for degree qualified migrants in Canada and Australia. *IRPP Choices*. 14 (May 2008) 1-49.

Potential implications for FCRP: The issues raised by this author focus nearly entirely on Canada's immigration policy based on the general "human capital model". Given that the FCRP is not involved in designing immigration policy, HRSDC would have to engage in negotiations with Citizenship and Immigration in order to effect changes that are in line with the features in Australia listed above. The evidence clearly states that since Australia has moved from the human capital model in 1996, labour market outcomes in Australia for foreign trained individuals have improved substantially. Yet Canada shows worsening labour market outcomes for immigrants in spite of their higher education and general qualifications.