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DRAFT Impact Analysis Tool for NLS-funded Projects

At the completion of a project or program, evaluation is a means of demonstrating success, lessons learned and/or accountability.   Evaluation provides important and useful information for those who fund, undertake and/or benefit from projects and programs. The evaluation process begins as the project begins.

The National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) and Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) have clear objectives that need to be addressed by projects, individually and collectively. Systematic evaluation of funded projects is a means to summarize the outcomes of NLS expenditures and initiatives on a regular basis. You also have objectives, and evaluation is a way of determining how well they've been met.

Evaluation can take a wide variety of forms, e.g., cost-benefit analysis, return on investment, quality audit, standards-based assessment, impact analysis.   There is no "one way" to conduct evaluation. However, in order to have comparable information within the framework of a specific funding program such as that of NLS, it is important to have a relatively systematic evaluation format.

Therefore, it is recommended that those who undertake NLS-funded projects complete an **Impact Analysis**. The following instructions and templates should make the process easy for you, and will make a valuable contribution to our understanding of how, together, we are changing the situation for adults and communities that face literacy challenges.

Introduction to Impact Analysis: Setting the Stage

The word "impact" is used to mean "change." The National Literacy Secretariat funds projects to bring about such changes as:

- increased understanding of literacy issues
- improved information sharing among literacy-related organizations
- more integrated community and workplace literacy programs
- increase in numbers of learners served
- decreases in negative situations such as literacy-related barriers to employment
- decrease in learner drop-out rates

Impacts or changes can be:

- intended (planned or anticipated) and/or unanticipated
- evident immediately and/or over the long-term
- positive and/or negative (although few would plan for negative changes!)
- tangible (measurable) or intangible (hard to measure)
- varied according to different stakeholder needs and expectations

You've created a project with changes in mind. If you haven't already, write your project objectives as intended changes – intended impacts -- using the language of improvements, increases and similar terms.

Project Objectives
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

And who are the intended impacts for? Stakeholder groups may be learners, tutors and instructors, program administrators, communities, the Canadian public, governments. For simplicity sake, stakeholders fall into two categories: providers (of instruction, of programs, of funds for programs) and users or clients (e.g., targeted learner groups, specific communities). You will need to identify and survey all the relevant stakeholder groups for your project.

Stakeholders: Providers	Stakeholders: Customers or Clients
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

For each stakeholder group, you need actual persons who can be surveyed or interviewed. It is standard research practice to ask their permission, tell them exactly what you're doing and why, and share your findings if they are interested.

The Impact Analysis Process

The purpose of the impact evaluation is to assess how well the objectives have been met through a three-step process:

Step 1: pre-project data gathering

Step 2: post-project data gathering (immediate and/or longer-term)

Step 3: analysis and reporting

Please remember that data can take various forms:

▪ numerical or tangible measures such as research-based statistics from IALS, or

▪ intangible measures like "informed opinion" and perceptions of satisfaction.

Step One: Pre-Project Data Gathering

The purpose of gathering data before or as the project starts is to define the indicators of success in meeting the project objectives – the intended impacts.

The outcome of Step One is a statement of the intended outcomes or impacts, both immediate and long term, and from the perspective of all the stakeholder groups.

There are at least four possible sources for data:
- a traditional needs assessment
- established research and statistics, e.g., IALS
- your statement of project objectives
- the opinion of stakeholders, individually and collectively

The process will be to gather the relevant data through statistical research or opinions. Attached is a survey you can use to gather stakeholder opinion.

You will want to sort the data into these categories:

	Immediate impacts	Longer-term impacts
Stakeholder group 1		
Stakeholder group 2		
Stakeholder group 3		

When you have this filled out, you may wish to send it to the stakeholders for them to confirm this set of anticipated impacts and ask what evidence they would convince them that the impacts had been achieved.

Now you have to decide what evidence you will need to measure or gather before the project starts, e.g., number of agencies involved, types of existing materials or services. You need to describe the situation or problem that needs changing.

Step Two: Post-Project Data Gathering

The purpose of gathering data immediately after the project ends, or after a reasonable period of time for longer-term impacts, is to determine the extent to which intended impacts have been achieved. The second purpose is to solicit from stakeholder groups indications of other impacts that have been achieved but not anticipated, and to determine if any negative impacts have inadvertently been achieved.

The outcome of Step Two is a statement of the various impacts for various stakeholder groups:
- intended and achieved positive short-term or immediate impacts
- intended and achieved positive longer-term impacts
- unintended but achieved positive impacts (short-term and long-term)
- unintended and negative impacts (short-term and long-term)

You will use the same data sources as for the pre-project research – the same individuals and stakeholder groups.

The process will be to gather the relevant data through informed opinion and/or actual evidence using one or more of these methods: an opinion survey, targeted interviews and/or focus groups.   Attached is a post-project survey you can use to gather stakeholder opinion and to shape interview or focus group questions. You use the actual lists you generated in Step One in the questions or surveys you use in Step Two.

You will want to sort the data into these categories:

	Stakeholders: Providers	Stakeholders: Clients
Positive and anticipated short-term impacts		
Positive and intended long-term impacts		
Positive but intended impacts (short-term and/or long-term)		
Negative impacts (short-term and/or long-term)		

Step 3: Analysis and Reporting

The format for your Impact Analysis Report will be:

- an introduction: project, objectives, stakeholder groups, problem situation
- intended impacts from different perspectives (outcome of Step One)
- actual impacts when the project is complete (outcome of Step Two) with available evidence
- lessons learned and recommendations to others

Pre-Project Survey:
Determining Intended Impacts

_____(name of project) is a project of _____ (name of

organization) funded by the National Literacy Secretariat (and _____-- other partners if

applicable).

We are beginning to evaluate the project by asking stakeholders what they hope will be

achieved or changed by this project before it begins. The collected information will become the

"intended impacts" against which we will measure success when the project is complete.

The evaluation of this project will be based on a comparison of actual outcomes or impacts to

the intended impacts which we need to determine now.   Impacts or changes can be:

- different depending on the perspective, e.g., learners individually and collectively,
  educators and program providers, related service agencies and institutions,
  communities;

- anticipated (intended or planned) and/or unanticipated;

- tangible (measurable) and/or intangible;

- evident immediately (short-term) and/or after some time (long-term); and

- positive or negative (although few would plan for negative outcomes!).

It seems obvious that, if there wasn't a need for some type of change, this project wouldn't be

needed or funded. When this project is complete, what did you think will change and for whom?

Think of it this way: _This project would be considered a success if _____ was improved, or_

decreased, or lessened?

Please jot your ideas on this page and **fax it to** _____(name)
at _____ (fax number) on or before _____(date).

	Stakeholder Group 1 *(individually and collectively)*	*Stakeholder Group 2* *(educational and otherwise)*
Short-term or immediate (for this project)		
Long-term (broader implications)		

Post-Project Survey

We, _____(name of organization) are evaluating the _____

(name of project) project funded by the National Literacy Secretariat (and others if applicable).

Before the project began, we determined what impacts could be anticipated by the various

stakeholder groups. This is the final survey to assess the impact of the project. Please mail to

(_____ address) or fax (_____fax number) your completed survey to

_____ (person or agency) on or before _____ (date).

The following items were identified as potential or planned positive impacts of the project.

1. To what extent do you think that _____(client or consumer stakeholders) have benefited directly or indirectly from the project?

In my opinion, they have achieved: (please check ✔)	**A great deal**	**Some**	**Not at all**
•			
•			
•			
•			
• other -- positive?			
• other -- negative?			

2. To what extent do you think you and other provider stakeholders have benefited from the project?

In my opinion, they have achieved: (please check ✔)	**A great deal**	**Some**	**Not at all**
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
• other -- positive?			
• other -- negative?			

3. Can you list any other positive outcomes of the project that were not anticipated?

4. Can you list any negative outcomes of the project for any stakeholder groups?