The Financial Literacy Evaluation Project: Building a Pan-Canadian Community of Practice

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Social and Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI), Canada
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About SEDI

SEDI is a national, charitable organization whose mission is to reduce poverty by expanding social and economic opportunity for low-income and at-risk Canadians.

Three areas of work:

Financial literacy  Saving and Asset Building  Entrepreneurship

Latest initiatives:
Financial Literacy Evaluation Project

Overview

• A new, developmental project led by SEDI
• Promoting a collaborative, pan-Canadian approach to building evaluation capacity in the field of Financial Literacy
• Work to date: National scan and consultations, design work
• Thanks to our funder: Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada (IIROC)

Long-term Goals

• To support Canadian financial literacy practitioners and funders to integrate evaluation into their practice
• To support the creation of an evidence-based case for financial literacy programming in Canada
An emerging vision of collaboration and learning

Advisory Panel

Reference Group
An emerging community of practice
Lead practitioners and funders from across Canada

SEDI Team

Existing Regional Hubs:

Prairies
B.C.
Ontario
Quebec
East

Advisory Panel:

Lead Stakeholders -
• Autorité des marchés financières (AMF), Quebec
• Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC)
• Human Resources & Social Development Canada (HRSDC)
• Investor Education fund (IEF), Ontario Securities Commission
• SEED Winnipeg
• St. Christopher House (Toronto)
• SEDI
Financial literacy in Canada: An entry point to achieve other social and economic development objectives

Community Economic Development
(micro-enterprise credit, self-employment training, cooperative development and social purpose enterprise)

Poverty Alleviation
(Multiple services to promote social inclusion, employability, access to entitlements - adult education, food security, immigrant settlement, etc.)

Asset Building
(IDAs and matched savings programs)

Consumer Education and Protection
(consumer education/advocacy and credit counselling programs)
What will we be evaluating?
Conceptualizing financial literacy practice at the organizational level

Program Delivery

In-house training
Outreach training/capacity building

In-house coaching
Outreach coaching/capacity building

Group
Individual

Internal
External

Scaling-up and Replication

Policy Research and Dialogue

Source: Financial capability Implementation Options
HRSDC Scan on Financial Capability Practice in Canada – March 2011 – Resources for Results
Implications for evaluation

Evaluation will be challenging due to:
• A wide range of programming objectives and modalities – we will focus on direct service (training and coaching)
• Embedding of FL into other programs – few are solely FL interventions (attribution will be difficult)
• Weak evaluation funding and capacity
• Substantially different target populations and organizations – flexible offerings that respect differences
• Emerging field of practice – Innovation and inconsistency of delivery – a fidelity checklist will be required
Current FL evaluation of CBOs (N=26)

- Focus on accountability
- Challenge of project-focused funding context
- Evaluation is not integrated into program planning...

Findings:
- 19% had logic models
- 12% had a full evaluation plan for their project
- 46% said that they do outcomes research, - basic pre-/post- surveys and some follow-up interviews
- 23% had had the assistance of external evaluators
- 31% engage in policy work
What constitutes a “good enough” evaluation strategy?

Key decisionmaking themes in designing a balanced evaluation approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relaxed, developmental approach</th>
<th>Structured, systematic approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevant</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rigorous</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluation methodologies that respect participants and acknowledge the context of financial exclusion</td>
<td>• Solid basic metrics to report on the scope and reach of program investments</td>
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<td>• Tells the real story behind outcomes.</td>
<td>• Robust and rigorous, “experimental design” methods</td>
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<td><strong>Flexible</strong></td>
<td><strong>Standardized</strong></td>
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<td>• Developmental and adaptable to changing delivery methods and different target populations</td>
<td>• Emphasis on consistency and “fidelity” of delivery</td>
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<td><strong>Appropriate and practitioner-driven</strong></td>
<td><strong>“Objective”, external, expert-driven</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Desire for participant-centred and qualitative evaluation</td>
<td>• Desire for consistency and reliability evaluation strategies</td>
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<td>• Easy to implement and cost-effective,</td>
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## Emerging Strategy

### Phase 1 – Foundation Building (2011)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy 1</th>
<th>Strategy 2</th>
<th>Strategy 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convening</td>
<td>Agenda Setting</td>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
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**Strategy 1: Convening**
- Facilitate the development of a pan-Canadian community of practice
- Build “buy-in” and investment

**Strategy 2: Agenda Setting**
- Clarify learning priorities
- Devise a theory of change
- Agree on a common set of basic outcomes indicators

**Strategy 3: Capacity Building**
- Devise a tool set, data collection processes and “how to” guide
- Begin coaching a self-directed planning process for monitoring and evaluation (funders/practitioners)
Priorities for this phase

**Deliverables**
- Data collection tool set – performance monitoring and basic participant outcomes
- Project and evaluation planning worksheets and templates (web-based distribution)
- Agreement on a “core” set of FL outcomes
- Development of a long-term learning and evaluation strategy and matrix
- Working theory of change

**Strategies**
- Collaborative development of base tools and strategy
- Active stakeholder guidance and input into tool development
- Peer review by academics
- Clear language and design editing
- Validation testing
- Pilot tools with funders and practitioners
- Exploration of “dash board” reporting format
Building from the base...
A continuum of evaluation learning

Advanced
- Rigorous approach led by external evaluator(s) in close cooperation with CBOs and funders
- Comparison group evaluation?

Intermediate
- Practitioner-led outcome evaluation and learning
- Case study approach with heavy emphasis on qualitative data
- Repeated measures - outcomes

Basic
- Basic monitoring
- Collection and reporting of performance metrics
- For organizations with few resources
Simple thinking about indicators...
Making use of the Task Force on Financial Literacy’s National Financial Literacy Index.³

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<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
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<tr>
<td>Making ends meet</td>
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<td>Keeping track of money</td>
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<td>Choosing products</td>
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<td>Planning ahead</td>
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<td>Staying informed and getting help</td>
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Possible next steps

**Phase 1: Foundation Building**
- Evaluation Agenda
- Community of practice
- Foundational tools and resources

**CBO Evaluation Capacity Building**
- Strategy to support a broad base of practitioners to integrate evaluation into FL
  - Evaluation coaching
  - Practitioner-led outcomes research

**Building a Strong Evidence Base**
- Centralized data collection?
- Collaborative outcomes research
- Comparison group research
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