

FINAL REPORT

EVALUATION OF THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORK GROUP MODEL PROJECT

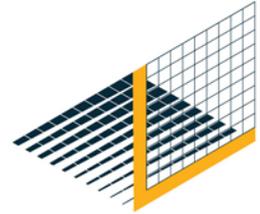
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Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Barriers related to international qualifications assessment and recognition (IQAR), (particularly in regulated professions and trades) are complex. Provinces across the country have had to address these challenges so that skilled newcomers to Canada may enter the occupations they have been trained in as efficiently as possible, while still protecting the public interest by maintaining appropriate standards of practice.

The Multi-stakeholder Work Group model is unique to Nova Scotia and has been recognized nationally as a best practice to address international qualifications challenges.

The primary goal of this initiative is to identify and develop systemic change and sustainable programs that ensure fair, transparent and equitable pathways to licensure. This initiative also promotes sustainable programs to support newcomers to become qualified and integrated into the provincial workforce in their chosen fields.

Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model

During the Multi-stakeholder Work Group (MWG) meetings and in the work done in the interim, barriers and gaps to IQAR are identified, the pathways to licensure are reviewed and updated, information is shared, partnership opportunities are explored and pursued, and systemic changes are identified and implemented. The degree to which the MWGs have implemented systemic changes and supports along the pathway to licensure is dependent on several factors, including the nature of the profession, the length of time the MWG has been operational, and degree of regulation for the profession. MWG participants are committed to ensuring that processes to licensure are fair, equitable and transparent, while upholding Canadian standards. As a result, the Multi-Stakeholder Work Groups play a significant role in ensuring that internationally trained professionals become contributing members of their occupations in Nova Scotia.

Results

The results of the evaluation show that the MWG Model project has met all of its short-term and intermediate-term goals, and has achieved long-term goals through systemic changes and the development of programs that have reduced barriers along the pathway to licensure for internationally educated professionals in regulated occupations.

There are clearly identifiable, concrete outcomes resulting from the eight MWGs.

The results of this evaluation clearly identify several outcomes and impacts attributable to the MWGs, including the removal of barriers on the pathway to licensure, changes in licensure process and new pathways created. As a result of the MWG, information related to IQAR issues and challenges is shared, issues identified and discussed, and opportunities for partnership explored. As a result of the MWGs, new ideas are incubated and special projects are initiated.

Determinants for Successful Collaboration

The determinants of successful collaboration developed by Mattessich and Monsey in their article *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*¹ provide a framework with which to evaluate the MWG Model. The article identifies seven distinct phases of collaboration using multi-stakeholder models, including initiation, acquaintance, first and second agreement, implementation, consolidation and institutionalization. They also identify six factors influencing the success of multi-stakeholder collaboration models. Based on the results of the focus group, survey and key stakeholder interviews, it is evident that the MWG contains all of these key determinants.

The results of the stakeholder survey indicated that over 85 percent of stakeholders either agreed or strongly agreed that there is mutual respect, understanding and trust amongst stakeholders in the work group.

¹ Mattessich PW, Monsey BR, 1992. "Collaboration: What Makes It Work", From Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, S&H. ISBN 0- 940069-02-4.

Outcomes

The results of the evaluation identify several outcomes achieved that are directly attributable to the Multi-stakeholder Work Group model. The following examples are a direct result of the MWGs and each has had a direct impact on immigrants in the province.

- Creation of IMG Med III Clerkship, a unique pathway to licensure for physicians
- Observership programs;
- Specialist assessment for medical practice (in progress);
- Online orientation programs available to immigrants both pre and post arrival;
- College of Pharmacists eliminated a requirement for part of internship to be in hospital environment, thereby overcoming a significant barrier;
- Pharmacy clinical skills examination and internship can be done in any order;
- Continuing education credits awarded to pharmacists and engineers who take part in preparatory or assessment programs;
- Worksite-based competency assessment against Competencies (WPAC) project for internationally educated engineers (IEES);
- Engineers Nova Scotia (ENS) credits ISIS Communication/orientation skills program as a three month credit toward the required one year of Canadian experience.
- ENS credits the IEE WPAC project as a four month credit toward the required one year of Canadian experience.
- Many MWGs link directly to Pan-Canadian initiatives in IQAR as well as bridging program in other Maritime provinces.

Impacts

While the full long-term impacts resulting from the multi-stakeholder work group model will not be realized in until some date in the future, the multi-stakeholder model has already realized long-run outcomes as a result of systemic changes and support programs that reduce barriers for internationally educated individuals in regulated fields. The MWGs have result in substantive and improved changes to licensure pathways, and the introduction of innovative programming done in partnership.

Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned from the Multi-stakeholder Work Groups is that in order to make significant progress in addressing the challenges of international qualifications recognition, it is critical that all key stakeholders be involved. All key stakeholders are needed at the table so that changes can be made which are realistic and sustainable. Each stakeholder holds part of the solution so working collaboratively is not only more effective, it's more efficient.

Several of the lessons learned identified by stakeholders related to the collaborative process within the MWG. Stakeholders indicated that collaboration works if understanding and respect are mutual for all members at the table. They also indicated that it takes time to build the level of trust required for stakeholders to begin to engage in the collaborative engagement process required to address challenges.

Nova Scotia's smaller size means that key stakeholders are more readily identified. In addition, efforts to develop the positive partnerships required are frequently grounded in well-established working relationships.

Conclusion

The results of the evaluation clearly demonstrate that the Multi-stakeholder Work Group model has not only met all of its short-term and intermediate-term outcome goals, it has also achieved long-term goals through the development of systemic changes and programs that have reduced barriers along the pathway to licensure for internationally educated professionals in regulated industries.

The consultation and analysis undertaken for this evaluation clearly identify several positive outcomes and impacts to address IQAR challenges that are directly attributable to the MWGs. Information related to IQAR issues and challenges is shared, issues are identified and discussed, opportunities for partnership are explored, new ideas are incubated and special projects are initiated. Perhaps most importantly, the momentum for change is sustained.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In Nova Scotia, as elsewhere, international qualification assessment and recognition (IQAR) is a complex issue, and the challenges do not belong to the regulatory authorities alone. When Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) began to work on IQAR issues, it became evident that in order to make systemic change, and develop realistic and sustainable solutions, all of the relevant stakeholders needed to be at the table. On this basis, ISIS moved forward to provide leadership in the development of profession-specific Multi-Stakeholder Work Groups that meet regularly to address the challenges related to IQAR in the province.

Unique to the province, the Multi-stakeholder Work Groups (MWGs) were developed and implemented to address the complexity of IQAR and include all of the stakeholders involved in the assessment, recognition and integration of internationally educated professionals. They provide appropriate forums for informed dialogue, examination of the issues and challenges, and the development of practical and realistic solutions. The goal of this initiative is systemic change to ensure fair, transparent and equitable pathways to licensure, as well as sustainable programs to support skilled newcomers to become qualified and integrated into the provincial workforce in their chosen fields.

Nova Scotia's Multi-stakeholder Work Group model has been recognized nationally as a best practice to address international qualifications challenges. Each work group brings together the key stakeholders in that profession(s) to address the challenges of international qualifications assessment and recognition. Membership in these work groups includes: regulatory authorities, professional associations, educational institutions, settlement and language service providers, employers, unions, sector councils, government departments, internationally educated professionals and others as relevant.

In October 2011 a project was initiated which funded an ISIS staff to provide leadership to the Multi-stakeholder work group initiative while working within the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE). The Multi-stakeholder Work Group project is funded through a contribution agreement between LAE and the federal government (i.e., Human Resources and Skills Development Canada). Other resources devoted to the project include the staff time from ISIS, LAE, Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and the other stakeholders and donated meeting space.

1.2 Study Objectives

The primary purpose of this study is to complete an evaluation of the MWG model process in terms of short- and medium-term outcomes achieved. An Evaluation Framework and set of evaluation questions was developed based on the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Logic Model, goals, activities and outcomes. The evaluation focuses on the outcomes (both intended and unintended) achieved through the main activities undertaken, and assesses the relevance and performance of the MWG model in meeting its objectives. The evaluation also provides recommendations for the future direction of the MWG model.

II. METHODOLOGY

This evaluation is conducted using a collaboration framework and focuses on the outcomes and impacts achieved by the Multi-stakeholder Work Group model. This evaluation:

- identifies the short term, intermediate and longer term outcomes (based on a review of the Logic Model and the Evaluation Questions);
- assesses the impact of the project in terms of individual stakeholders, their organizations, their professions/occupations and the community at large (based on the results of the stakeholder interviews, observation of work group meetings, focus group discussions, and survey results)
- assesses the impact of the multi-stakeholder work groups on international qualifications recognition in the province of Nova Scotia;
- collects and analyzes qualitative and quantitative data (through stakeholder and key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and survey results)

The data collection methods utilized include observation of work group meetings, focus group discussions (evaluation added as an agenda item at MWG meetings), and a survey questionnaire (completed by both past and current stakeholders), and key informant interviews.

Document and Literature Review

The document review includes a review of multi-stakeholder work group file materials, including meeting minutes, progress reports and other documentation for each of the MWGs. Relevant documents and materials were reviewed prior to attending the MWG meetings. In addition, a review of the literature on multi-stakeholder models was undertaken to better understand the factors affecting successful collaboration and to develop a framework to evaluate the success and impact of the multi-stakeholder work group model developed by ISIS. The document and literature review were critical in developing the questions for the focus group discussions, stakeholder interviews, and the questionnaire used in the survey of current and past stakeholder members. In addition, the review of the literature on collaborative multi-stakeholder models and determinants of their success was instrumental in undertaking the qualitative and quantitative assessments of the impacts of the multi-stakeholder work group model.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were included as an agenda item at the MWG meetings. This allowed for an efficient method to conduct an observation of the MWG meetings and facilitate a group discussion that avoided intruding on the regular meeting agenda. Focused discussion groups were used to collect multi-perspective information and engage stakeholders in discussion and consideration concerning the impacts of the activities undertaken as well as the process used in the MWG model. The focus group discussion utilized a detailed discussion guide, submitted to the Advisory Committee for review prior to the focus group.

Survey Questionnaire

This study also collected primary data and information with the use of a survey of both past and current MWG members. The survey was based on a representative sample of up to 10 members from each of the eight stakeholder work groups for a maximum total of 80 survey respondents. Survey respondents were carefully selected to be representative of the MWG membership, and included representation from regulatory authorities, professional associations, educational

institutions, settlement and language service providers, employers, unions, sector councils, government departments, internationally educated professionals and others as relevant to the working group.

The survey was sent by out by e-mail to respondents with an invitation letter providing a brief introduction to the survey, the evaluation of the program, and the importance of their participation. In addition, the survey was announced at the focus group discussions scheduled prior to the launch of the survey. Reminders were sent out by e-mail, following generally accepted protocol for survey methodology (two e-mail reminders spaced appropriately). A copy of the survey of current and past multi-stakeholder work group members is contained in Appendix A of this report.

The survey contained a series of questions that facilitated an evaluation of both the process and the outputs achieved by the MWG Model. The survey responses provide a full assessment of the Model across the broad range of activities implemented and a review of the impact of these activities on outputs and results. The survey questionnaire assisted in gathering key data and information required to conduct the evaluation of the resulting impacts on the individual stakeholders, their organizations, their professions and occupations, and the community at large - not only in terms of IQAR in Nova Scotia – but more broadly in terms of the settlement and integration of immigrants in the province, labour market development, and economic development. Care was taken to ensure security of the administration of the survey and all information obtained. All responses were treated as confidential, and results were analyzed and presented in aggregate according to specific evaluation questions and issues addressed (in such a way that responses from individual respondents cannot be identified). A total of 34 completed questionnaires were received, (a 42 percent response rate). Summary tables of stakeholder responses are contained in Appendix B.

Key Informant Interviews

In addition, in-person interviews were conducted with the program administrators, to review the activities undertaken and assess the relevance for the goals and objectives for the MWG Model. Key informant interviews were also conducted to obtain additional information related to the impacts and outcomes of the initiative. The interview questions were based on the issues defined for the evaluation, reviewed and refined as necessary for interviewing purposes. Key stakeholders interviews are vital to get the type of understanding needed to interpret the impacts and results produced by the Model. Only in this way can the nature of the results and the attribution to the Model to produce these results be explored. This is necessary to establish credible causal links between the Model's performance (outcomes) and the program activities. A copy of the key informant interview guide is contained in Appendix A.

III. MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORK GROUP MODEL

This section provides a brief overview of the challenges associated with IQAR, legislation that has been introduced in Nova Scotia to ensure fair registration practices as well as the development of the MWG Model as an innovative approach introduced to assist with these challenges.

3.1 Context

Immigrants arriving in Nova Scotia bring with them significant education, experience, knowledge, skills, positive personality traits and talents. This human capital has the potential to contribute greatly to the economic development of the province. However, this valuable human capital is often not fully utilized. One major reason for this underutilized potential is the challenge presented by IQAR. For internationally trained professionals who immigrate to Nova Scotia, qualifications assessment and recognition represents a significant and complex barrier to employment. Credentials assessment refers to the process of validating educational documents and providing a Canadian equivalency statement. On a broader basis, international qualifications recognition includes more than assessing and verifying a university degree. It also includes assessing professional credentials, competencies and experience. Every province outside the Atlantic region has a provincially mandated international credentials assessment service. There is currently no international credentials service in the Atlantic region and newcomers send their documents for assessment to agencies in other provinces.²

3.2 Fair Registration Practices Act

Broad frameworks are an important foundation to establish principles and guide work on IQAR but the reality is that change mostly happens at the provincial level. In 2008, Nova Scotia joined Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba by introducing legislation that aims to address challenges related to IQAR. The Fair Registration Practices Act (FRPA) will ensure that the registration practices of regulatory bodies in Nova Scotia are "transparent, objective, impartial and procedurally fair".³ The provincial Department of Labour and Advanced Education is responsible for ensuring compliance with this Act and it is taking a collaborative approach to doing so.

3.3 The Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model

Regulated occupations require certification or licensure. Skilled immigrants understand the importance of high standards of practice, but require fair and realistic opportunities to have their qualifications assessed and recognized so they can work in their fields. This includes:

- clear, transparent and timely pathways to licensure;
- no unnecessary barriers; and
- orientation and bridging programs.

The multi-stakeholder work group model was created with these challenges in mind. Developed by ISIS and now continued by the province, the profession-specific MWGs provide a unique collaborative approach to bringing about systemic change in regulated occupations. The MWGs bring together all relevant stakeholders who then work together to eliminate

² The best source of information on international credentials assessment services is www.cicic.ca

³ To see the whole Act, go to http://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/60th2nd/3re_read/b211.htm.

unnecessary barriers and, combine their efforts to streamline the process and provide effective supports. ISIS works closely with the NS Department of LAE on this initiative.

The goal of this initiative is systemic change to ensure fair, transparent and equitable pathways to licensure, as well as sustainable programs to support skilled newcomers to become qualified and integrated into the provincial workforce in their chosen fields. Currently, there are eight active MWGs covering fourteen regulated occupations active in Nova Scotia:

- International Medical Graduates (IMG)
- International Pharmacy Graduates (IPG)
- Internationally Trained Lawyers (ITL)
- Internationally Educated Engineers (IEE)
- International Trained Construction Electricians (ITCE)
- Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN)
- Internationally Educated Dental Professionals (IEDP)
- Internationally Educated Medical Lab Technologists (IEMLT)

The fourteen regulated occupations covered by the eight MWGs include:

- Engineering
- Engineering Technician/Technologist
- Pharmacists
- Physicians
- Registered Nurses
- Licensed Practical Nurses
- Medical Laboratory Technologists
- Lawyers
- Construction Electricians
- Dentists
- Dental Hygienists
- Dental Assistants
- Dental Technologists
- Denturists

Each work group brings stakeholders to the table on a quarterly basis or more often. The intent of these work groups is to make realistic, systemic and process changes. The MWG Model facilitates the development of a collective vision and strategic directions to:

- provide a forum for the exchange of information about existing processes and programs;
- facilitate collaboration and partnership;
- avoid program duplication;
- identify barriers, issues and gaps;
- identify opportunities for collaboration;
- develop, review and modify pathways to licensure for immigrants coming to Nova Scotia
- provide critical feedback on processes and programs;
- create and develop innovative, workable solutions;
- develop partnership programs/projects; and
- act in an advisory capacity to the development and implementation of bridging and/or gap training initiatives.

While the specific representatives on each group, as well as their roles, vary according to the structure and culture of the profession – the nature of the membership is essentially the same. Each work group involves a range of key stakeholders involved in the profession, including:

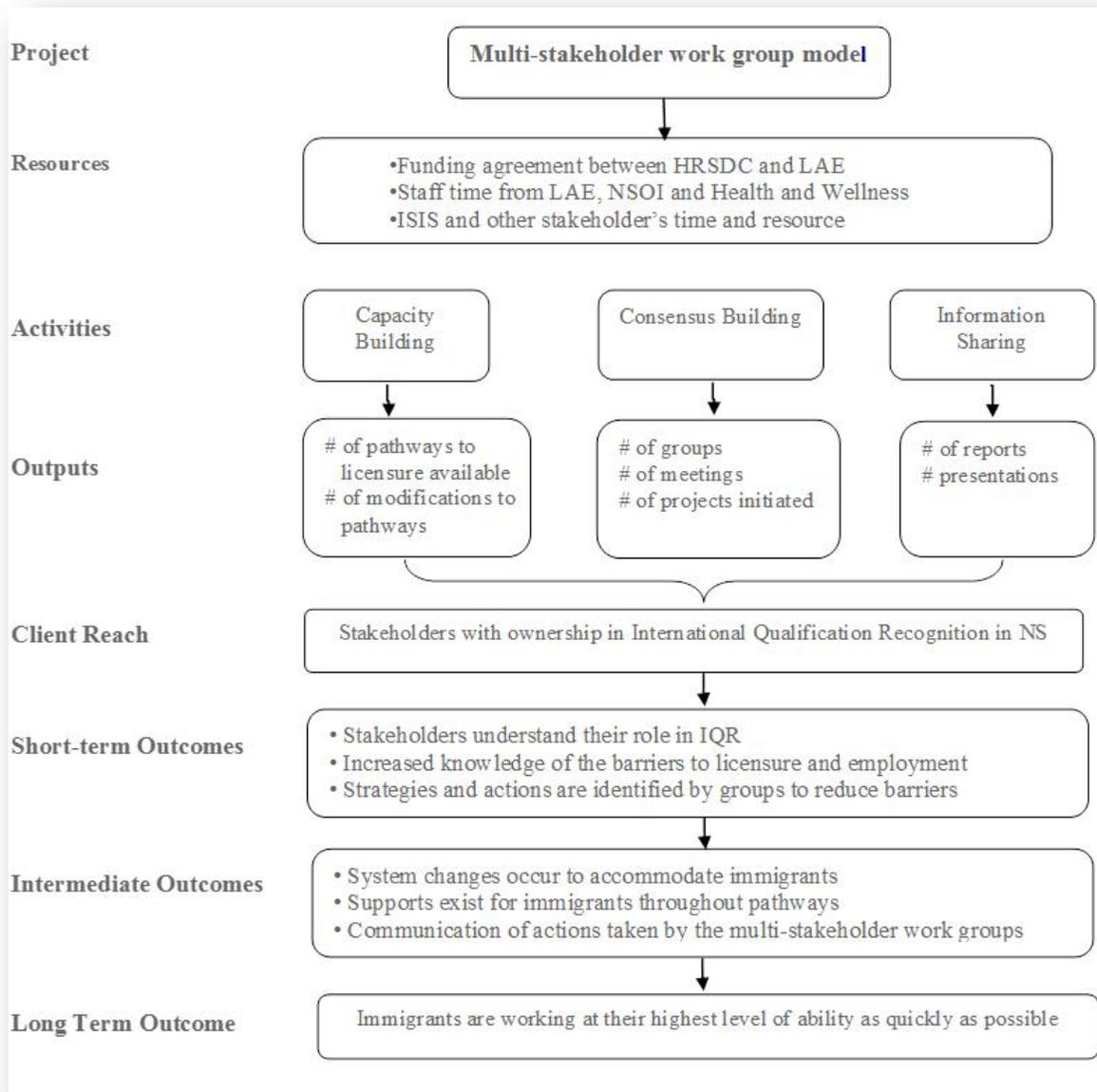
- Professional Association (e.g., Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS))
- Occupational Regulatory Body (e.g., College of Pharmacists of NS)
- Educational Institution – university, college, continuing education
- Government – the provincial Office of Immigration and other departments as relevant⁴
- Employer and union representatives
- Representatives of associations of internationally educated professionals
- Immigrant settlement serving agency (ISIS)
- Others as appropriate

⁴ The Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) is at every table including the FRPA review officer, Labour Mobility Coordinator and a Senior Policy Analyst from the Office of Immigration (now part of LAE). Other departments are included if relevant – eg. Department of Health and Wellness.

IV. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The evaluation of the MWG Model is based on a systemic review of the project documentation, its stated goals, objectives and projected outcomes. An Evaluation Framework is developed based on the Logic model (Figure 1) for the MWG project, identifying the short-run, medium- and long-run outcomes. The set of Evaluation Questions (below) was developed based on the project goals, outputs and outcomes

Figure 1: Logic Model: Multi-stakeholder Work Group Project



4.1 Evaluation Questions

All data and information collected throughout the evaluation was tailored to address the evaluation questions using the various methodological approaches. Quantitative and qualitative data and information was collected using focus groups, key stakeholder interviews and a stakeholder survey. The data gathering instruments were developed with the aim of examining the evaluation questions to ensure the most credible and defensible linkages between project activities and outputs, and outcomes. Figure 2 provides a summary of the evaluation questions used in this study.

Figure 2: Evaluation Questions: Multi-stakeholder Work Group Project

Process Evaluation

Are the key determinants of success for multi-stakeholder models of collaboration present in the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model?

Short-term Outcomes

Does the Multi-stakeholder Model help stakeholders understand their role in international qualification recognition (IQR)?

Does the Multi-stakeholder Model help to increase stakeholders' knowledge of barriers to licensure and employment?

Has the Multi-stakeholder Model lead to strategies and actions being identified by stakeholder work groups to reduce barriers to licensure?

Intermediate Outcomes

Have there been systematic changes to accommodate immigrants?

Have supports for Immigrants throughout pathway to licensure been developed?

Has there been communication of action taken by Multi-stakeholder Work Groups?

Long-term Outcomes

Have there been changes that reduce barriers and allow immigrant to be working at the highest level of ability as quickly as possible?

Additional Evaluation Questions

Has there been a high degree of collaboration among the members of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group?

What are the key benefits of members' involvement with the Multi-stakeholder Work Group?

What are the key challenges encountered in the Multi-stakeholder Work Group?

What are the key lessons learned as a result of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group work well?

4.2 Framework to Assess the Multi-stakeholder Collaboration Model

The review of the literature on multi-stakeholder models of collaboration identified several articles outlining the premise, goals and objectives of multi-stakeholder models and provided a better understanding of the determinants of success for collaborative multi-stakeholder models. These determinants of success serve as a framework against which the success of the multi-stakeholder work group model developed and initiated by ISIS can be evaluated.

In multi-stakeholder networks, representatives from civil society, business and governmental institutions come together to find a common solution to a problem that affects all of them. Problems taken on by these networks tend to be very complex, can affect people across national boundaries, and are not sufficiently well understood. In multi-stakeholder networks, information concerning a problem is gathered from different sources, learning continually takes place around the multi-stakeholder table, conflicts between participants are addressed and cooperation is sought.

Mattessich and Monsey in their article *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*⁵, conceptualise multi-stakeholder networks by proposing a problem-centred stakeholder definition and identify seven distinct phases of collaboration using multi-stakeholder models, including initiation, acquaintance, first and second agreement, implementation, consolidation and institutionalization. They also identify six key factors influencing the success of multi-stakeholder collaboration models, including factors related to

1. Environment (social, cultural and political environment);
2. Membership Characteristics;
3. Process/Structure;
4. Communication;
5. Purpose; and
6. Resources

Are the key determinants of success for multi-stakeholder models of collaboration present in the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model?

Evaluating the Multi-stakeholder Work Group model against the six key factors influencing the success of multi-stakeholder collaboration models, it is evident that all of the determinants for successful collaboration models are present in the MWG Model, with some being more prevalent than others.

The results of the stakeholder survey indicated that over 85 percent of stakeholders either agreed or strongly agreed that there is mutual respect, understanding and trust amongst stakeholders in the work group. In addition, over 88 percent of stakeholders believed that there is an appropriate cross-section of members in the multi-stakeholder work group.

⁵ Collaboration: What Makes It Work. Mattessich PW, Monsey BR, 1992. From Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 919 Lafond Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104, (800) 2746024, 53 pp, softcover, S&H. ISBN 0-940069-02-4.

Table 1 provides a summary of the stakeholder survey results pertaining to the factors contributing to successful models of collaboration in the framework outlined by Mattessich and Monsey. As can be seen in Table 1, over 85 percent of stakeholders surveyed believed there was a high degree of collaboration in the multi-stakeholder work group. Even in cases where the percentage of stakeholders surveyed that either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements related to the determinants of successful models of collaboration is less than 75 percent, a large percentage of stakeholders indicated they were neutral or had no comment. For example, roughly 74 percent of stakeholders indicated they either agreed or strongly agreed that the co-chair model of leadership is effective, another 14.7 percent indicated they were neutral, 8.8 percent indicated they had no comments, and only 2.9 percent indicated they either disagreed or strongly agreed with the statement. A detailed summary of survey results and comments is contained in Appendix B.

| Table 1: Summary of Stakeholder Survey Results Pertaining to Factors Contributing to Successful Models of collaboration | |
|--|---|
| | Percentage that either agree or strongly agree |
| The work group is an effective forum for addressing IQAR challenges in this occupation. | 78.4% |
| There is mutual respect, understanding and trust amongst stakeholders in the work group. | 85.3% |
| There is an appropriate cross-section of members in the multi-stakeholder work group | 88.2% |
| There is a high degree of collaboration that exists in the multi-stakeholder work groups. | 85.3% |
| The multi-stakeholder work group promotes effective communication on IQAR challenges and issues. | 85.3% |
| The co-chair model of leadership is effective | 73.5% |

Table 2 provides a summary of the evaluation of the key factors influencing success of collaboration using the framework put forward by Mattessich and Monsey, based on the results of the focus group discussions, stakeholder survey and key stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders indicated that there is evidence of inter-collaboration among members within the meetings and externally as required. Consistent with the findings of Mattessich and Monsey, stakeholders indicated that the level of collaboration varies depending on the stage of development in the group. Multi-stakeholder work groups that are more established (i.e., Pharmacy, Engineering, Medicine and to some extent Law) have demonstrated the most collaboration to date. Others are assuming a collaborative approach quickly. Stakeholders also indicated that some groups recently came together and are at the trust building stage. Evidence that groups have developed a high degree of collaboration is illustrated in the fact that some group have come together to submit common proposals for funding.

| Table 2: Framework for Assessing Successful Multi-stakeholder Collaboration Models, Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration: | |
|--|--|
| 1. Factors Related to the Environment | |
| History of collaboration or cooperation in the community | The results of the focus group, key stakeholder interviews and stakeholder survey indicate that the history of collaboration or cooperation already existed in the community and provided the potential collaborative partners with an understanding of the roles and expectations required in collaboration and enabled them to trust the process |
| Collaborative group seen as a leader in the community | The results of the stakeholder interviews and survey indicated that once the multi-stakeholder work groups became established (and by implication, the agencies in the group) the group is perceived within the community as a leader – at least related to the goals and activities it intends to accomplish. This result is reinforced by having senior parties from each of the stakeholder groups represented in the multi-stakeholder work group |
| Political/social climate favorable | This key determinant was also present for all multi-stakeholder work groups in general. The political leaders, opinion-makers, persons, who control resources and the general public in the Nova Scotia context support the mission of the multi-stakeholder work group (or at least do not oppose it). |
| 2 Factors Related to Membership Characteristics. | |
| Mutual respect, understanding, and trust | This determinant of success was also evident in the multi-stakeholder work groups as shown in the results of the focus group, key stakeholder interviews and stakeholder survey, although stakeholders indicated that mutual respect, understanding and trust could sometimes take a while to build. Once the Multi-stakeholder work group is established and members develop mutual trust for one another, they also begin to demonstrate an understanding and respect for each other and their respective organizations, how they operate, their cultural norms and values, limitations, and expectations. |
| Appropriate cross-section of members | The importance of this determinant was reiterated in the focus group, key stakeholder interviews and stakeholder survey results. It was noted that in cases where the MWG included representatives from each segment of the stakeholder community affected by its activities, there was a much greater chance for success of the group, a greater respect from the community, and a greater opportunity to affect change. |
| Members see collaboration as in their self-interest | This determinant was present in all cases where the MWG was more developed and had built up a trust, mutual respect, and understanding of one another. In these cases, collaborating stakeholders believe the benefits of collaboration will be greater than costs such as loss of autonomy or “turf”. |
| Ability to compromise | This determinant was also present in all cases where the MWG was more developed and had built up a trust, mutual respect, and understanding of one another. Collaborating stakeholders are able to compromise since the many decisions within a collaborative effort cannot possibly fit the preferences of every member perfectly. |

| Table 2 Continued: Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration: Framework for Assessing Successful Multi-stakeholder Collaborations | |
|---|--|
| 3. Factors Related to Process/Structure | |
| Multiple layers of decision-making | All members of the MWG participate in decision-making, and in this manner take ownership of the decisions made. Decisions were made for the most part by consensus preferably, and if not, then majority. However, in cases where all members did not agree, they felt comfortable discussing their opposing viewpoints. |
| Members share a stake in both process and outcome | Members of the MWG feel ownership of both the way the group works and the results or product of its work – largely because all participate in the decision-making process. |
| Flexibility | Members of the MWG remain open to varied ways of organizing itself and accomplishing its work. |
| Development of clear roles and policy guidelines | Collaborating partners clearly understand their roles, rights and responsibilities and how to carry out responsibilities. |
| Adaptability | Ability of MWGs to sustain themselves in the midst of major changes, members, etc., (e.g., if co-chair no longer present) may not yet be present. This will likely develop as MWGs become established. |
| 4. Factors Related to Communication | |
| Open and frequent communication | Open communication was present in all of the MWGs. In terms of the frequency, most MWG groups met between 4-5 times per year. Collaborative group members update one another, discuss issues openly convey all necessary information to one another and to people outside the group. |
| Established informal and formal communication links | This was present in all of the MWGs. Channels of communication exist on paper, so that information flow occurs. In addition, members establish personal connections through participation of stakeholders, producing a better, more informed and cohesive group working on a common project. |
| 5. Factors Related to Purpose | |
| Concrete, attainable goals and objectives | This was present in all of the MWGs. The goals and objectives of the collaborative group are clear to all partners, and can realistically be attained. All members understood their roles, as well as the role of others around the table. |
| Shared vision | This was present in all of the well established MWGs. Stakeholders have same vision, clearly agreed upon mission, objectives and strategy. The stakeholders developed the vision as they worked together. |
| Unique purpose | This was present in all of the MWGs. The mission and goals or approach of the collaborative group differ, at least in part, from the mission and goals or approach of the member organizations. |
| 6. Factors Related to Resources | |
| Sufficient funds | Multi-stakeholder work groups are all voluntary. Funding resources come from supporting agencies. |
| Skilled convener | Yes. The individual who convenes the collaborative group has organizing and interpersonal skills, and carries out the role with fairness. Because of these characteristics (and others), the convener is granted respect or legitimacy from the collaborative partners. |

V. EVALUATION RESULTS

5.1 Summary of Evaluation Results

This evaluation focuses on the *outcomes* resulting from the Multi-stakeholder Work Group (MWG) Model. Outcomes are the more immediate and tangible results of program activities that can be observed, monitored, measured, and evaluated in the short to medium term and can be intended or unintended. Impacts refer to the high level effects that are attributable to a program in the medium or long term and demonstrate how the project has affected the big picture issues or challenges that the program was designed to ameliorate.

The results of the evaluation show that the MWG Model project has met all of its short-term and intermediate-term goals, and has also achieved long-term goals through systemic changes and the development of programs that have reduced barriers along the pathway to licensure for internationally educated professionals in regulated industries.

For example, systemic changes such as allowing IPG internships to be completed in community settings rather than hospital settings, the development of the IMG Med 3-Clerkship program, and amending the sequencing in the licensure pathway such that the IPG internship component may now be completed prior to the national qualifying exam all reduce the barriers facing internationally educated professionals in these professions, thereby achieving the longer-term objective of reducing barriers and allowing immigrants to working at their highest level of ability as quickly as possible.

The achievement of outcomes by the Model is evaluated based on the data and information collected, including focus group discussions, MWG current and past member survey, and stakeholder interviews.

5.2 Short-Term Outcomes

Does the MWG model help stakeholders understand their role in IQAR?

“I believe IQAR issues are too complex and cross too many areas to be taken on by one group, collaboration and integration of work is essential and the multi-stakeholder work group model facilitates this.”

(Multi-stakeholder work group member)

The results of this evaluation found extensive evidence that there is an increased understanding among MWG members of their role in international qualification recognition. The survey asked members whether the MWG model had resulted in increased knowledge related to IQAR that would likely not have occurred otherwise. They were also asked to provide examples of how the multi-stakeholder model has led to this increased knowledge.

Over 84 percent of stakeholders surveyed indicated that as a result of participating on the multi-stakeholder work group, they are more knowledgeable about IQAR. Related to this question, over 78 percent of stakeholders surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that the work group is an effective forum for addressing IQAR challenges in this occupation. In support of these results, the results of the focus groups discussions highlighted the fact that stakeholders each have their own mandate coming from their own organizations. However, as a result of the MWG discussions,

they indicated that they begin to better understand the grey areas between organizations and departments. While stakeholders understood their own policies before joining the MWG discussions, they did not fully understand the role of other organizations, and were not able to identify any gaps for internationally trained immigrants that may exist and fall between the mandates of individual organizations. In addition, when they try to fill in the gaps between organizations without the discussion at the MWG, it is not always easy to find the correct or most up-to-date information.

“I receive a great education every time I attend a meeting. I learn about what others are doing and have contacted one or two other members to participate in my own organization’s programs/initiatives.” (Multi-stakeholder work group member)

Stakeholders indicated that they gain insight into the challenges faced by immigrants along the pathway to licensure as a result of the MWG discussion. They also gain a broader perspective on potential overlap and duplication along the pathway to licensure, and begin to identify how they can work in a more coordinated way. Stakeholders also indicated that in many cases, their own organizations are still in the process of understanding issues facing immigrants as they proceed along the pathway to licensure. This lack of understanding can present major obstacles for immigrants as they try to find correct and up to date information. Stakeholders indicated that the knowledge and information shared at the MWGs provides valuable insight not only for the stakeholder members themselves, but for their own organizations ultimately for immigrants, as stakeholders take this knowledge and insight back to their own organizations, update their web sites, provide up to date information to the public, and begin identify potential solutions to current gaps or barriers facing internationally educated newcomers.

The development of a clear visual licensure pathway documents provides a framework within which stakeholders can identify not only challenges faced by immigrants, but also potential solutions to the barriers that can be developed collaboratively while still protecting standards in place to protect the public for each profession under consideration.

Short-term outputs resulting from the MWG Model include updating information on organizations’ websites, helping immigrants find information, using plain language, providing information to immigrants, changing the manner in which information is provided to internationally trained individuals (making sure information is accessible – i.e., no more than three clicks away), and assisting immigrants in gaining recognition. Other examples of short-term outcomes directly attributable to the MWG model include providing increased clarity around standards, protocol and requirements and the development of a clear visual pathway to licensure document, improvements in the information provided on web sites, development of on-line and on-site courses, and changes in the order in which courses may be taken for the purpose of completing the pathway to licensure.

The results of the survey of current and past MWG members also identified several important outputs in terms of stakeholders recognizing their role in IQAR that are directly attributable to the MWG Model. MWG members indicated that IQAR issues are too complex and cross too many areas to be taken on by any one group or organization. They indicated that collaboration and integration of work is essential and the multi-stakeholder work groups facilitate the collaboration required to deal with IQAR. Stakeholders repeatedly indicated that the MWG meetings are an ideal forum within which they can discuss IQAR issues, identify barriers, and discuss solutions. They also noted that having the right (representative) stakeholders at the table that can inform, influence and take action is an effective way of achieving overall objectives.

Does the MWG Model help to increase stakeholders' knowledge of barriers to licensure and employment?

“As a result of my participation in the multi-stakeholder work group, I feel more knowledgeable about the issues associated with becoming registered in my professional group than my counterparts in other provinces that don't have regular communication with their stakeholders.” (Multi-stakeholder work group member)

The results of this evaluation show substantial evidence that the MWG Model helped stakeholders better understand the barriers to licensure and employment for internationally educated professionals in regulated occupations. Stakeholders indicated that as a result of MWG, they are better able to support internationally educated professionals and better able to know where to get additional support, if required. Participants also indicated that they are better able to understand the barriers in the pathway to licensure (e.g., communication, financial experience, or training, barriers).

Each MWG has an internationally educated professional from that particular occupation as a member of the Work Group. This stakeholder is usually someone who has already challenged the licensure process in Nova Scotia and who brings the perspective of internationally educated professionals in that field to the work group table.

Stakeholders indicated that the multi-stakeholder work group model also provides a convenient and efficient venue to learn about programs and best practices in other jurisdictions, and in some cases partnering or adding on to existing programs. The multi-stakeholder work group model is efficient in that it brings all key players to the table so that they can discuss issues and challenges related to IQAR at one place at one time. Everyone becomes more aware of what already exists (locally and elsewhere) and gains an increased awareness in a very efficient way.

Stakeholders also indicated that having the visual pathway to licensure documents on their website is helping their own staff as well as internationally trained professionals. The visual pathway assists in developing support programs for newcomers and provides the logic for their existing programs. This representation helps to identify additional support required for the internationally trained individuals and to tailor programs that are suitable (ranging from language training through to identifying educational programs to self assessment tools).

ISIS created the visual pathway to licensure for many professional occupations seven to eight years ago for easy access for newcomers. At the time there was no visual pathway document available for occupations such as MLTs, for example. While the development of the visual pathway was in many cases, not a direct result of the multi-stakeholder working groups, the visual pathway documents combined with the professional expertise around the table at the MWG sessions created a practical venue to vet programs developed to support internationally trained professionals as they moved along the pathway. Having the educators, employers, regulators, immigration settlement workers, and internationally trained individuals in each of these occupations together around the table provides an efficient and effective to vet programming support for internationally-educated professionals developed by the settlement agency and organizations.

Has the MWG Model led to strategies and actions to reduce barriers?

“Collaboration enhances the knowledge and understanding of the various issues facing the IQR’s. It also distributes the workload in dealing and improving the issues.”
(Multi-stakeholder work group member)

There are numerous examples of the implementation of strategies and actions to assist internationally educated professionals as they move along the pathway to licensure that are directly related to the MWGs.

Members of the MWG also identified outcomes and impacts for their organization that were directly attributable to their involvement with the MWG process, including the drafting or revision of regulations that recognize the barriers faced by internationally educated professionals. In addition, stakeholder representatives from educational institutions (including representatives from the universities, colleges and community colleges) identified new directions being taken in the way courses are offered or in the timing or content of courses offered.

The stakeholders present at the table are also able to influence or initiate change in their own organizations. When barriers in the pathway to licensure for internationally educated professionals are identified, they have no problem taking it to the right person in their own organization that can potentially implement suitable change. This is a key reason why the representatives at the table must be fairly senior within their own organization so that they can initiate this change and hold a fair amount of influence within their organization to see that it is implemented.

Another reason identified by stakeholders that it is important to have the right people around the table – stakeholders should be knowledgeable about their own organization, changes in policy or direction, changes in mandates or in funding. The sharing of knowledge is important as it assists each of the stakeholders in viewing the challenges for the internationally educated professionals from different perspectives. As a result of this knowledge and information sharing, stakeholders are aware of what is possible to change as a result of their participation in this group. Stakeholders indicated that once a high degree of trust is established among members of the MWG, members were comfortable identifying issues and challenges in the pathway to licensure, and working together as a group find appropriate solutions.

5.2 Intermediate Outcomes

In examining intermediate outcomes, consideration was given to the length of time the MWG had been operating. Some MWGs are relatively new (only their fourth meeting at the time of this evaluation), and therefore, it is still premature to identify intermediate outcomes, while others had been meeting for a longer time period (five to seven years) and have achieved numerous intermediate outcomes, ranging from streamlining of educational programs, developing new programs and courses, to changing the order in which educational or practicum components are offered/completed. In addition, differences in the requirements along the pathway to licensure among occupations affects the degree to which MWGs can initiate systemic changes that address issues and challenges faced by internationally educated professionals in gaining licensure in that occupation.

Have there been systemic changes to accommodate immigrants as a result of MWGs?

“It took time for the work group to come together and build trust. Once all parties had an understanding that this is a safe environment to share and reflect on IQR issues, the trust and respect grew. We then were able to begin to truly work in a collaborative manner and develop solutions that bring about real change that will make a difference for internationally educated professionals obtaining licensure in Nova Scotia.”
(Multi-stakeholder work group member)

The results of this evaluation show that there have been substantive systemic changes to accommodate immigrants that are directly attributable to the multi-stakeholder work groups. A few of the work groups have made changes to the pathways to licensure as a result of discussions at the MWG. The development of the IMG Clerkship Program, for example, is attributable to the collaboration IMG Work Group. Examples of systemic changes that have occurred to accommodate internationally educated professionals that are directly attributable to the MWG Model include, (but are not limited to) the following:

- Pharmacy internships can be done completely in community settings rather than hospital settings, which are difficult to access for IPGs. Because of the limited internship spaces provided by the hospitals, IPGs found it difficult to secure a hospital-based internship and waited long periods of time to finish this last step in their licensure. Due to the collaborative efforts of the IPG work group, an IPG now is able to complete the internship component of their licensure requirement in a community pharmacy. The elimination of the requirement for a portion of the pharmacy internship to be completed in a hospital environment reduced a major barrier facing IPGs in finding a hospital internship placement.
- The IMG Clerkship program - a joint program between the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness and Dalhousie University created a new pathway to licensure for physicians in NS and is directly attributable to the IMG stakeholder work group. IMG participants that complete this program become Canadian graduates and are eligible for residency positions. Ten IMGs have taken part so far and are currently in clerkship, residency or in practice. A return of service in Nova Scotia is required upon graduation.
- An IMG Observership Program has been established and is very helpful to IMGs. This is a partnership among the College of Physicians & Surgeons, Doctors Nova Scotia and ISIS, as well as all active participants in the IMG Work Group. Physicians in Family Practice across the province are also key partners. This program inspired a similar one in the law profession.
- An amendment of the sequencing in the IPG licensure pathway such that the IPG internship component may now be completed prior to the national qualifying exam. This is extremely beneficial because the practical knowledge and skills acquired during the internship helps IPGs during the national exams. As a result, the pharmacy final exam (OSCE)⁶ can be taken before, during or after the required internship period.
- A collaborative program for internationally educated engineers (IEES) that enables access to longer engineering work placements (four months versus six weeks) combined with a work-site performance assessment against engineering competencies (WPAC) tool for IEEs.

⁶ The Objectively Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) is an examination used in health sciences (medicine, physical therapy, radiography, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary medicine, optometry, chiropractic, naturopathic medicine, paramedicine and midwifery) designed to test clinical skill performance and competence in skills such as communication, clinical examination, medical procedures, prescription, exercise prescription, joint mobilisation techniques, radiographic positioning, radiographic image evaluation and interpretation of results.

Have there been supports for immigrants throughout pathway to licensure as a result of the MWG Model?

In addition to systemic changes there have been numerous supports for immigrants throughout the pathway to licensure that are directly attributable to the multi-stakeholder work groups. These range from bridging programs to financial support to study and support groups. Examples of supports for immigrants made that are directly attributable to the MWG include the following:

The International Medical Graduates (IMG) Bridging Program: The IMG Bridging Program offers a number of programs, services, and resources to support IMGs entry into the Canadian healthcare system. This program offers informational, learning, and other types of support to over 150 IMGs in Nova Scotia. The services are offered at no cost. Participation is open to IMGs who live in Nova Scotia and are registered with ISIS.

The IMG Bridging Program also offers **study groups** to assist IMGs in preparing for the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination (MCC EE), Qualifying Examination Part I (QE I), Qualifying Examination Part II (QE II) and the National Assessment Collaboration Objective Structured Clinical Examination (NAC OSCE). The aim of the study groups is to facilitate focused learning and provide a learning environment in which Canadian medical content can be explored, discussed, and modeled. Participating in study groups facilitates the development of a network of peers, a feeling of connectedness and exposure to various supports and resources.

The **IMGs Clinical Skills Review Program** was also developed as part of the IMG Bridging Program. This program is an onsite program at ISIS developed with the collaboration of a number of the physician members of the IMG Work Group who facilitate sessions to provide an opportunity for IMGs to practice professional interactions with patients. The program uses case studies and simulated patients to help IMGs prepare for clinical evaluations.

International Pharmacy Graduates (IPG) Bridging Program: This program includes the Communication Skills Lab which involves a number of members of the Stakeholder Work Group, as well as study groups and access to resources.

Observership Program: The Observership in Family Physicians' Clinic is a volunteer arrangement between an IMG Observer and a Supervising Family Physician, designed to expose IMGs to clinical practice. It is based on the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS) program with its associated policies and procedures. The time frame may be determined and approved according to the needs of the Observer and the availability of the Supervising Physician. Observerships generally last between one and three months with the IMG attending one to two days a week. IMGs that have passed the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination (MCC EE) are eligible to apply for this program.

Additional supports for immigrants throughout the pathway developed as a result of the multi-stakeholder work Groups include the following:

- Better communication of the certification or registration process have been developed and communicated with internationally educated newcomers that are working towards licensure.
- Observership opportunities that remove the barrier of not having any professional references or networks;
- Establishment of On-site Programs to provide workplace observational experience.
- Financial support to help in the cost of licensure for internationally educated professionals.

- A structured interview process as an alternative to confirmatory exams is used to assess the competencies of highly experienced engineers.
- A communication/orientation program for engineers offered by ISIS is accepted towards the Canadian experience requirement. Work placement time is also accepted.
- Additional pre-arrival support and information to allow immigrants to be better prepared upon arrival. For example, the IMG group put Dalhousie's orientation program for IMGs into online modules to be accessed prior to arriving in NS.
- IMG designated residency positions established.
- Continuing education credits are awarded to pharmacists and engineers who take part in preparatory or assessment programs for professional immigrants in these fields`

Has there been communication of action taken by MWGs?

“This work group has been very successful in opening the lines of communication and allowing for a better understanding of the role/work of the participating stakeholders.”
(Multi-stakeholder work group member)

The evaluation found substantial evidence of communication of actions taken by multi-stakeholder work groups among the stakeholder membership. Stakeholders also identified the importance of open communication at all meetings. The MWG meetings are viewed as a safe forum for discussing some of the difficult and challenging issues related to IQAR. Stakeholder members' perspectives are shared and over time members become more informed about the challenges, issues, and processes along the pathway to licensure. As a result, the discussion can become more focused and sophisticated.

The results of the focus group discussions, stakeholder interviews and the stakeholder survey indicated that the MWGs are viewed by stakeholders as a safe forum to discuss IQAR issues, explore barriers and think about solutions with the decision makers. Stakeholders indicated that the MWG meetings promote an open dialogue and stakeholders do not feel threatened in sharing their thoughts and opinions. MWG members also indicated that there is a good representation of the stakeholders involved for each work group, and that this broad representation facilitates the informed discussion required.

5.3 Long-term Outcomes

Has the Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Model helped immigrants in working at their highest level of ability as quickly as possible?

While the full long-term impacts resulting from the MWG Model will not be realized until some date in the future, the results of this evaluation found substantial evidence that the MWG Model has already realized long-term outcomes as a result of systemic changes and support programs that reduce barriers for internationally educated individuals in regulated fields.

The following discussion provides examples of systemic changes and support programs directly attributable to the MWGs that have contributed to assisting immigrants in working at their highest level of ability as quickly as possible and have already realized long-term impacts.

- Due to the efforts of the IPG work group, IPGs are becoming more recognized by the pharmacists and other health care professional working in the Canadian health care system as being highly beneficial to Canadian pharmacy practices. Now because of the reputation of the

organizations represented by membership in the IPG stakeholder work group, IPGs are able to find work placements for internships, acceptance from preceptors and find jobs upon graduation, which address the longer-term goals of the Multi-stakeholder work group model.

- The removal of the requirement for internship to include a hospital setting for IPGs has also led to longer-term impacts. This requirement had previously posed barriers for international pharmacy graduates (IPGs) because of the huge demand for hospital placements. Hospital internship placements are relatively more accessible for Canadian pharmacy students. Now IPGs can complete their internships in community work placement settings, which are much easier for them to access. Other changes to the licensure pathway have also been made that have already realized long-term impacts and have assisted IPGs in working at their highest level of ability as quickly as possible.
- Because of the IEE multi-stakeholder group efforts, IEEs that participated in the pilot study for the WPAC project have benefited from first-hand experience in working in Nova Scotia-based engineering firms. They have gained from networking connections, references, and direct contacts with engineering employers. These references and networking connections will assist internationally educated engineers in working at the highest level of their ability as quickly as possible. This pilot project has resulted in half of the participating IEEs either being offered additional employment with engineering firms beyond the WPAC project or having received an indication from the employers that they would have been hired should a position or opening in their firm develop. In addition, the ISIS Communications and Orientation program for IEEs is recognized by Engineers Nova Scotia as credit towards Canadian experience. Both of these developments/projects are a direct result of the IEE Stakeholder Work Group.
- Additional longer term impacts have been realized in integrating international medical graduates as a result of the *IMG Clerkship Program* that are directly attributable to the IMG Work Group. Successful completion of the program means IMG participants become Canadian graduates and are therefore eligible for residency positions in Nova Scotia. Following the completion of the program, the return of service requirement means international medical graduates will then practice in Nova Scotia. This program is another example of helping immigrants working at their highest level of ability as quickly as possible.

5.4 Additional Evaluation Questions

What are the key benefits to members resulting from their involvement with the Multi-stakeholder Work Group?

“The benefits arising from the multi-stakeholder work groups are huge. Collaboration brings about realistic solutions that address the problem because all perspectives have been included and accounted for. In my opinion, it is the only way to move forward.”
(Multi-stakeholder work group member)

Members’ involvement with the multi-stakeholder groups is on a volunteer basis and involves a great deal of commitment and dedication to achieving the goals and objectives of the MWG. Stakeholders were asked directly in the stakeholder survey to identify the benefits resulting from their involvement with the MWG.

The following provides a brief summary of the benefits associated with stakeholders' involvement in the MWGs, as identified in the stakeholder survey and focus group discussions.

The Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model.....

- allows members to be more knowledgeable in order to help internationally educated professionals and guide them as to where they need to go;
- increases networking opportunities;
- allows members to keep up to date on information (sharing information at the MWG meetings);
- provides a powerful and creative way of developing new programs that are informed as a result of the collaboration of members of the MWG;
- helps stakeholders move away from silos;
- clarifies licensure pathways and identifies the issues, challenges, opportunities and gaps along the pathway,
- enables members to go back to their own organizations and build programs based on improved information gained from stakeholder discussion;
- provides a cost effective chance to bring in outside experts and speakers;
- provides an opportunity for stakeholder members to brainstorm; and
- provides a chance to identify gaps in pathway to licensure and to collectively identify bridging program(s) that will assist internationally educated professionals.

The benefit of participating in the MWG most often cited in the stakeholder survey was the opportunity to learn about IQAR and collaborate with others to bring about realistic solutions to address issues and challenges identified. Most stakeholders indicated that this approach is the only way to move forward. The results of the stakeholder survey also indicated that they thought that the MWG provides an important source of credible and up-to-date information on the immigration and credentialing of professionals. Stakeholders also indicated that the initiatives programs initiated by MWGs are more well-rounded, effective and efficient when multiple stakeholders are involved.

Another benefit of collaboration identified by stakeholders was that it is easier to tackle major issues with all stakeholders in agreement. Collaboration also leads to innovative solutions, for example the IEE group developed a proposal for funding for a worksite based competency assessment for engineers (the first of its kind in Canada), which was approved.

What are the Key Challenges Encountered in the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model?

One of the main challenges identified by the employer stakeholder members is finding the time to attend. They also noted that a fair amount of advance notice is always given, so it is not a challenge created by the chair. This was cited as a challenge for stakeholders representing their department on many or all working groups.

Members from relatively recent MWGs indicated that one of the challenges is that there isn't always a clear focus at the groups in the early stages when they are first formed. Members did indicate however, however this has improved since the groups first began.

Other challenges are related to the process at the work group meetings. Not all members can attend every meeting and agenda items may need to be deferred to next meeting(s). Adhering to the agenda while also allowing people to talk can also be a challenge.

As IQAR is only one of most members' responsibilities, one challenge highlighted is that collaborative projects may be set aside because of competing priorities. It can also be a challenge to work out collaborative solutions because of the varying mandates of stakeholders. Personalities and work schedules can also be an issue. Another challenge cited by stakeholders was that of the difficulty of understanding the role and work of other stakeholders, legislation requirements, and potential IQAR clients. Regulators indicated that it is sometimes difficult to help members understand a particular policy/guideline particularly when they see it as limiting an internationally trained professional from getting into residency or practice.

What are the Key Lessons Learned as a Result of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model?

"I learn at every meeting. I've learned that IQAR is complex and therefore, focusing on a profession (or small group of related professions) is essential if discussions are going to be meaningful and progress to be made." (Multi-stakeholder work group participant)

The results of the focus group discussions and the survey of MWG members identified several lessons learned as a result of their participation in the Multi-stakeholder Work Group model. Regulators identified a key lesson learned being increased mindfulness when drafting regulations, based on an enhanced awareness of the issues, challenges and barriers associated with the pathway to licensure for internationally educated professionals.

A key lesson learned identified by MWG members is that no **one** person or organization owns the issues and challenges related to IQAR and therefore the ability to identify and develop effective solutions are also not owned by a single individual or organization. Stakeholders indicated that a key lesson learned was that it takes a well-informed group of stakeholders to address IQAR issues and challenges facing internationally educated professionals and to identify collaborative solutions. They also indicated that they have become more aware of specific issues related to IQAR in regulated occupations and are able to take this new information and knowledge back to their own organizations to enact change. They also indicated that they learned that it can take time to implement change but there are sometimes "low hanging fruit" that can be identified by the MWG – changes that can be implemented quickly and at low cost. They indicated that many times slight changes in process identified through the interactions of the MWG process can result in significant changes for internationally educated professionals going through the process to licensure. Another lesson learned identified by MWG members is that regulators can be very proactive partners, keen to eliminate unnecessary barriers and work collaboratively to find workable solutions.

A key lesson learned identified by many stakeholders is that the involvement of all stakeholders is critical to the success of this model for systemic change. It is important that educational institutions are involved as they are the providers of the "gap" training or longer-term training opportunities which may be needed. Governments may be regulators themselves and also play a crucial leadership and funding role. Immigrant serving agencies and language providers have the front line expertise and knowledge of the challenges faced by internationally educated professionals, and most frequently, are the organizations, which advise newcomers and develop bridging programs. Employer and union partners contribute to the richness of the discussion and participate actively in developing solutions. In occupations such as the construction electrician

trade, involvement of the union is essential. In fields such as pharmacy, skills shortages mean that employers are often the strongest agents for change

Several of the lessons learned identified by stakeholders related to the collaborative process within the MWG. Stakeholders indicated that collaboration works if respect is mutual for all members at the table. They also indicated that it takes time to build the level of trust required for stakeholders to begin to engage in the collaborative engagement process required to address IQAR issues and challenges. Only through communication, collaboration, and effective problem solving can the MWGs achieve positive outcomes. Stakeholders also indicated they had a much better understanding of what is required for internationally educated individuals in regulated professions to achieve licensure in Nova Scotia and what resources are being made available for them. They also indicated that they have a better understanding of the qualification recognition process and how each organization is involved in this process.

VI. CONCLUSION

There are many barriers related to IQAR, particularly in regulated professions and trades, and these barriers are complex. Provinces across the country have had to address IQAR challenges so that skilled newcomers to Canada may enter the occupations they have been trained in as efficiently as possible, while still protecting the public interest by maintaining appropriate standards of practice. In Nova Scotia, the challenges associated with IQAR has led to the development of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group model for change that involves the formation of profession-specific multi-stakeholder work groups for the purpose of addressing IQAR issues and developing practical and realistic solutions.

Evaluating the multi-stakeholder work group (MWG) model against the determinants of successful collaboration framework developed by Mattessich and Monsey, it is evident that Nova Scotia's MWGs contains all of the key determinants for successful collaboration, based on the results of the focus group, survey and key stakeholder interviews.

The MWGs have resulted in concrete changes including substantive and improved changes to licensure pathways and the introduction of innovative programs. Numerous programs and partnerships have been conceived and implemented that address challenges associated with IQAR for internationally educated professionals in regulated occupations that are directly attributable to the Multi-stakeholder work group model. Systemic changes such as allowing IPG internships to be completed in community settings rather than hospital settings, the development of the IMG Med 3-Clerkship program, and amending the sequencing in the licensure pathway such that the IPG internship component may now be completed prior to the national qualifying exam, all reduce the barriers facing internationally educated professionals, resulting in immigrants working at the highest level of ability as quickly as possible.

Stakeholders see themselves as much better informed as a result of participating in the multi-stakeholder work group discussions and are aware of the different perspectives of all stakeholders around the table. While they may not be the final decision maker, they have the ability to influence and impact change in their own organization, based on what they have learned at the multi-stakeholder work group discussion. A key lesson learned from this analysis is that the involvement of all stakeholders is critical to the success of this model for systemic change.

The results of the evaluation show that the Multi-stakeholder Work Group model project has not only met all of its short-term and intermediate-term outcome goals, it has also achieved long-term goals through systemic changes and the development of programs that have reduced barriers along the pathway to licensure for internationally educated professionals in regulated professions.

The consultation and analysis undertaken for this evaluation clearly identify several positive outcomes and impacts to address IQAR challenges that are directly attributable to the MWGs, including changes in licensure process and new pathways created. As a result of the MWG, information related to IQAR issues and challenges is shared, issues are identified and discussed, opportunities for partnership are explored, new ideas are incubated and special projects are initiated. Perhaps most important, the momentum for change is sustained.

APPENDIX A: SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Key stakeholder discussion guide

The following discussion topics will be used to guide the stakeholder interviews.

1. Please comment on each of the following (provide examples where possible):

The multi-stakeholder work group model facilitates the development of a collective vision and strategic directions to:

- a) exchange and share information (avoiding duplication of efforts); *(have already collected evidence of this in the focus group discussion)*
 - b) identify barriers, issues and gaps;
 - c) develop, review and modify pathways to licensure for immigrants coming to Nova Scotia;
 - d) identify opportunities for collaboration;
 - e) develop partnership programs/projects; and
 - f) act in advisory capacity to the development and implementation of bridging and/or gap training initiatives.
2. This evaluation assesses the impact of the project in terms of individual stakeholders, their organizations, their professions/occupations and the community at large

Please comment (and provide examples where possible) on the extent to which the *multi-stakeholder work group model* has lead to the following outcomes (see Logic Model for examples of short-term, intermediate-term and longer-term outcomes):

- a) short-term outcomes:
 - b) Intermediate outcomes:
 - c) Longer term outcomes:
3. Please comment on the impact of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model on international qualifications recognition in the province of Nova Scotia.
 4. What, if anything, would you change about the design or implementation of the Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Model?
 5. What are the main lessons learned from your participation in this program?
 6. What other occupations could this program be applied to?
 7. We realize it is relatively early in the program (for some of the working groups in particular), however, can you provide examples where the program has made a difference in addressing skills shortages in certain occupations?
 8. We would also like to gather information on the outputs of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model Project (see Logic Model):
 - Consensus-building: pathways to licensure, modifications to pathways,
 - Capacity-building: # of groups, meetings, projects initiated;
 - Information sharing: number of reports, presentations

Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Evaluation Survey

Gardner Pinfold Consulting Inc. has been contracted by ISIS to conduct an evaluation of the process, outcomes and impacts of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model. The primary purpose of this survey is to gather information, feedback and insights from current and past Multi-stakeholder Work Group members related to the process, outcomes and impacts (both intended and unintended) achieved and as well as recommendations for the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model.

Please note that all responses to the following questions are treated as confidential.

Your individual responses will be collected by Gardner Pinfold and will not be distributed to ISIS. The analysis will incorporate the aggregate results into the final evaluation report in such that individual responses will not be identifiable.

Instructions: Please feel free to enter your responses to the following questions digitally, and returning your completed survey via e-mail as either a Word or PDF document attachment. Alternatively, you could print the survey and complete by hand – scan it and return to us via e-mail as a PDF. Either way works for us.

Please e-mail your completed survey to: rcollins@gardnerpinfold.ca

Your insights and comments are an important component of the evaluation of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Are you a current or past member of a multi-stakeholder work group? Please check one.
 Current member ___ Past member ___

2. Which multi-stakeholder work group(s) do you belong to? Please select all that apply.

Construction Electricians ___
 Dental Professions ___
 Engineers ___
 Lawyers ___
 Medical Laboratory Technologists ___
 Nurses ___
 Pharmacists ___
 Physicians ___

3. How long have you been/were you a member of the multi-stakeholder group? Please check one.

Less than 1 year ___
 1 to 2 years ___
 More than 2 years ___

II. MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

Instructions: Section II presents a series of statements and provides you with an opportunity for further comment. Please use the following 5-point scale to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the each of the statements in this section.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree No Comment

Please place an "X" in front of the ranking to indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the statements below.

4. The work group is an effective forum for addressing International Qualifications Recognition, (IQAR) challenges in this occupation.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree No Comment

Please elaborate:

5. There is mutual respect, understanding and trust amongst stakeholders in the work group

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree No Comment

Please elaborate:

6. There is an appropriate cross-section of members in the multi-stakeholder work group.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree No Comment

Please elaborate:

7. There is a high degree of collaboration that exists in the multi-stakeholder work group.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree No Comment

Please elaborate:

8. The multi-stakeholder work group promotes effective communication on IQAR challenges and issues.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree No Comment

Please elaborate:

9. The co-chair model of leadership is effective.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree No Comment

Please elaborate:

| II. MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH CONTINUED | |
|---|--|
| 10. How are decisions made in your work group? Please explain: | |
| 11. What challenges have you or your work group encountered in working collaboratively? Please explain: | |
| 12. What are the benefits of collaboration? Please explain: | |
| III. RESULTS | |
| 13. As a result of participating on the multi-stakeholder work group, are you more knowledgeable about international qualification recognition (IQAR)? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, what are your most important "lessons learned"? Briefly explain: | |
| 14. As a result of the multi-stakeholder work group - what systemic or process changes have been made? Please explain: | |
| 15. As a result of the multi-stakeholder work group, what unnecessary barriers have been removed? Please describe: | |
| 16. As a result of the multi-stakeholder work group, have partnership programs been conceived and developed? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please provide examples: | |
| 17. Do you think the work group is a leading forum for addressing IQAR challenges in your occupation? Yes ___ No ___ Briefly explain: | |
| 18. As a result of the multi-stakeholder work group, please describe any other specific outcomes or impacts that have occurred that have not been captured above. Please describe and provide examples, if applicable: | |

| IV. IMPACTS | |
|--------------------|---|
| 19. | Has your participation on the multi-stakeholder work group resulted in... a) impacts on your every-day work? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please describe impact(s): |
| | b) impacts on your organization? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please describe impact(s): |
| | c) impacts on your profession or occupation? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please describe impact(s): |
| 20. | What suggestions do you have for increasing the effectiveness of the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Model? Please provide suggestions: |
| 21. | What opportunities has the work group provided for you? (eg. Partnerships, funding, other...)? Please provide any examples of opportunities the stakeholder work group has provided for you: |

| V. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 22. | Please add any additional comments on the effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder work group model. Additional comments on effectiveness: |
| 23. | Please add any additional comments on the impact of the multi-stakeholder work group model. Additional comments on impacts: |

Thank you for participating in the Multi-stakeholder Work Group Evaluation Survey!

If you have questions or would like more information please contact:
Ruth Collins, Office Manager
Gardner Pinfold Consultants Inc.
Tel: (902) 421-1720 Ext. 10

APPENDIX B: SURVEY RESULTS

| Q 1. Are you a current or past member of a multi-stakeholder work group? | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Current member | 33 | 97.1% |
| Past member | 1 | 2.9% |
| Total | 34 | 100% |

| Q 2. Which multi-stakeholder group(s) do you belong to? Please select all that apply | | |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| | Count* | Percentage |
| Construction Electricians | 3 | 10.3% |
| Dental Professions | 3 | 10.3% |
| Engineers | 4 | 13.8% |
| Lawyers | 3 | 10.3% |
| Medical Laboratory Technologists | 2 | 6.9% |
| Nurses | 5 | 17.2% |
| Pharmacists | 4 | 13.8% |
| Physicians | 5 | 17.2% |
| Total | 29 | 100% |

* Note: Distribution of respondents across multi-stakeholder groups excludes stakeholders that belong to more than one work group.

| Q3. How long have you been/were you a member of the multi-stakeholder group? Please check one. | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Less than 1 year | 10 | 29.4% |
| 1 to 2 years | 14 | 41.2% |
| More than 2 years | 10 | 29.4% |
| Total | 34 | 100.0% |

| Q4. The work group is an effective forum for addressing IQR challenges in this occupation. | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0.0% |
| Disagree | 0 | 0.0% |
| Neutral | 7 | 20.6% |
| Agree | 15 | 44.1% |
| Strongly Agree | 12 | 35.3% |
| No Comment | 0 | 0.0% |
| Total | 34 | 100.0% |

| Q5. There is mutual respect, understanding and trust amongst stakeholders in the multi-stakeholder work group. | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0.0% |
| Disagree | 1 | 2.9% |
| Neutral | 4 | 11.8% |
| Agree | 15 | 44.1% |
| Strongly Agree | 14 | 41.2% |
| No Comment | 0 | 0.0% |
| Total | 34 | 100.0% |

| Q6. There is an appropriate cross-section of members in the multi-stakeholder work group. | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2.9% |
| Disagree | 1 | 2.9% |
| Neutral | 2 | 5.9% |
| Agree | 17 | 50.0% |
| Strongly Agree | 13 | 38.2% |
| No Comment | 0 | 0.0% |
| Total | 34 | 100.0% |

| Q7. There is a high degree of collaboration that exists in the stakeholder work group. | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0.0% |
| Disagree | 0 | 0.0% |
| Neutral | 5 | 14.7% |
| Agree | 17 | 50.0% |
| Strongly Agree | 12 | 35.3% |
| No Comment | 0 | 0.0% |
| Total | 34 | 100.0% |

| Q8. The multi-stakeholder work group promotes effective communication on IQR challenges and issues. | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0.0% |
| Disagree | 2 | 5.9% |
| Neutral | 3 | 8.8% |
| Agree | 17 | 50.0% |
| Strongly Agree | 12 | 35.3% |
| No Comment | 0 | 0.0% |
| Total | 34 | 100.0% |

| Q 9. The co-chair model of leadership is effective. | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0.0% |
| Disagree | 1 | 2.9% |
| Neutral | 5 | 14.7% |
| Agree | 17 | 50.0% |
| Strongly Agree | 8 | 23.5% |
| No Comment | 3 | 8.8% |
| Total | 34 | 100.0% |

| Q 13. As a result of participating on the multi-stakeholder work group, are you more knowledgeable about IQR? | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Yes | 28 | 84.8% |
| No | 5 | 15.2% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

| Q 16. As a result of the multi-stakeholder work group, have partnership programs been conceived and developed? | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Yes | 20 | 69.0% |
| No | 9 | 31.0% |
| Total | 29 | 100% |

| Q 17. Do you think the work group is a leading forum for addressing IQR challenges in your occupation? | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Yes | 24 | 77.4% |
| No | 7 | 22.6% |
| Total | 31 | 100% |

| Q 19 b. Has your participation on the multi-stakeholder work group resulted in impacts on your organization? | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Yes | 19 | 57.6% |
| No | 14 | 42.4% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

| Q 19c. Has your participation on the multi-stakeholder work group resulted in impacts on your professional occupation? | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Yes | 12 | 41.4% |
| No | 17 | 58.6% |
| Total | 29 | 100% |

APPENDIX C: STUDY SCHEDULE

| Activity and Description | Date |
|--|--|
| Project Start-Up A start-up meeting with the Project Advisory Group | October 2012 |
| Document, Data and Literature Review Gather and review all background materials and other supporting and relevant information to provide insight into the Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Model, its goals, objectives, governance, reporting systems, administration, committee structure, programs and program criteria | End of October 2012 to mid January 2013 |
| Prepare Work Plan Detailed development of the Work Plan outlining the details of our evaluation plan including deliverables and milestones. | Submitted October 26, 2012 |
| Survey of Stakeholder Work Group Members Conduct survey of members of Multi-Stakeholder Work Group members | Mid November to mid December 2012; Follow-up interviews January –February 2013 |
| Focused Discussion Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group discussions addressing the Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Model process and outputs and highlighting the impacts associated with ISIS Project activity. | As per multi-stakeholder Work Group meeting schedule |
| Conduct Key Stakeholder Interviews Conduct interviews with the interview members of ISIS’s Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Model, program administrators, key industry stakeholders and knowledgeable representatives. | Mid November to end of January 2013 |
| Conduct Evaluation Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Evaluation results compiled in tabular format to summarize the results. □ A summary of the results of the focus group analysis, survey questionnaire, and stakeholder interviews. | Mid January to end of February 2013 |
| Prepare Final Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Evaluation report • Final Evaluation report | March 15, 2013 March 31, 2013 |

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