

1111 Corner St., Stoneville, CS C3S 3S3
cornerstone@consulting.ca / 1-888-MY-STONE

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Literacy Victoria
930A Yates Street
Victoria, BC V8V 4Z3

February 11 2012

Dear Ms. Ruth Derrick,

Cornerstone Consultants is pleased to submit a proposal outlining an evaluation plan for the Literacy Victoria Outreach Program. We recommend conducting a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation to assess the relevance, design, delivery and impact of the program. Our proposal includes:

- a brief overview of the Literacy Victoria Outreach Program;
- a logic model linking the Outreach Programs' inputs, activities and outcomes;
- a description of the type and scope of the proposed evaluation;
- an evaluation matrix;
- a description of the evaluation design, methodology and analysis plan;
- an overview of anticipated challenges and solutions of the proposed evaluation;
- a sample data collection instrument and description of administration
- an estimated evaluation timeline;

Our consultants have a **high degree of experience and expertise** in designing and conducting many types of evaluations within a variety of contexts. We are confident we can deliver a **rigorous yet feasible evaluation** that can address your needs. We are also sensitive to the varying needs program stakeholders and primary intended users may have when it comes to evaluation. As such, we strongly **recommend meeting with Literacy Victoria and related stakeholders** early in the planning process to help guide the evaluation and interpret findings.

We trust that you will find the proposal meets the requirements outlined in the RFP and also offers some **innovative solutions** along with detailed **practical suggestions** for carrying out your evaluation. Should you have any questions or concerns about our proposal, feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

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A proposal for the evaluation of
Literacy Victoria Outreach Program

February 11 2012

Prepared for
Literacy Victoria

Prepared by

CORNERSTONE.
CONSULTANTS

1.0 Introduction and Overview

Established in 1988 Literacy Victoria (LV) is the main community-based literacy services organization for adults in Victoria, BC as well as southern Vancouver Island. LV offers free literacy services, including skill development in basic reading, writing and mathematics to individuals over age 18, to facilitate an increase in self-esteem and the development of life skills to become active and engaged citizens and make meaningful contributions to their communities. LV serves as an overarching framework for four key programs: The Learner's Network, Aboriginal Learning, Skills for Work, and the Outreach Program (**Figure 1**). For the purposes of this evaluation Cornerstone Consultant's (CC) will be focusing on LV's Outreach Program (OP).

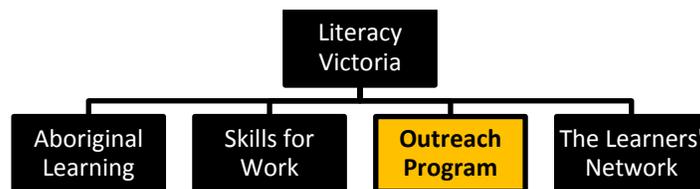


Figure 1: Literacy Victoria Program Portfolio

Initiated in 2007 the OP works with community partners to provide integrated literacy and learning support to marginalized individuals in the community. The program is designed to assist individuals who face multiple barriers towards engaging in learning opportunities, and help them develop and achieve their personal literacy goals. OP is directed at three key target audiences; *adult learners, community organizations, and the broader community* as a whole. The program offers four key services;

1. A weekly creative writing group at the Sandy Merriman Emergency Shelter for Women (SMESW)
2. One-on-one tutoring for inmates at the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Center
3. A weekly travelling book-borrowing service (Bookmobile) that visits 10 individual sites
4. A Mobile Computer Lab that provides computer assistance to residents of city shelters and transitional housing throughout the community

The program was developed following the results of a comprehensive needs assessment completed in 2006 in conjunction with potential organizations. The needs assessment identified the types of existing literacy services offered in the context of relevance to the various client bases these organizations served. Findings highlighted that clients of each of the partner organizations were not accessing traditional learning programming, and identified the need to tailor literacy services to meet the needs of various clients groups that catalyzed the development of the program's goals as outlined above. This was followed by a formative evaluation in 2008, which found that partner organizations were highly supportive of the OP, and highlighted the need to collect and assess feedback from the learners directly.

2.0 Program stakeholders

Based on our understanding of the program from the RFP we have identified a number of key stakeholders. We **recommend engaging all primary intended users** in the evaluation process.

Table 1: Key Stakeholders and Primary Intended Users

Key Stakeholders
1. Funders
Federal government
Ministry of Human Resources
Skills Development Canada
ALLESP
2. Participants
Target Audience: Adult learners, Community organizations, and the broader community
3. Organizational support
LV OP staff – Outreach helpers and Volunteer coordinators
Support staff associated with the four main community partners

3.0 Program Logic Model

A program logic model is provided in **Appendix A**. The model diagrams the **theoretical linkages** between program inputs, components/activities, outputs and both short- and long-term outcomes; however, it may be criticized by some for being too simplistic. Complicated and complex programs such as OP are typically diagrammed by a single, linear causal pathway; omitting important information about the context, concurrent programs and client characteristics. Thus, to complement the logic model, we recommend conducting a brief literature review to understand the underlying mechanisms for how and why the program works (See section 1.4 in the evaluation matrix, **Appendix B**.)

4.0 Evaluation Considerations

CC will be developing a plan to connect with learners and community partners via a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation to gather the input and feedback of adult learners using OP services. Given the previous completion of a needs assessment and formative evaluation, we propose to conduct a comprehensive a process and outcome evaluation. The evaluation plan is oriented around OP’s relevance, design, delivery and impact to determine whether adult learners are benefiting from the serviced offered, in terms of their personal learning goals, and more broadly whether OP’s services are effectively removing systemic barriers towards learning opportunities for marginalized individuals. An intended timeline for the evaluation plan is available in **Appendix D**. Furthermore, we at CC adhere to the *Program Evaluation Standards* developed by the Joint Committee for Standards on Education Evaluation and adopted by the Canadian Evaluation Society and the *Code of Ethics* adopted by LV.

5.0 Proposed Evaluation Plan

5.1 Evaluation Questions

Based on the evaluation purpose stated above, a number of key questions have been identified. Please refer to **Appendix B** for a complete list. We strongly **recommend meeting with program stakeholders** to clarify these questions before we proceed with implementing the proposed evaluation plan.

5.2 Evaluation Design and Data Collection Methods

To adequately address the identified evaluation questions, we recommend using a **mixed-methods** approach consisting of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Multiple data sources will be examined to ensure adequate data coverage for each evaluation question and allow for **triangulation of findings**. In **Appendix B**, evaluation questions are linked to the proposed data collection sources, methods, and design features. Below we describe each method in more detail.

Method #1: Literature Review

A literature review will be conducted in the first stages of the evaluation to assess program theory. More specifically, researching the theoretical basis of literacy programs will help us to understand i) the context and mechanisms under which the LV program is operating, ii) how and why the program works and iii) and the impacts and outcomes of the services provided.

Method #2: Environmental Scan

An environmental scan will be conducted (through an internet/website, and yellow pages search) to identify existing organizations in Victoria that provide services to marginalized groups. This scan will identify other community-based organizations (currently not partnering with LV) and other marginalized groups that may benefit from this service.

Method #3: Document Review

CC will review any existing data previously collected for the program. This data will include any information coming from the 2006 comprehensive needs assessment, the Literacy Outreach policy and training manual, as well as the data on the number of clients accessing outreach services. These documents and data will give a better sense of the processes associated with the OP and will help inform the next steps of the evaluation.

Method #4: Key Informant Interviews

Four face to face (one on one) interviews will be conducted with each current outreach site coordinator (SMESW, VIRCC, BM, and MCL) to better understand whether they feel the Outreach program is meeting their needs as well as how their current site can better host or deliver the program [See **Appendix B** for the evaluation questions to be addressed in the interviews]. Coordinators will be asked to sign a consent form at the time of their interview. Confidentiality and anonymity will be discussed at this time since it will be challenging with four very specific programs to maintain total confidentiality and anonymity. A set of open ended questions will be used, and the interviews will be tape recorded.

One on one interviews will also be conducted with approximately 10-15 inmates at the VIRCC. Interviews will be arranged at the time of the one-to-one tutoring that usually occurs. Because focus groups are most likely not feasible with this group, interviews will be conducted instead. These interviews will get a sense of whether they feel the program is meeting their needs, what the barriers are to program use, etc. (see **Appendix B** for related evaluation questions). Since 40 inmates have been using the program, a random sample within those 40 inmates will be done to recruit interview participants. Consent forms will be signed at the time of the interview, and confidentiality will be ensured for these participants. CC recognizes that there are many barriers

to conducting research within correctional facilities (resistance from stakeholders, restricted access to subjects, ethical issues). We will also consult with the correctional facility staff to determine what potential incentives can be given for inmates participating in interviews.

Method #5: Focus Groups

Focus groups will be conducted with the client users of the remaining 3 Outreach Service groups (SMESW, BM, & MCL) to again determine whether the program meets clients' needs, if barriers/constraints exist, and their satisfaction with the program. We are suggesting to conduct at least two focus groups per site. We have provided more detail regarding recruitment, consent information, group composition, and detailed methods and questions for the focus groups with the SMESW clients (see draft data collection instrument). Similar recruitment strategies and focus group questions will be used for the other service groups. These will all be developed in conjunction with other program stakeholders. There are some additional considerations for these focus groups; as LV has a significant Aboriginal client base, we suggest conducting a focus group primarily with Aboriginal clients using a 'talking circle' approach. We suggest bringing in a member from the Songhees Nation to facilitate the focus group. This method is often used in health research in order to facilitate a trusting relationship between the researcher and the client. Refreshments will be provided and incentives (specifically tailored to each groups' needs) will be offered for all focus group participants. Focus groups will also be conducted with volunteer outreach helpers to address two evaluation questions: i) are they adequately trained to deliver the program? and ii) do they feel OP has beneficial effects on clients? Similar methods for recruitment, consent, and incentives will be used as described above.

Method #6: Survey

A brief client survey will be developed to collect information on participants' demographic information as well as general level of satisfaction (which was pointed out as a gap within the RFP). This survey will be developed through collaboration with CC and the service coordinators for the four community groups. We will request further consultation regarding the readability of the survey to ensure that clients of all literacy levels can understand and complete it. The final paper survey will be distributed to all program volunteers who run the individual programs. The volunteers will then administer the survey to all adult learners using the program. Appropriate incentives to offer to participants will be defined with each site coordinator. A consent form will be attached to the front of the survey which will also undergo readability assessment.

5.3 Data Analysis

The client survey will generate primarily **quantitative data**, thus we propose using **SPSS 14.0** to conduct mainly descriptive analysis. **Descriptive analysis** will help establish an overall picture of the demographic variability in adult learners. Means and standard deviations will be calculated for continuous variables (eg. age, SES) and frequencies will be calculated for categorical variables (e.g., gender, ethnic background, language). Cross tabulations (or **chi-squares**) will be used for frequency data, while **t-tests and/or correlations** will be used for continuous variables. If after further consultation with LV, there is an interest in exploring the interactions between client literacy and demographic information, than further quantitative analysis can be conducted. The evaluation team would then work with LV to create a specific tool to assess literacy levels

for various client groups. Correlation analyses can also be used to examine the relations between two variables across clients. Both continuous and categorical variables can be examined.

Focus groups and interviews will generate primarily **qualitative data**, thus we propose using **NVIVO 9.0** to conduct a **content analysis**. Tape recordings will be transcribed and coded according to themes. Coding labels will come directly from the exact words of the participants, using a grounded theory approach. Content will be coded by two independent raters. A measure of inter-rater reliability will be calculated to determine the consistency in coding between rater. In the final stages, pattern codes can be compared with broader categories, and related back to theoretical models found in the literature review conducted in the earlier stages of the evaluation.

Where multiple data sources are available, data will be **triangulated** whereby analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data will be combined.

6.0 Interpreting and Reporting Evaluation Findings

Once data has been analyzed, basic findings for each evaluation question will be presented to LV and stakeholders in which patterns will be identified and discussed. The possible significance and explanations of the findings will be determined, and judgement will be rendered as to whether the findings are desirable or undesirable. Recommendations will also be made. Alternative dissemination strategies beyond the final report will be discussed with LV and stakeholders and pursued as appropriate.

7.0 Description of Draft Data Collection Instrument and Administration

Administration of Focus Group Protocol & Script for the Sandy Merriman Emergency Shelter for Women (SMESW)

The evaluators will work in co-ordination with the SMESW and LV stakeholders to develop the most appropriate focus group practices.

Group composition

Regular attendance of the creative writing group at SMESW consists of approximately 4 to 6 participants. Therefore, we will aim to conduct the focus groups with a minimum of 6 participants to reduce the pressure on each participant in the discussion. Please see **Advertisement & Recruitment** for more information on the methods we will use to increase the number of participants attending each focus group session. Focus group sessions will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Focus group participants will be females who attend the creative writing group (program users) offered at the SMESW. Stakeholder meetings with Cornerstone Consultants will determine if there is a demand and sufficient budget needed to conduct focus groups with abstainers/program dropouts.

Advertisement & Recruitment

A low-cost recruitment method will include placing posters throughout the shelter and in the creative writing group location. All materials used for the focus group will be constructed for low-literacy reading levels, including recruitment materials. For participants that sign up for the focus groups, we will use snowball sampling to lead the investigators to new potential focus group participants. The pool of potential participants will be limited to who attends the shelter on the days the evaluators are present.

A member of the evaluation team will be present on location to recruit individuals who wish to sign-up. All efforts to obtain contact information for the women signing up for the focus group will be made, in order to provide them with follow-up reminders.

As stated by the SMESW, most women who use the program's services cannot afford the cost of groceries and rent. With this in mind, refreshments will be served at the focus group location and \$50.00 will be provided as incentive for participation.

Focus group protocol

Focus groups will be held on Mondays after the normally scheduled creative writing group. This will allow the facilitator to invite participants during the group activities to stay for the focus group afterwards. The focus groups will be held in the same location as the creative writing group as this serves as a common area for these women who may not have permanent residences to meet.

Focus groups will be conducted by a neutral facilitator that will lead the participants through the discussion. A neutral recorder will also assist with preparatory activities, note taking, and the debriefing process. The focus group personnel will be females as there may be concerns amongst the women in the shelter regarding the presence of males. The evaluation team recognizes the personal nature of the subject matter and potential crises participants may be facing in the midst of the evaluation process and will therefore make all necessary efforts to establish trust between the facilitator and participants.

All participants will be assured anonymity through strict procedures which include no access to the transcripts by anyone outside of the evaluation team, and removal of identifiers from feedback used in verbal or written materials. Consent for participation and audiotaping will be read verbally to all participants in order to address possible literacy concerns.

Focus groups participants will be asked about the degree they feel the program is meeting their low-literacy needs and potential constraints to reaching their literacy objectives. Refer to **Appendix D** for sample focus group discussion questions.

8.0 Assessment of Challenges and Solutions

Below we identify some possible challenges that may be encountered throughout the evaluation process and propose some **innovative and practical solutions**.

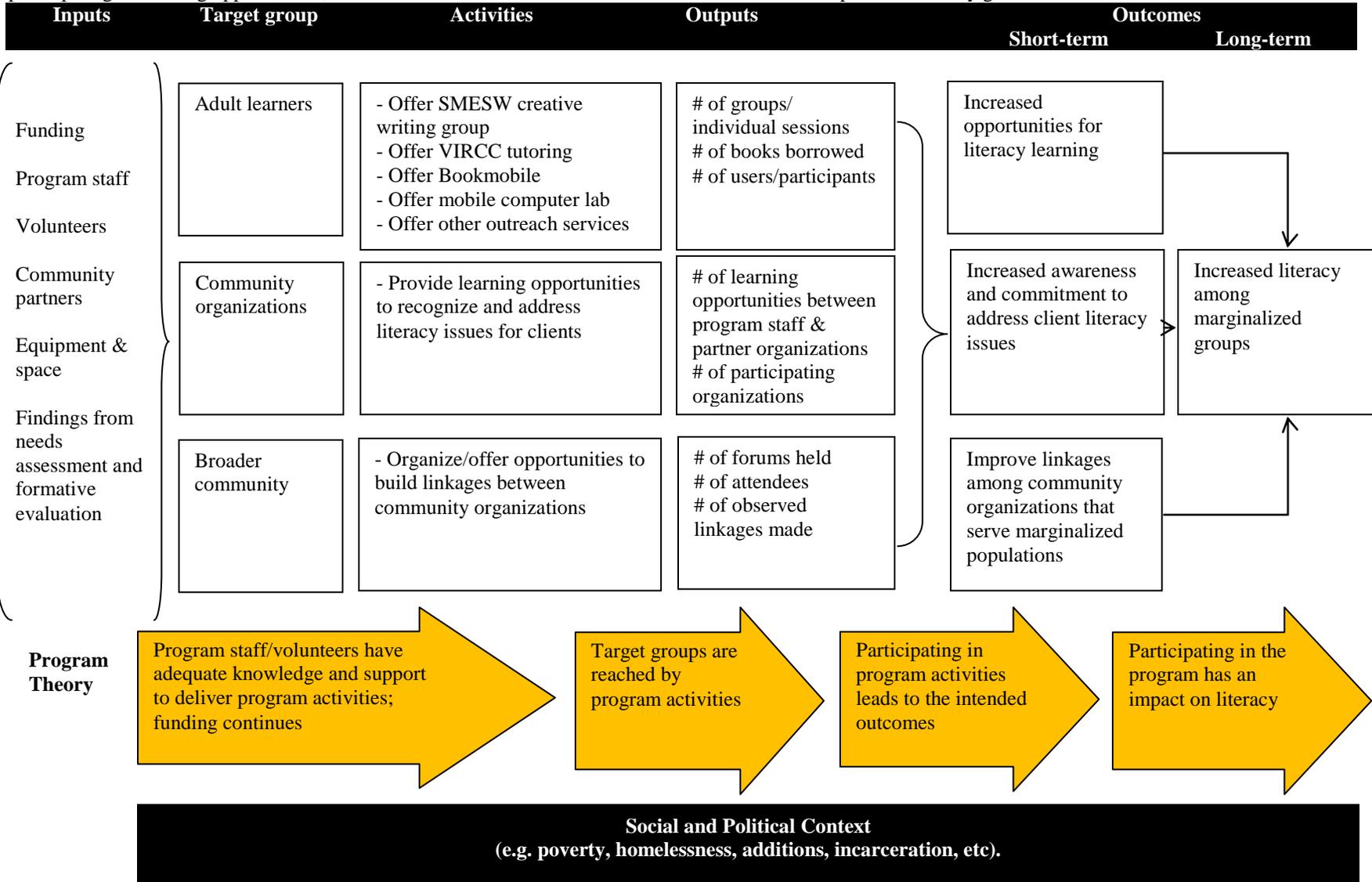
Possible Challenges	Proposed Solutions
Working across a diverse range of client groups and community partners to obtain adult learner feedback	Given the wide range of client groups and community partners involved with the OP, the evaluation team will collaborate with the community partners that serve those client bases to identify the most appropriate ways to gather feedback from specific client groups. CC will work with community partner to identify the types or resources and internal capacities they require to facilitate data collection around the feedback of adult learners they serve
Low education levels of various clients groups	The evaluation team will work with specific community partners to ensure various data collection methods are employed based on the literacy level of their particular client group. Primarily, focus groups and key informant interviews will be used to collect data around clients' input/feedback around their use of OP's services. Focus groups for example can encourage open and respectful dialogue in order to gather information on specific client needs and help to engage multiple client bases in a common dialogue. Key informant interviews provide flexibility in questioning and allow for the collection of in-depth views pertaining to an individual's perceptions regarding a program and/or service.
Limited baseline data for longitudinal comparisons of OP services use	While LV collects data on the number of participants that use a particular program, demographic data on users is not collected. The evaluation team will work with the community partners delivering the four key programs, to develop a simple information collection tool – a brief client survey that can be easily tailored and administered across client groups to gather demographic data
Obtaining consent to collect data from minors that utilize OP services	According to provincial legislation in BC, consent forms can only be signed by adults (individuals that are 19 years of age or older in, with the exception of emancipated minors who may sign on their own behalf.) OP is available to anyone over 18 years of age, participants may be under the age of 19, we will need to determine whether those who are minors are legally emancipated in order to ethically obtain data. In addition, assent forms can be used to give minors who have a legal guardian the opportunity to convey their own independent decision to participate in research.
Language and cultural appropriateness of data collection methods/tools	Given the diversity of the various client groups served by different community partners and OP programs, sensitivity to language and other cultural issues are crucial (i.e., working with Aboriginal community [Songhees Nation], via the use of a talking circle approach as discussed in the Methods section). CC will ensure that data collection tools are translated from English into appropriate languages required by various client groups.
Confidentiality and ethical considerations when working with marginalized individuals	The highest ethical considerations will be accounted for, and the data obtained through the focus groups and interviews will not be linked to any identifying information to ensure that the confidentiality and privacy rights of participants will be upheld.

9.0 Conclusions

We have proposed to conduct a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation to address the relevance, design, delivery and impact of LV's Outreach Program. We have also outlined a number of specific evaluation questions. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are recommended for data collection, as well as the use of multiple data sources to enable the triangulation of findings. A dissemination plan is also provided, and possible challenges and solutions are discussed. We hope you find this evaluation plan meets your needs and provides both **innovative and feasible** solutions.

APPENDIX A. Logic Model for Literacy Outreach Program

Overall Goal: Provide integrated literacy and learning support to marginalized individuals in the community who face persistent and multiple barriers to participating in learning opportunities, and to enable these individuals to set and work towards their personal literacy goals.



APPENDIX B. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Priorities/Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Methods	Design	Sample	Feasibility*
1.0 Relevance						
1.1 Does the format and activities offered by each service meet the clients' interests, needs and learning goals?	- clients' interests, needs and goals	Clients of the SMESW, BM, MCL services	Focus groups	One time	At least two focus groups per site (n=6+); snowball sampling	High
		Clients of the VIRCC service	Individual interviews		At least 10-15 clients; snowball sampling	Moderate
1.2 How do the programs goals and objectives align with the mandates of community partners that are currently engaged?	- mandates of community partners	Representatives from each partner organization	Key informant interviews	One time	At least on representative from each partner organization	High
1.3 Are there other community partners that should be engaged in the delivery the program?	- #/type of other partners/ programs identified	Website search; scan of Yellow Pages	Environmental scan of other partners/ programs that provide services to marginalized groups	One time	All available data	High
1.4 What are the underlying mechanisms for how and why the program works (program theory)?	- identify the context, mechanisms and expected outcomes of the program	Existing literature	Literature review (using a realist perspective)	One time	All existing literature	Moderate
2.0 Design & Delivery						
2.1 Are the services being delivered to the intended audience?	- # of clients attending each service - demographics of clients	Clients	Review of existing data;	Ongoing	All program clients	Moderate
		Clients	Brief client survey			
2.2 Are there other marginalized groups that are not being reached by	- #/type of other marginalized groups	Website search	Environmental scan of other	One time	All marginalized	High

the program?	identified		organizations/ programs that provide services to marginalized groups		groups	
2.3 Is the space provided by community partner agencies adequate?	- location, size, and accessibility of space	Service sites	Site assessment	One time	All service sites	High
2.4 Are the supplies and equipment provided by the program adequate?	- #/type of supplies and equipment provided	Volunteers	Focus groups	One time	All (n=15); at least two groups	High
2.5 Are volunteers trained adequately to deliver the program?	- #/type of training activities - opinions of volunteers	Records review Volunteers	Existing document review Focus groups	One time	All existing program records All (n=15); at least two groups	High
2.6 What are the barriers/constraints for current clients to participate in the program?	- barriers/constraints identified by clients	Clients of the SMESW, BM, MCL services Clients of the VIRCC service	Focus groups Individual interviews	One time	At least two focus groups per site (n=6+) At least 10-15 interviews	High
2.7 What other contributions can currently engaged community partners offer?	- space, resources, supplies, etc.	Site coordinators	Key informant interview	One time	All site coordinators (n=4)	High
3.0 Impacts						
3.1 Are adult learners satisfied with the services offered by the program?	- level of satisfaction	Clients of the SMESW, BM, MCL services Clients of the VIRCC service	Focus groups Individual interviews	One time	At least two focus groups per site At least 10-15 interviews	High Moderate
3.2 Are adult learners meeting their personal literacy goals?	- opinion of clients	Clients of the SMESW, BM, MCL services Clients of the VIRCC service	Focus groups Individual interviews	One time	At least two focus groups per site At least 10-15 clients	
3.3 Do the services have any other beneficial effects on the clients? Do they have any adverse effects?	- benefits identified - adverse effects	Clients of the SMESW, BM, MCL services	Focus groups	One time	At least two focus groups per site	High

	- benefits identified by volunteers	Clients of the VIRCC service Volunteers	Individual interviews Focus groups		At least 10-15 clients All (n=15); at least two groups	Moderate High
3.4 To what degree do partner organizations recognize the benefits of addressing the core literacy with their clients?	- opinions of partner organizations	Representatives from each partner organization	Key informant interviews	One time	At least on representative from each partner organization	High
3.5 To what degree have linkages been built among community organizations that serve marginalized populations?	- observed linkages/ collaborations made between organizations	Representatives from each partner organization	Key informant interviews	One time	At least on representative from each partner organization	High

*Feasibility was determined by a brief assessment of the available human resources and time required to collect the data, along with the anticipated financial costs. Those that are highly feasible require fewer human resources, take less time and cost less money.

Appendix C: Evaluation Timeline

Evaluation activities	Timeline				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
<i>Preparation</i>					
Stakeholder and EAC meetings	●				
Development of data collection tools (e.g., client surveys, interview and focus group scripts, etc.)	●				
<i>Data collection</i>					
Focus groups		●—————●			
Key informant interviews		●—————●			
Literature review	●				
Document review	●				
Environmental scan	●				
<i>Analysis & reporting</i>					
Data analysis & interpretation			●—————●		
Report writing					●
TOTAL COSTS					\$20 000

A detailed budget is available upon request.

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions

The following draft questions will be included in the focus group script at the SMESW location. Prompts will be used to clarify any misunderstanding participants may have, as well as help to get them to elaborate or provide more detailed remarks.

- Do you find the activities in the creative writing group to be helpful for your daily literacy needs? E.g., writing letters.
- Are you satisfied with the support you receive from the creative writing group in helping you improve your reading and writing skills?
- Do you ever have any constraints or barriers that keep you from attending or participating in the program?
- Do you find there are any other benefits to attending the creative writing group, other than improvement of your reading and writing skills?
- Do you find there are any negative consequences of attending the creative writing group?
- Do you have any recommendations for the program?