



Excellence • Expertise • Results

Dear Ms. Derrick,

RE: Request for Proposal:

In response to your request please find enclosed a proposal to evaluate the Literacy Victoria Outreach Program. *Falcon Evaluations* is uniquely positioned to work with you in your context, having extensive experience in literacy programs and cultural competency working with vulnerable and diverse populations.

Falcon Evaluations is an institutional member of the Canadian Evaluation Society, and we are accountable to the professional standards of practice set out by both the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Our motto is Excellence, Expertise, Results: Excellence in professional standard of practice, Expertise in evaluation, and Results that you will find useful for sound decision-making.

Our company is known to deliver high quality evaluations based on extensive stakeholder input and high quality data assurance. We propose a process where evaluation questions and objectives are fully informed by stakeholder information needs; data quality assurance practices are rigorously instituted; and recommendations are relevant, comprehensive and readily utilized.

Your careful consideration of our proposal is very much appreciated. Please free to contact us if you require any further information. We look forward to your reply and the opportunity to work with you.

Sincerely,

The Falcon Evaluations Team

FALCON EVALUATIONS

1234 PEREGRINE WAY, FALCON RIDGE, EVALULAND, CANADA

FALCON@FALCONEVALUATION.CA (432)123-4567

ABOUT THE LITERACY VICTORIAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

Literacy Victoria, recognized as a community leader in providing adult literacy services, offers free support to adults (18+) in mathematical, reading, writing, computer, and other “essential skills”, to augment literacy skills; and subsequently enhance self-esteem and life skills that allow for more effective participation in the general community. The Agency is comprised of three components: The Learners Network (individuals matched with volunteer tutors), Aboriginal Programs (Aboriginal Tutor Program and Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills Pilot Project, developed with First Nation community partners), and the Outreach Program. A preliminary literature search indicates that the literacy and outreach program delivered by Literacy Victoria is in keeping with Federal government best practices outlined by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC, Literacy & Essential Skills, 2012) and similar outreach literacy programs, such as the Outreach Literacy Program in Revelstoke, B.C. (Revelstoke Adult Literacy Outreach Project, 2008).

OUTREACH PROGRAM

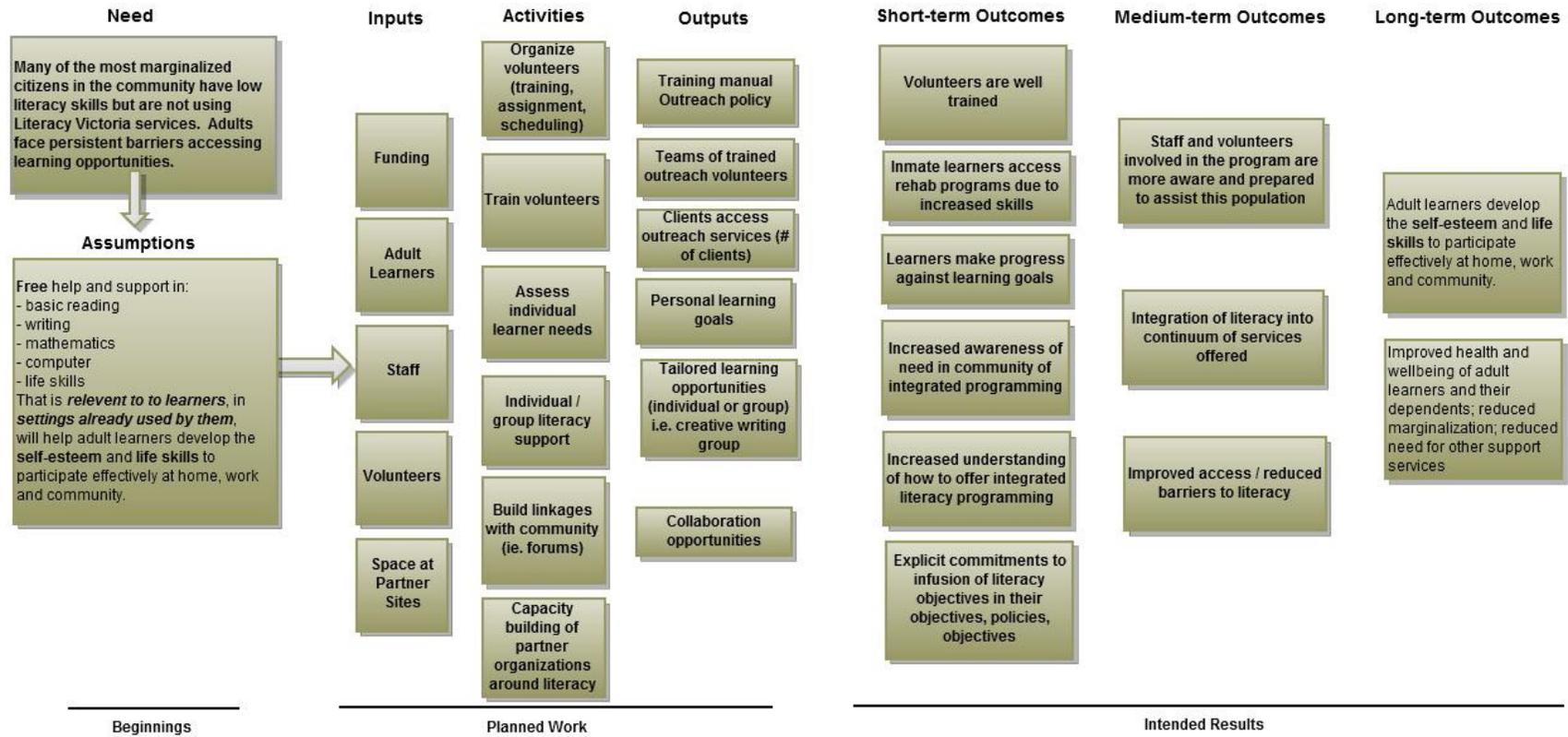
Recognizing that access to literacy services can be more difficult for people who are marginalized in the community because of multiple complex factors (eg. homeless, poverty, health). The Outreach Program was developed primarily to assertively engage this group in order to meet learners where they are at.

Another objective of the Outreach Program is to develop community capacity by offering services in partnership with community agencies, and to promote an integrated approach to program development and delivery. Literacy Victoria works with individual organizations to not only deliver services on site, but to integrate literacy development practices into that organization’s policy and operating procedures. Individual and group support is provided at the Sandy Merriman Emergency Shelter for Women and the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre; and at multiple community sites via a Bookmobile, and a Mobile Computer Lab. Each site is staffed by outreach helpers, volunteers, and an outreach co-ordinator. At each site, staff and clients are engaged to assess literacy goals and needs- a pilot project is developed and continuously adjusted according to changing needs. (Literacy Victoria, 2012). On a broader community scale, Literacy Victoria held two community forums to address how literacy programming can continue to be integrated throughout the community.

PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

Our team has developed a tentative logic model as illustrated in Figure 1. A carefully crafted logic model is an essential tool for understanding the program we are evaluating. We would validate this logic model through dialogue with stakeholders, a process that benefits us all by fostering a shared understanding of the program and its theory of change.

Figure 1: Tentative Logic Model for the Literacy Victoria Outreach Program



STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Central to a collaborative approach to evaluation is a careful analysis of stakeholder needs. Maximizing collaboration between the evaluator and key stakeholders in a strategic way assures recommendations will be more useful to those directly in a position to make program direction decisions (Bryson, Patton & Bowman, 2011, Mathison, 2007; Smits and Champagne, 2008). Stakeholders bring their perspective and experience of the program and the larger context; while the evaluation team brings evaluation expertise. We recommend forming an evaluation steering committee, comprised of the evaluator and key stakeholder representatives. When well executed, this can be an effective and inclusive way to guide the evaluation process. Stakeholder representation on the steering committee would be based on roles played in their respective groups and the experience and skill they can bring to the process (Taylor & Botschner, 1998). We, as evaluators, must pay careful attention to diversity and power relationships, and effectively negotiate balanced representation that accounts for a diversity of cultures, and power dynamics (Markiewicz, 2005).

TABLE 1. QUESTIONS INFORMED BY STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS, NEEDS / INFORMATION NEEDS

Stakeholder Groups	Interests	Information Needs	Questions
Primary Users			
Literacy Victoria Board Chair Literacy Victoria Executive Director	Evaluation strategy that will best assess impact of Outreach Program	Evaluation design How challenges will be addressed What is impact of the program on targeted beneficiaries and community partners?	What will this evaluation tell us about the impact of the Outreach Program on the target groups of learners and community partner agencies?
Secondary Stakeholders			
Outreach Co-ordinators & Volunteers Community Partners Intended Beneficiaries (Clients /Learners)	Overall functioning of the programs Program Design Engaging learners	Who is accessing the program Are there barriers to access Is the program being delivered as intended	What is working well in the program? What improvements to engaging learners are needed? How can program design be improved? How can partnerships with community partners be enhanced?

Table 1 details possible stakeholder group interests, information needs, and questions. One of the steering committee's first tasks would be to review and provide input to this information. A preliminary stakeholder analysis of the Outreach Program would indicate to us that the primary stakeholders are the Literacy Victoria Chair of the Board of Directors and Executive Director, because they are in the position to make decisions about future directions of the program. Intended beneficiaries of the program are present and future *learners* of the Outreach Program. Other secondary stakeholders are the *Outreach co-ordinators* and *Outreach helpers*, who deliver the program; and the *community partners*, who provide space, and overall support.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Strong research design is fundamental to an effective evaluation. This evaluation encompasses impact, relevance and design/delivery elements. For this reason we propose a hybrid design that incorporates both impact and formative evaluation designs.

IMPACT DESIGN

Impact evaluations measure change and attempt to determine whether change is attributable to the program. Although comparisons focus on planned program outcomes, it is very important to also deliberately consider unintended consequences, be they positive or negative.

A comparative group design to evaluate impact among intended beneficiaries is not feasible in this case for the following reasons: data does not appear to be available on literacy levels prior to program participation; the program does not track demographic data on participants to permit a matched control group; known challenges reaching this population would prohibit recruitment and assessment in sufficient numbers to develop a matched control group. Therefore, we recommend contribution analysis as an alternative approach to assessing the counterfactual.

Contribution analysis would place focus on the quality of articulation of the program theory, work to rule out contradictory evidence about underlying assumptions, and explore alternative explanations for outcomes observed. (Mayne, 2008)

To evaluate outcomes among program partners, we would use a comparative groups design. Community groups would be identified that serve the same target population, but which have not participated in activities of the outreach program. This is a useful design because the comparison to a counterfactual increases our confidence that the change we observe is attributable to the program, and not to other cause(s). Data collected from non-participating agencies will also help broaden the perspective of the evaluation.

We also suggest the use of case studies as a means of telling the story of the program. We propose case histories of some program beneficiaries be included to add depth and context to the evaluation results.

It is important to recognize that the Literacy Victoria program is still quite young, and many of its activities have been either recently implemented or have evolved over time. As such, it is not

reasonable to expect achievement of long-term outcomes. The impact component of this evaluation would focus on short-term outcomes and outputs.

RELEVANCE AND DESIGN/DELIVERY (FORMATIVE DESIGN)

In addition, to address relevance and design/delivery, we propose a mixed method, within-program design, using the validated logic model as a guide to compare program activities and outputs to what was intended when the program design was developed. Realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley 1997; Pawson 2006) can be a useful approach for understanding how a program actually works, including who benefits from the program and who does not.

We will also reference publically available statistical data on this population along with the program's 2008 needs assessment, to develop an understanding of current need and program relevance.

We would conduct a literature scan to explore the theory of change on which this program has been based, and compare with alternative theories documented in the literature. If we find that there are gaps in the literature, we propose utilization of a panel of experts to evaluate the theoretical basis for the program.

METHODS

The evaluation will involve several lines of inquiry, as outlined below. All instruments will be designed in consultation with the steering committee. Table 2 presents an evaluation matrix. Table 3 details anticipated challenges and possible threats to our lines of inquiry. Table 4 lists our evaluation instruments and associated data quality assurance measures.

DOCUMENT REVIEW will include the program's governing documents, 1999 needs assessment, formative evaluation documents and data, and various research and public opinion reports conducted in regards to literacy outreach programming. We will also be reviewing the organizational website, literacy assessment tools and training materials.

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA about inmates that outlines rehabilitation program participation and progress towards program impacts and individualized learning plans. The evaluation group will also be accessing Statistics Canada information available on the target population to build baseline data/demographic data of target population.

PARTNER FOCUS GROUPS (n=3) to collect perceptions on indicators related to awareness, design and delivery indicators. Interviews will be held at the partner sites, and all appropriate staff members will be invited to participate in the focus group. Focus groups will be audio recorded. Online survey with other community organizations will be implemented to assess awareness impacts in community organizations that are not currently involved with the program.

SURVEY WITH OUTREACH HELPERS to address indicators related to program relevance, design, delivery and impacts.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INFORMAL KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (n~10) will be performed with program beneficiaries. Evaluation team will visit project sites and conduct one-on-one interviews with program beneficiaries to collect opinions on program outcomes achieved and program relevancy. Interviews will be audio recorded. Interviews have been chosen in lieu of case studies due to the sensitivity of information and the needs of the target population. Please see Appendix 1.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INFORMAL KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (n~10) will be performed with non-participants. Evaluation team will visit project sites and conduct one-on-one interviews with individuals to assess program relevance and literacy levels of non-participants. Interviews will be audio recorded. Interviews have been chosen in lieu of case studies due to the sensitivity of information and the needs of the target population.

LITERATURE SCAN of other Literacy Outreach programs and “best practices” documents to compare the current theory of change of the Literacy Victoria Outreach program. The literature scan will inform the evaluation’s understanding of the current landscape of literacy programs.

CASE STUDIES (n=3) will be conducted to collect information on indicators related to impacts, design and delivery. Case studies are used to highlight in-depth cases where the program context and design are unique, produce unique impacts and take place in an unpredictable environment. All evaluation instruments will be developed in consultation with the steering committee and pilot tested before being rolled out to the entire sample.

TABLE 2: EVALUATION MATRIX

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Information Sources
Relevance		
1. Does the program respond to identified needs of program beneficiaries	- Is the program targeting the identified needs	- Semi-structured interview with beneficiaries - Survey with outreach helpers - Statistics Canada census data - Needs assessment (1988)
2. Is this program duplicating services already provided in the community?	# of other accessible literacy programs to same beneficiaries	- Literature scan - Focus groups with stakeholder community partners
Design		
3. Is the theory of change valid	- Theory of change is logical and supports outputs and outcomes - Program objectives are clear	- Literature scan of best practices - Document review
4. Does the program design resonate with the theory of change?	- Match between program logic model and program practice	-Interviews with program staff and outreach helpers - Observation of the program activities - Review of outreach program policies manual and administrative data

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Information Sources
Delivery		
5. Is the program being delivered as intended?	-Statements that staff and outreach helpers are appropriately trained	- Focus group with program staff & outreach helpers
6. Are there alternative program delivery models that would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the program?	- Existence of alternative and more efficient & effective delivery models - Suggestions for delivery improvement	- Literature scan of alternate program delivery models - Focus group with program staff & outreach helpers
Impacts		
7. Are program outcomes being achieved? 7 a) Have literacy skills improved for program beneficiaries?	-Progress towards achievement of literacy learning plan objectives (e.g.-inmate learners qualify for rehab programs due to increased skills)	- Semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries - Survey with outreach helpers - Data from the prison re: rehab program
7 b) Are program partners /staff offering improved access and reduced barriers to literacy	-Compare awareness levels of program partners and non-program partners re: i)-need of integrated programming ii) understanding of how to offer integrated literacy programming iii.) commitment to literacy evident in objectives, policies & objectives iv) staff & volunteers level of awareness and degree of preparation to assist this population	- Electronic survey with stakeholder community partners and non-community stakeholder groups - Review of policies of stakeholders and non-stakeholder groups - Survey with staff and outreach helpers
8. What other benefits are the participants experiencing as a result of participation	- Benefits identified by participants - Increased life skills - Decreased risks associated with	- Case studies - Semi-structured interviews with program beneficiaries
9. Are there unintended outcomes of the initiative (positive or negative)	-Benefits identified by participants	- Case studies - Semi-structured interviews with program beneficiaries

TABLE 3 ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES

Anticipated Challenges	Context	Mitigation strategies
Access to beneficiaries	The population of adult learners that are being targeted by the Literacy Outreach program are members of a hidden population who become visible in their interactions with institutions (hospitals, treatment centers, shelters, etc.). While accessing these services makes these populations more visible, there are still large aspects of this population that remain hidden.	Following the guidance of the steering committee, the evaluation team will target program beneficiaries where they are- the literacy outreach programs (including the Bookmobile, etc.).
Establishing rapport	The targeted population may have adverse reactions to cooperating with research teams based on personal lived experiences with research teams. Appropriate protocols will be developed with the steering committee to address issues concerning trust and building rapport	- e.g.: utilizing mentors to facilitate interviews
Maturation	The evaluation group understands that natural changes that occur as a result of normal passage or time. Due to the demographics of the target population, it can be assumed that beneficiaries are accessing several different interventions, literacy related and otherwise	-comparing results of interviews to reported results of similar literacy outreach programs - examining alternative explanations for outcomes occurring have been ruled out

		or clearly have only a limited influence
Social interaction / bias	Social pressures, whether intended or not, in the evaluation context, that lead to stated opinions that are not directly attributed to the intervention itself. In this case, participants may feel pressure to respond that the program has benefited them because they feel pressure to give the “correct answer”. This applies to program beneficiaries, partners and program staff.	-provide complete information outlining what “informed consent” means, and detailing the roles and responsibilities of beneficiaries and evaluation staff - examining alternative explanations for outcomes occurring have been ruled out or clearly have only a limited influence

TABLE 4. EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Instrument	Evaluation Questions	Data quality assurance
semi-structured interview protocol, case study interview protocol	relevance, impacts	- validated by tutors and program staff to ensure literacy levels are appropriate - information is based on self-report, therefore reported outcomes will be compared against progress reported in individual learning plans - compared against non-participant data - questions will be developed based on the “International Adult literacy survey measuring adult literacy and lifeskills: New frameworks for assessment” (Murray, Clermont, Binkley, 2005)
survey instrument (Outreach helpers)	tutoring	-validated through steering committee for clarity of questions - survey questions will be based on objectives outlined in tutoring manuals
on-line survey (other organizations)	program relevance program impacts	-validated through steering committee for clarity of questions - survey will be developed based on the “International Adult literacy survey measuring adult literacy and lifeskills: New frameworks for assessment” (Murray, Clermont, Binkley, 2005) -relevance questions will be modeled after questions found in formative evaluation and initial needs assessment
semi-structured interview protocol with non-participants	program relevance program impacts	- validated by community workers and program staff to ensure literacy levels are appropriate - compared against program beneficiary data -questions will be developed based on the “International Adult literacy survey measuring adult literacy and lifeskills: New frameworks for assessment” (Murray, Clermont, Binkley, 2005)
focus group protocol		- validated through steering committee for clarity of questions

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

ETHICS

Falcon Evaluation conducts all evaluations in accordance with the ethics and standards of practice established by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) and adopted by the Canadian Evaluation Society, January 2012 (JCSEE, 2012); as well as, the guidelines set out by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS, 2012).

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

We will use SPSS to generate descriptive statistics for appropriate questionnaire items; and for relevant data obtained through the program. Data will be fully screened against invalid entries, missing data, and outliers. Missing data will be analyzed to confirm it is random; otherwise appropriate measures will be taken. Bivariate comparisons will be made to determine statistical significance of differences between groups. We will also undertake multivariate statistical analysis where it can be useful to the evaluation.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Interviews and focus groups will be digitally recorded, with the permission of the informant, following a tested interview protocol. A summary will be produced from the recordings for analysis, along with verbatim quotations where they will help illustrate findings. Two team members will independently code the summaries, and a third member will be available for mediation. Following coding, the data will be analysed inductively for themes. Recordings will be destroyed within 6 months of delivery of the final evaluation report.

ACTION PLAN

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

We have carefully considered the feasibility of this evaluation and are confident it can be executed within your time and resource requirements. Figure 2 in our appendix outlines a project timeline, which would be finalized following consultation with your team.

REPORTING AND FOLLOW UP

We recommend that the results of this evaluation be shared directly with all primary stakeholders, in a form that facilitates understanding and offers opportunity for questions and feedback.

Along the way we will brief the evaluation steering committee on emerging data and findings. A draft report will be submitted for review by the committee in advance of final report preparation. Our team will be available for queries and presentations for a period of 3 months following the end of the evaluation period.

IN SUMMARY

Falcon Evaluation is a recognized leader in delivering professional evaluations that provide quality assured data in which to make informed decisions to move your program forward.

The proposed evaluation design is triple quality tested – meeting JCSEE , CES, and Tri-Council standards of practice. We proposed a mixed method design to ensure that all impacts will be

captured to the greatest extent possible. In utilizing a realist approach, we have provided a design that is useful in understanding how a program actually works, including who benefits from the program and who does not.

In alignment with the dedicated time lines and resources, we have created a feasible action plan that utilizes low-cost methods that have high impact value and build upon existing data and the expertise available within the organization.

The proposed evaluation will be accurate because we have built in methods that utilize current program documentation and data, as well as a contribution analysis that takes into account alternative explanations for observed impacts.

Finally, our proposed evaluation framework will be accountable to internal and external stakeholders due to the collaborative design of the evaluation. Throughout the evaluative process, stakeholders will be consulted to identify information needs to assure that recommendations are useful and appropriate for the organization. Furthermore, our particular proposal addresses threats to internal and external validity, and strives to overcome the challenges associated with engaging with the intended target population of the Literacy Victoria Outreach Program

REFERENCES

- Bryson, John M., Patton, Michael Quinn, Bowman, Ruth A. , “Working with evaluation stakeholders: A rationale, step-wise approach and toolkit”, *Evaluation and Program Planning* 34 (2011) 1-12
- Literacy Victoria (2012) retrieved from <http://www.literacyvictoria.ca>
- Markiewicz, A. (2005). “A balancing act: Resolving multiple stakeholder interests in program evaluation. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, Vol 4 (newseries), Nos 1&2 March/April 2005, pp.13-21
- Mathison, S. (2008). What is the difference between evaluation and research – and why do we care? In N. Smith and P.R. Brandon (Eds), *Fundamental issues in evaluation* (pp. 183-196). New York: Guilford.
- Mayne, J (2008) Contribution analysis: an approach to exploring cause and effect. ILAC Brief 16 May 2008 (www.cgjar-ilac.org).
- Murray, Scott, Clermont, Yvan & Binkley, Marilyn. (2005). *International Adult Literacy Survey Measuring Adult Literacy and Life Skills: New Frameworks for Assessment*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=89-552-MIE2005013&lang=eng>
- Smits, P.A. & Champagne, F. (2008). An assessment of the theoretical underpinnings of practical participatory evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 29 (4), 427-442
- Revelstoke Adult Literacy Outreach Project (2008), A look at best practices for conducting outreach for literacy programs <http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Assets/Regions/Shuswap+Revelstoke+Region/Images/Best+Practices+Inventory.pdf>
- Taylor, A. R., & Botschner, J.V. (1998). *Ontario community support association: Evaluation handbook*. Kitchener, ON: Centre for Research and Education in Human Services Retrieved from <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/takingcultureseriouslyCURA/references.html>

APPENDIX 1: DRAFT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Semi-Structured Interviews: Clients of Literacy Victoria Outreach Program
Preliminary

(Consent has already been given) Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. I would like to ask you a few questions about your participation in the Literacy Victoria Outreach Program which will inform our study of how to improve services.

If at any time you want to discontinue the interview or have a question, that is completely up to you and will not affect the services you receive from Literacy Victoria

The interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes. If you need to take a break etc. we can do that also.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

O.k. Let's get started.

Questions

Qualify the informant:

1. How long have you been involved in the program?
2. How many group meetings have you attended?

Description of their experience (overall satisfaction):

1. Have you taken part in literacy programs other than this one?
2. (If yes) What did you learn from them?
3. What brought you to the program?
4. What have you learned?
5. Have you learned skills other than reading, writing, math and computer skills?

Specific perceptions of accomplishment (or not); challenges; concerns? [probe for unintended outcomes both positive and negative]

1. What was happening in your life before you became involved in the program?
2. What was your literacy level before becoming involved in the program (reading, writing, math, computer skills)?
3. How would you describe your life now? Have you been able to meet your goals?

Suggestions for improvement

1. How could the program that you were involved in be improved?
2. Is there any more Literacy Victoria could be doing to help people access its services?

