

# Performance

All parties are very satisfied with the project's performance. Although the means of evaluation were unclear during the first phase, the project was assessed more in qualitative terms.

## Circulation of Information

At first the objective of the Ambassadeur project was to provide socioeconomic information that addressed the concerns of citizens through the CACs. In the first phase, all clienteles were targeted. The regional results indicate that, in a very short time, the information officers managed to reach a substantial number of people. In the second phase, the energy was focused more on employability. A follow-up tool was used with some participants and, in some areas, it was found that, as a result of information officer intervention, a number of the people landed jobs.

The "Ambassadors" quickly realized that the CACs were ideal places to provide information and lead sessions, and that their involvement gave new life to some CACs.

With a tool such as the Internet, it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which people who attended a session absorbed the information, among other reasons due to the lack of counters at the websites and the absence of a control group with the same characteristics as the pilot-project region but no Ambassadeur. On the other hand, some CFDCs took initiatives that to us reveal the interest sparked by their efforts in the community.

The Lac St-Jean Ouest CFDC created a website about the Ambassadeur project. From February 28, 2000 to January 25, 2001, the site received 2,545 hits compared to 500 for the CFDC since its creation. The Haut-Saguenay CFDC produced an Internet guide that was handed out at the information sessions and sold at a modest price (\$2.00). The Fjord and Lac St-Jean Est CFDCs organized contests in which contestants had to find information at specified sites and qualified to win a computer. The Fjord CFDC, by checking the IP addresses of contestants, found that the connections did not just come from CACs.

Although information tools adapted to the needs of the groups were developed in each community, the project's performance is closely tied to the quality of information officer selection. The candidate profile for the project called for communication and training skills and talents combined with a knowledge of new information technologies, and not computer scientists. As you may recall, each CFDC was responsible for their selection and the profile had been worked out with HRDC assistance.

The results achieved confirm that this approach produced unexpected dividends. The information officers quickly become community resource persons and were approached to obtain information, to learn how to find specific information and to plan information sessions. Their ability to enter the communities and arouse public interest gave the CFDCs un hoped-for exposure, yet also created pressure to add this service as part of their offering.

## Financing

An important factor that affected the project's performance was financing. The uncertainty created by the delays in approving the grant, the shortfall in the money received from the Pan-Canadian Activities Fund and the questions surrounding the project's survival hampered CFDC initiatives in the field.

From the very outset, all parties involved found that the project filled a need, but at the same time it gave rise to expectations that they may not be able to live up to unless the project is renewed. A number of planned initiatives were only partly carried out, or postponed, or simply dropped due to the precarious nature of the information officers' jobs. The time limit on the project prevented any medium- or long-term planning.

The partners all agree that this service should be maintained. Some CFDCs have indicated their intention of adding it to their service baskets, but funding remains a central concern. As of April 2001, the citizen phase of the Ambassadeur project is no longer financed by the Pan-Canadian Activities Fund, but the CFDCs are continuing their work in the field in the hope of obtaining a grant from the OLT.

## Project Benefits

The Ambassadeur project proved to be an important promotional tool for the partners. It gave the CFDCs public exposure and, above all, enabled them to cultivate relations with numerous local organizations. A number of CFDC executive directors talk about this project with pride. Moreover, it created expectations in the community. People greatly appreciated the service ("a good free service...how could we do without it?"). But the project's

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short lifespan worried some. As one participant put it, one can ask, "Is it enough to help the community pull itself up by the bootstraps?"

For HRDC, it turned out to be a very interesting means of promoting government products and services. The project also made it possible to develop ties with people in the field and to combine the forces of two organizations with different missions in pursuit of a common goal. Some even foresee the possibility of cooperating on other projects.

The citizen phase of this project spanned a very short period of approximately two years, including a year and a half of work in the field, because:

- it no longer officially comes under the Pan-Canadian Activities Fund,
- the partners are looking for funds to continue the project; and
- it is difficult to clearly identify all its ramifications in the communities.

There are many avenues to explore in measuring the extent to which the regional objectives set at the start were attained by the project, as well as its benefits including:

- the impact of the training given by the "Ambassadeurs" to CAC volunteers in their efforts to lead, support and coach users;
- subsequent use of the documentary resources by the people reached, the use of information and communication technology to meet their needs and the dissemination of information in their entourage and social network; and
- the organizations concerned taking charge of the information to convey it to their clientele.

In fact, one benefit of the citizen phase worth considering is the multiplier effect of the efforts made in the various communities by the information officers. From the outset, the comments are positive but, with distance, the partners will be able to accurately assess all of the project's benefits. The qualitative evaluation is rather positive.

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