

LEARNER GAINS RESEARCH PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared for: College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC)

Prepared by: Marti Jurmain Consulting

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report fulfills the requirement for an independent evaluation of the Learner Gains Research Project (the Project), conducted by the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC) from January to December, 2016.

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (the Ministry) contracted with the College Sector Committee to administer entry and exit tests to Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) learners using the Essential Skills for Employment and Education (ESEE) tool. The Project goal is to assist the Ministry to understand more fully learners' experiences and progress through the LBS system and to validate learner skill gain pre-and post assessment. A secondary goal is to gather information on how learners view the ESEE assessment tool itself.

The Project's "focus is on the administration of the entry tests (to new LBS program registrants), and exit tests to learners who complete their programming within the project duration".

The evaluation methodology included both quantitative and qualitative methods. Telephone and in-person interviews were held with the CSC Interim Director. Telephone interviews were held with the Project Manager and Data Specialist. The Evaluator reviewed all reports to the Ministry, sample data sets from learner assessments, various e-mail correspondence, and summaries of inquiries and responses from learners and LBS service delivery agencies. Key findings by the Evaluator are:

1. This Project has been managed by an experienced, capable project team that was responsive to ministry requests and queries, even when little turnaround time was provided for new activities.
2. The project team designed appropriate processes and completed project activities, as outlined in the approved work plan, in a timely and professional manner. It provided the Ministry with reports required or requested from time to time within specified timeframes. The Project Team is to be commended on its responsiveness to requests for additional information, many of which required considerable computer programming time.
3. The project team assisted Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) service providers to complete their role in the project through communication tools, guides, and responsiveness to queries. It responded quickly to learner queries received through the web assessment tool links. The team mitigated any risks or problems in a timely and effective manner.
4. The Learner Gains Project was successful in accomplishing its core objectives. A significant amount of rich data has been garnered through the Project, with thorough data analysis evident in the Interim and Final Reports.
5. For future projects of this nature, the Ministry and project team should develop a framework to measure user experience and satisfaction at the project outset from all participants (LBS providers and learners).

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this report is to present a final evaluation of the 11-month Learner Gains Research Project (the Project), administered by the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC). This report will fulfill the requirements of the Project Agreement to engage a consultant to review the project deliverables. The report will evaluate the extent to which the CSC:

- designed appropriate processes and completed its project activities in a timely manner
- assisted Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) service providers to complete their role in the project
- provided the Ministry with reports required or requested from time to time within specified timeframes
- assisted in the assessment of learners' literacy gains as a result of program intervention, using the Essential Skills for Employment and Education (ESEE) assessment tool

The Project's "focus is on the administration of the entry tests (to new LBS program registrants), and exit tests to learners who complete their programming within the project duration". Project requirements are outlined in the Agreement between the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the College Sector Committee, signed on December 14, 2015.

The Ministry ultimately wishes to assess learners' literacy gains as a result of the intervention of a literacy program, using the ESEE tools to measure entry and exit literacy competencies.

Limitations

This evaluation report is based on an examination of documentary evidence focused on the completion, comprehensiveness and timeliness of approved work plan activities, as well as interviews with key project administrators. The Evaluator did not survey LBS service delivery agencies, although there was an examination of queries from the agencies to the Project Manager and subsequent responses from the Project Manager. A survey of LBS service delivery agencies has been conducted separately from this review.

The Evaluator also did not survey learners. However, evidence was gathered from project personnel as to the quantity and nature of inquiries or problems faced by ESEE clients (learners) and their resolution. Information was also gathered on data and programming requirements that enabled the ESEE tool to be used effectively and provide the information requested by the Ministry. A financial audit for the Learner Gains Research Project is to be completed separately.

The Ministry "has expressed an interest in using the Essential Skills for Employment and Education (ESEE) tool as a gateway to understanding learners' experiences and progress through the Literacy and

Basic Skills (LBS) program" (Schedule A: Project Description). Learner engagement occurs when there are queries from learners who are using the ESEE tool and encounter difficulties, triggering a response from the CSC data specialist. As such, the Project gathered limited information on how the Essential Skills for Employment and Education (ESEE) assessment tool itself is viewed by learners.

Information was also gathered related to region and some learner demographic information. Data on assessment results and time taken for testing from both pre and post-tests may also provide some indication of the learner's "experience and progress through the LBS program". No specific survey of learners was envisioned in the original contract with the Ministry nor was part of the approved work plan.

Learner experience with the ESEE tool is also provided through responses by the LBS service deliverers engaged with the Project. These survey responses are provided in a separate report submitted to the Ministry.

BACKGROUND

The Ministry has contracted with the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC) to administer entry and exit tests to Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) learners using the Essential Skills for Employment and Education (ESEE) tool. Its goal is to understand more fully learners' experiences and progress through the LBS system and to validate learner skill gain pre-and post assessment. secondary goal is to gather information on how learners view the ESEE assessment tool itself.

The CSC was contracted to assess approximately eighteen hundred (1,800) learners on entry to their LBS program, from a sample of approximately thirty (30) LBS organizations with 45 sites serving these learners, and representing all LBS streams (Anglophone, Francophone, Aboriginal and Deaf). There are approximately 45,000 LBS learners in Ontario, and 316 LBS service deliverers. Each of the LBS program learners takes an entry test with three components (literacy, document use, and numeracy), completes his/her LBS program, and then takes an exit test at the end of the program. Testing is available in English and French, with American Sign Language (ASL) supports available where required.

The timeframe for the entry and exit testing was January to the end of November, 2016. As such, learners would be required to have completed their individual learning programs within at maximum an 1 month time frame.

Th ESEE Assessment Tool

Essential Skills for Employment and Education (ESEE) is a validated assessment tool that has been thoroughly tested for skills assessment (reading, document use, numeracy), mainly for pre-testing entry skills of learners. The College Sector Committee (CSC) has conducted two previous pilots for ESEE: one with a representative sampling of school boards and community-based LBS service providers, and one with representation from all LBS sectors and streams. The ESEE tool had not been used extensively for post-testing of learners.

During the start-up phase of the Project the technical team added an entry checklist developed in a previous pilot to determine whether learners had the basic skills to be registered to begin the assessment. This checklist is represented in the first section of the assessment by a 6 question "locator" that determines whether:

- a) the learner proceeds or is exempted from the test
- b) the learner is streamed to the Type A assessment with less challenging tasks
- c) the learner is streamed to the Type B assessment with more challenging tasks

ESE learner users have numbered over 200,000 since 2011/12, representing over 140 service providers. The tool is very well used, and a methodology for handling inquiries and problems has been put in place. Every component of the ESEE tool has a link to report a problem. Queries from users are grouped into commonalities (e.g., technical Issues); the technical team has developed standardized responses to typical problems, and responses are customized as needed for individual queries. Responses occur normally within the hour, and always within a day of the query. Responses are normally by e-mail, but may also be by phone. During the Project, there have been n follow-up inquiries from the client on the same issue.

Th Responsibilities of the College Sector Committee

The CSC ("Recipient") is required to:

1. Ensure all reports are formatted according to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
2. Develop and distribute project and training information to Ministry staff, service providers, and individual learners as appropriate and agreed on.
3. Develop qualitative and quantitative data collection processes, including instruction packages, and test data that includes test completion times, scores, and rates of uptake, and report the test data to the Ministry on a monthly basis.
4. Conduct the Project from January to November, 2016, providing e-mail and telephone support to LBS service delivery agencies as needed; monitoring the data collection tools; and providing feedback to the Ministry regarding targets.
5. Review all qualitative and quantitative data for data integrity and forward data to the Ministry.
6. Prepare and submit all reports according to the agreed on work plan for the Project. Reports include reports of raw data collected using the ESEE tool; an interim report, and a final report that includes a full analysis of quantitative and qualitative data with recommendations.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This report is a summative evaluation of the Learner Gains Research Project. The following methodology was utilized in the evaluation.

1. The Evaluator conducted an initial in-person meeting with the CSC Interim Director to gather documentation relevant to the review and discuss her engagement with the project. Introductions were made by the Interim Director to the Project Manager and Project Data Specialist.
2. review and analysis of documentary evidence related to Project work plan goals and activities was conducted to determine the completion of activities, challenges and how they were mitigated, and the timeliness and completeness of reports. Additional documentation was requested and received from both the Project Manager and the Project Data Specialist by e-mail and phone.
3. The Evaluator reviewed the Interim Project Report of July 21, 2016 and addenda to gather specific information on responses and responsiveness of the Project team to inquiries or requests from LBS service deliverers, clients/learners, and the Ministry.
4. review of representative raw data sets was completed to examine data categories and completeness.
5. Telephone interviews, using prepared survey questions (Appendix A), were conducted with the CSC Interim Director, the Project Manager and the project Data Specialist.
6. Lists of problems or requests from the LBS service providers, learners, and the Ministry were examined, along with the responses provided from project team members (Appendix B).
7. The Evaluator reviewed the draft Final Report of the Project, and conducted follow-up telephone or e-mail questions for the Interim Director and project team.

The table below identifies the documentary evidence examined for this evaluation.

Documentary Evidence

Work Plan Component	Documentary Evidence Considered	Completion/Comments
Work Plan Set-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Agreement between Ministry and CSC• Work plan spreadsheets, provided by project team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective date: Dec. 14, 2015• Completed/agreed on; Schedule A of Agreement
Web application adaptation/customization for the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Agreement between Ministry and CSC	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESEE User Guide for Organizations • ESEE Test Administrators User Guide • Review of various websites related to the Project, the ESEE tool, and Ministry publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Guides provided to LBS service delivery agencies • Available from start of Agreement
Preparation and distribution of project documentation, including instructions for LBS service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memoranda from Ministry to LBS service providers, Dec. 21, 2015 and March 14, 2016 • Quick Start instruction sheet for ESEE • ESEE User Guide for Organizations • ESEE Test Administrators User Guide • Site Lists and contact information for service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Guides provided to LBS service delivery agencies • Contact information provided by the Ministry was often not for LBS providers themselves, resulting in the project team having to locate appropriate contact information
Responses to Inquiries from LBS service providers, learners, and Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary of inquiries/problems submitted to Project Manager from LBS service deliverers and responses • summary of inquiries/problems submitted to Data Specialist from clients/learners and responses • Ministry e-mails requesting new information or data sets and project team responses • interview summaries with project team members, based on 2 interviews each, Nov., 2016, and following post-test administration, Dec., 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated as part of risk management throughout Project by Project Manager • Updated as part of risk management throughout Project by Project Data Specialist • Information or new data sets provided in a timely manner on request
Project registration/support/training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project data sets: June 1, 2016 (pre-test data) • Final Report, Dec., 2016 	

Assessment tool administration in service delivery agencies - entry tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly reports to Ministry • Additional data provided re: e-mailed Ministry requests • Summary of inquiries/problems submitted from LBS agencies • Summary of inquiries/problems submitted by learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contract indicates monthly reports; however, the Ministry made several requests for additional information • Response to requests/problems from LBS agencies were completed within 1 day • Response to requests/problems from learners were completed within one hour to one day
Assessment support, response to inquiries and problems; data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary of requests/problems submitted to Project Manager • summary of requests/problems submitted to Data Specialist • interview summaries with project team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going to Project completion, Nov. 30, 2016
Assessment tool administration in service delivery agencies - exit tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary of requests/problems submitted to Project Manager • summary of requests/problems submitted to Data Specialist • interview summaries with project team members • Interim and Final Reports 	
Reports to Ministry: Interim Report and Final Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Interim Report, June 30, 2016 • Interim Project Report, Addendum, July 21, 2016 • Interim Report, Additional Requested Information, Aug. 15, 2016 • Final Report - draft received Dec. 18, 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted June 30, 2016 • Additional information provided to the Ministry, July 21, 2016 • Additional Requested Information from Addendum, provided, Aug. 15, 2016 • Final report follow-up conducted with Interim Director, Dec. 19, 2016

Interview Information

The initial interview with the CSC Interim Director was held in person November 2, 2016. The Interim Director provided print and electronic copies of key project documents. She discussed her understanding of her role in the Project, as well as details on communication and meetings with the project team. This interview assisted in the development of interview questions for the Project Manager and Project Data Specialist.

The Evaluator interviewed the Project Manager and Project Data Specialist through both telephone interviews and e-mail follow-up requests for information. Two additional interviews were held by telephone with the CSC Interim Director on December 1 and December 19, 2016.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Project Management. This project has been well managed and thoroughly documented by the CSC project team. The College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading is an experienced organization that has successfully managed many projects over the years. It has governance documents that relate to roles and responsibilities, position descriptions for contract staff, formal protocols for financial transactions, formal decision-making methods, and procedures to identify risks and address them.

The project team is also experienced with the administration of the ESEE tool and the analysis of data from the use of the tool since 2011. Data identity security was maintained throughout the Learner Gains Project through coded personal identifiers for learners. Learner queries are enabled through links provided in the individual's assessment; responses to these queries are transmitted to the coded learner identification. Accordingly, the identity of an individual learner is protected at all times. The Executive Director reviewed all monthly data reports to ensure there was no identifiable information of the learner.

The CSC Executive Director left the organization partway through the Project (May, 2016), and an Interim Director provided experienced oversight of the project activities and reports for the majority of the project time frame. The Interim Director submitted all reports according to work plan deliverables and dates. She established a timetable and format for deliverables, and ensured that all were prepared and submitted on time. The Ministry contacted the Interim Director directly by e-mail from time to time for additional information; the Interim Director then tasked team members to prepare the information, and she submitted it on time (occasionally with very little turnaround time) to the Ministry. Interim Director statements are confirmed by documentary evidence.

The Project Manager and Data Specialist have decades of experience with the literacy networks and environment in Ontario. They were able to handle any challenges that arose in an effective and efficient manner. Challenges faced by the project team include:

- There have been communication challenges due to the fact that the Ministry made the initial contact with LBS organizations, and then provided a contact person to the CSC team for ongoing communication regarding the administration of the ESEE tool. Two main concerns arose:
 1. the Ministry provided a number of agency/organization contact persons who were unrelated to the LBS program in their institution, requiring the project team to seek correct contact information and revise the registration data base.
 2. There was some confusion in the LBS field, and many more inquiries than expected from the field as a result, that arose from communication with two different agencies (Ministry and project team).
- The ESEE website is heavily used; a challenge identified by the Data Specialist was the programming customization required for this Project - e.g., responding to the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). For example, much of the ESEE site was made up of images of text pages. However, the e-readers used by the visually impaired cannot read images. Therefore, the project team had to convert all "images" to text. This was a considerable amount of work, but it will be valuable to ESEE in its future uses. The User Guide also had to be made more readable.

2. Work Plan Completion. The project team completed all work plan elements on schedule, responding to inquiries or requests from the Ministry immediately on receipt. The evaluator conducted both in-person or telephone interviews with the three members of the project team. The interview questions appear in the appendices. Work plan products (data, reports) were submitted complete and on time. Challenges were handled professionally and with the confidence of an experienced team.

3. The Essential Skills for Education and Employment Assessment Tool. The ESEE is a web application that assesses a learner's essential skills in literacy, document use, and numeracy. The tool identifies and assesses skill levels and gaps, compares skill levels to occupational requirements and identifies a customized learning plan. The ESEE web application is managed by the College Sector Committee for Academic Upgrading (CSC). Skill levels are measured on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) 50 point scale, and Employment and Social Development Canada's 5 level scale; the levels are also aligned with the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). The tool is available in English and French, and is accessible for those who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The ESEE tool has been tested, validated, and used by over 200,000 learners since 2011/12. The ESEE tool is available for use on an ongoing basis as desired by the Ministry. The documentary evidence reviewed suggests that the tool is easy to use by both LBS service deliverers and learners once an initial learning phase occurs. Inquiries by service deliverers and by learners specific to this Project were handled in close to real time through the on-line identification of a problem built into the ESEE software. The project team was diligent in the timeliness of its response to inquiries, and there was no repeat query related to the same issue by the inquirer, indicating satisfaction with the response.

The ESEE tool has an initial 6 question "locator" that will allow the learner to be exempted from the test or placed in an appropriate assessment level (A or B). Over the time frame of this project, only 2% were exempted from taking the assessment based on the locator questions.

User Guides were provided to all LBS service delivery agencies. The User Guide for Organizations provides an overview of the website; registration information and setting up of test administrators; information on the assessments and "locator pre-test"; the preparation of reports; and information for special needs learners. The Test Administrator User Guide focuses on information for those who will register learners and guide them through the assessment processes. It provides a video on essential skills, as well as details on the learner outcomes from the results of the assessments. The guides are readable, user-friendly, and provide sufficient and relevant information to accomplish their goal of assisting the agencies in administering the tests. Inquiries sent to both the Project Manager and Data Specialist were frequently referred to specific pages in the Guides.

4. Problems/Inquiries with the Use of the ESEE Tool. To review the process and timeliness of handling problems or inquiries, the Evaluator reviewed all inquiries received during the period of January to October, 2016, with a final list provided in mid December, 2016. Inquiries reported to the Project Manager by LBS service delivery agencies were largely technical questions. Appendix B documents a representative sampling of both typical and atypical inquiries and the response given. Responses were normally provided the same day.

The Data Specialist received 127 error messages from all ESEE users from January to the end of October, 2016, with the Project accounting for 34% of the total number of users during this time period. Appendix B provides details on the type and number of technical inquiries and the responses provided. Initial answers to error messages appear to have been sufficient, as there were no repetitions of the same queries.

5. Results of the Data Analysis. The Interim Project Report provided by the project team on June 30, 2016 included the raw data from assessments to that date. The report noted the completion of additional changes requested by the Ministry to the web application such as the modification of existing accounts for the pilot, the addition of an exemption skills list, and registration tags by sector.

As of June 30, 2016, 33 LBS programs representing 45 sites were registered to participate, representing all requested sectors (community-based, college and school board) and streams (Anglophone, Francophone, Native and Deaf). 1837 individuals had been registered and 3,846 assessments administered as of May 31, 2016, with an additional 230+ test takers/assessments by June 20, 2016.

A Interim Project Report Addendum was submitted on July 21, 2016 provided additional information that was not available for the June 30, 2016 Report. This report noted that, of the 2,174 learners registered, 1,995 actually completed one or more assessments (there are three assessments to the test - reading, document use, and numeracy). The addendum reported that over 97% of learners had the skills to complete the on-line assessment, and more than 84% had the skills needed to complete the

Type B assessment (the higher level test). The addendum profiled the learners by age, gender, sector stream and location, and attempted to correlate scores by profile elements. Correlations appear to be strong between the scores of males and females and weak between age and score. The Evaluator found that other correlations are difficult to assess. As well, the Evaluator found that correlations between time taken for the test and learner scores were difficult to assess based on the variety of delivery methods for the test (in-class, off site, at various times and dates, etc.) The project team's data analysis also demonstrates an unease with attempting to determine accurate correlations between scores and language level for those of the deaf and hard of hearing, Aboriginal learners, and those within a specific geographic location. These interim findings by the team are confirmed in the Final Report, reviewed in December, 2016.

Following receipt of the Interim Project Report Addendum, the Ministry requested additional information and analysis. The Evaluator noted that, while this information was not part of the original work plan, the project team responded quickly to conduct the additional programming and data analysis. An example of such a request was the preparation of a more detailed analysis and potential correlation between the time taken for the test (filtering out extremes) and the test score.

The Learner Gains Research Project Final Report which provided and analyzed post-test in addition to pre-test data, was submitted in draft form to the Evaluator on December 18, 2016. The Final Report provides a detailed and useful history of the CSC, the ESE tool, and the use of the tool since late 2011. Of particular relevance for the Learner Gains Project, the ESEE team developed a locator pre-test process to automatically streams clients to the assessment version best suited to their abilities; a Level 1 assessment specifically designed for low-skilled clients; and a Level 1, 2 and 3 assessment that has more challenging questions for more advanced clients. The Final Report was also able to analyze post-tests of learners who had completed their LBS program, and to validate learner skills gains for those learners who had completed both pre and post tests within the Project time frame.

Over the duration of the Learner Gains Research Project, 2782 learners took the ESE test, and completed a total of 6,484 assessments (keeping in mind that there are three components to the test: reading, document use, numeracy), at 45 LBS sites representing all LBS streams (Anglophone, Francophone, Aboriginal, and Deaf). The majority of learners were 20 to 34 years of age; 57% were females and 42% were male. Overall, 2% or fewer learners were exempted using the locator function on the test. This infers that 98% of learners likely have the skills needed to complete an online assessment. In addition, only 15% of learners demonstrated weak enough skills to be streamed into the 15-20 item Type A assessments designed for lower-skilled people. Most learners (84%) demonstrated strong enough skills to be streamed into the 30-40 item Type B assessments designed for higher-skilled people.

This Evaluator reviewed both the perceived role and responsibilities of the CSC as well as the methodology outlined in the Final Report, cross-referencing these with the documentary evidence reviewed. The Evaluator agrees with the role as outlined and can verify that the methodology described was followed and documented.

The data filtering techniques adopted for the Final Report are reasonable for the LBS program and client group. For example the time taken by test takers to complete assessments was a reliable proxy for effort. In instances where a learner scored lower on the post-test than the pre-test, the post-test score was increased by the project team to match that of the pre-test. The team noted that it made this calculation because "clients do not lose skills in a time frame of nine months or less, even if they did not participate in any form of training."

The Final Report comments on the statistical reliability of findings, and these comments match the evidence reviewed by the Evaluator as well as generally-accepted data analysis principles. For example, results reported using sample sizes of 15-29 learners may not be reliable. The report authors note that "we include data points with sample sizes of 15-29 in our analysis, but extreme caution should be exercised when making inferences involving this data." In the analysis of test results, the project team frequently and appropriately does not derive conclusions based on low sample size, most notably for those taking the Type A tests.

Another possible reason for low sample sizes in post-test results is that while the Project began officially in January, 2016, it took until the middle of March 2016 for all pilot sites, except two, to have assigned test administrators and administered pre-tests to learners. Therefore, in order to take the post-test learners would have to have completed their program within 9 months - a very short timeframe for most LBS learners, particularly for those taking Type A tests.

Statistical analysis comments made by the project team are perceived as reasonable. For example, in considering time taken for the test, the final report authors note: "as clients are permitted to complete assessments in multiple sittings, test duration statistics do not necessarily reflect the actual time test takers needed to complete any one assessment." Time taken for tests is a thoroughly analyzed component of the test results. The project team notes several trends based on completion times for both Type A (lower level) assessments and Type B (higher level). One finding is that "only 63 per cent of clients completed Type B numeracy assessments in 60 minutes or less. The lower completion rate within the one-hour time frame suggests that the numeracy assessment may be too long." A follow-up recommendation on reducing the number of numeracy questions seems a reasonable response to this finding.

Findings related to learner skill gains are significant. The team notes that for the reading test, learners scored 21 points higher on their Type A post-test compared to their Type A pre-test. Type B learners scored 11 points higher on their Type B post-test compared to their Type B pre-test. This Evaluator agrees that these are significant gains in a short time frame. It is also worth noting that Aboriginal Type learners made the largest skill gains in reading.

6. Key Findings by the Learner Gains Research Project Team

The project team's key findings are reasonable and reflect the data summaries and analyses. These include:

- skill gains noted were generally significant, with Aboriginal learners taking the Type B tests the most significant
- the web application's streaming system effectively directs clients to the appropriate type of assessment
- factors affecting the amount and quality of data collected are: effort put forth by test takers; low rates of post-testing (19%) resulting in small sample sizes, and hampering the team's ability to more thoroughly investigate the skill gains achieved by sub populations such as sectors and streams; the ability for learners to complete a test in multiple sittings hindering the team's ability to accurately measure test durations and perhaps negatively affecting test scores.
- the Type B numeracy assessment may have too many questions. Currently, Type B reading and document use assessments have 30 questions and the Type B numeracy assessment has 40 questions. Excessively long assessments create issues such as cognitive load and testing fatigue that often result in lower scores.

7. Recommendations by the Learner Gains Research Project Team

The Evaluator agrees with the project team's recommendations and they are supported by the data and documentary evidence examined. Two significant suggestions are :

- To reduce test fatigue, cognitive load and lessen the need to complete assessments in multiple sittings, reduce the number of Type B numeracy questions from 40 to 30 and Type B reading and document use questions from 30 to 27.
- To collect more accurate test duration data, remove the ability for clients to complete a single assessment in multiple sittings.

Other recommendations are related to communications and administration for both learners and service providers/test administrators.

EVALUATOR'S ANALYSIS

Based on the evidence reviewed and interviews with project team members, the Evaluator offers the following conclusions:

1. This Project has been managed by an experienced, capable project team that was responsive to ministry requests and queries, even when little turnaround time was provided for new activities.
2. The project team designed appropriate processes and completed project activities, as outlined in the approved work plan, in a timely and professional manner. It provided the Ministry with reports required or requested from time to time within specified timeframes.

The Evaluator noted that some additional requests by the Ministry had not been agreed on in writing, signed and dated, as provided for in Article 33.2 of the Project Agreement. The Project Team is to be commended on its responsiveness to requests for additional information, many of which required considerable computer programming time.

3. The team mitigated any risks or problems quickly and effectively. The team assisted Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) service providers to complete their role in the project through communication tools, guides, and responsiveness to queries. It responded quickly to learner queries received through the web assessment tool links.

4. The Learner Gains Project was successful in accomplishing its core objectives. A significant amount of rich data has been garnered through the Project, with thorough data analysis evident in the Interim and Final Reports. The post-test analysis and recommendations will be valuable for future uses of the ESEE tool.

5. For future projects of this nature, the Ministry and project team should develop a framework to measure user experience and satisfaction at the project outset from major participant groups (here, both LBS providers and learners).

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Surveys of Project Team Members

Appendix B: Summaries of Inquiries/Problems submitted to Project Team

APPENDIX A

SURVEY FOR CSC INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1. Please describe how the Project is fulfilling the following requirements noted in section 2.3 of the Agreement with the Ministry:

1.1 section (b) on procedures to ensure the ongoing effective functioning of the "Recipient"

1.2 section (c) on decision-making mechanisms

1.3 section (d) on procedures for the prudent and effective management of funds

1.4 section (e) on procedures to enable successful completion of the Project

1.5 section (f) procedures to identify risks and address them

1.6 section (g) procedures to enable the preparation and delivery of all required reports

2. Please describe any challenges and how they were handled in the submission of reports and "any other reports as may be requested from time to time" to the Ministry in accordance with the timelines (section 7.1 of Agreement). Comment on your communication with the Ministry or the project team to ensure that all reports and "other reports" are completed to the satisfaction of the Ministry.

3. Comment on arrangements to ensure the protection of privacy of learners.

4. Please comment on the changeover from the original signatory for the CSC to yourself as Interim Executive Director.

5. Please discuss your interpretation of the Project Objectives as listed in Schedule A.

6. Please discuss any "Adjustments" to the Project, and how they were documented (Schedule A: footnote, p. 26)

7. Please discuss your meetings with the project team. What were their concerns and how did you address them? Can you provide notes from these meetings?

8. Please discuss your meetings/communication with the Ministry and any follow-up actions you took. (any notes from these meetings?)

9. Do you have any recommendations to share with the Ministry?

SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROJECT MANAGER

1. Please describe the background and start-up of the Learner Gains Research Project.

2. What do you understand your role/responsibility to be in the Project?

3. What have been the start-up challenges with this Project?

4. What have been the inquiries or problems experienced by the LBS field (service deliverers) during the initial stages of the project, and how did you respond to them?

5. Please describe your experience with the Project work plan and deliverables.

6. The ESE tool is an existing tool for testing literacy and numeracy. What changes would you make you make in the tool or processes for administering it would you make based on this Project?

7. Do you have other comments to share?

SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DATA SPECIALIST

1. Please describe the background and start-up of the Learner Gains Research Project from the perspective of yourself as data specialist.
2. What do you understand your role/responsibility to be in the Project?
3. What have been the start-up challenges with this Project?
4. What have been the inquiries or problems experienced by the LBS field (service deliverers) during the initial stages of the project, and how did you respond to them?
5. The ESE tool is an existing tool for testing literacy and numeracy. What changes would you make you make in the tool or processes for administering it would you make based on this Project?
6. Do you have other comments to share?

APPENDIX B

REPRESENTATIVE SUMMARY OF INQUIRIES SUBMITTED TO PROJECT MANAGER FROM LBS SERVICE DELIVERY AGENCIES

Typical Queries

Inquiry/Issue	Response
Need organization username and password	This is sent from the website once a registration has been completed. The list of organizations/individuals to be registered was provided by the Ministry. Individual inquiries were directed to the person who had been registered. The ministry had provided the name of the signing authority and not the LBS Program Manager. This resulted in numerous registration revisions, setting up new passwords, re-sending original information and providing instructions to review recorded webinar.
Received a "Forbidden; you do not have access to this server" message from the website	Some organizations had participated in earlier CSC ESEE pilots and were using the bookmarked link from these projects instead of the ESEE URL provided in all LGRP communications. Instructed to clear cache, bookmark new ESEE URL.
Do learners have to complete the assessment(s) all at once?	No, the assessments can be completed in sections. Reference to page 4 in the Test Administrator User Guide.
Is there a way to get more information about the test results than the emailed scores?	Steps to view full assessment results provided along with a reference to pages 8 & 9 in Test Administrators User Guide. OALCF coding explained.
Do we continue to use our existing log-in information (from current users).	Yes, we have moved your test admin account to the proper site number account.
We're doing some training with staff. Can you send a sample of (various pages, documents).	Referred to samples in user guides, attached to email, directions where to find on site.
If we don't assign all 3 assessments when registering a learner we cannot add the others as they complete the original assessment.	Glitch. Corrected within the hour.
What do we enter if a learner is exempted? Where do we enter post-test scores?	The Ministry posted information about entering it on EOPG.
Do learners have to be registered in EOIS	Sought clarification from ministry. No, they can be assessed before

CaMS before we can assess them?	EOIS CaMS registration but need to eventually be entered for the assessment to count towards target.
If a learner leaves before completing their program do we post-test them?	Referred to EOPG Q & A, clarified with ministry: "In the event that a registered learner leaves the program prior to completion or moves to another LBS service provider that is not participating in the project, the service provider that conducted the intake and entry testing should report the entry test score and then indicate the exit score as "not taken" and the reason for leaving the service provider."
We're ready to do post-tests. Do we re-register our learners? Where do I find it?	Directions for post-testing provided, referred to User Guide, page 8. (A number of programs did re-register before reading the user guide or asking. If we became aware we amalgamated the 2 accounts and deleted the second one.)
Do I deactivate clients after they have completed both pre- and post-tests?	Option explained, "Your choice. It does, though, make your list more manageable. Deactivating doesn't remove them. It moves them to a separate list below your active list. You can re-activate them at any time should you need to." Referred to User Guide, page 7.

A-typical Queries

Inquiry/Issue	Response
Suggestion from a deaf program that ASL be added to language drop down box on initial survey.	ASL added to language drop down box.
"Even when instructors helping learners there is high frustration."	The skills check list is intended to exempt learners who do not yet have the skills to be registered to take the assessment. Helping learners on the assessment prevents them from being exempted after the first 6 questions. If learners require help they are not ready for the assessment.
Somehow we ended up with 2 learners using the same account. One did the reading test and the other did the math test. Is there a way to fix this so that they don't have to re-do their assessments?	Instructions sent, assessments moved, new passwords assigned.

**REPRESENTATIVE SUMMARY OF INQUIRIES SENT TO DATA SPECIALIST FROM LEARNERS
(via the link in the ESEE tool)**

Technical Issues

Instances	Issue	Response
25	Image not loading	Reminded user about the image reload button
15	Buttons/images not loading	Informed user about bandwidth issue and suggested they not use wireless connection to take assessment
10	Navigation issues - test exited early - user error	Instructions provided
4	Glitches	Cause of glitch identified and fixed
2	Other (e.g., emails not being sent)	Instructions were provided

Assessment-related Issues

Instances	Issue	Response
18	Incorrect answer choices on assessment	Question reviewed and deemed correct - information provided
10	Question was confusing to test taker	Explanation of the question was provided and/or test administrator was contacted for follow-up
8	Potential answer not available	Explained that correct answer was available
13	Complaints about wording of questions or typos	Question was reviewed and changes made where needed

Miscellaneous Issues

Instances	Issue	Response
11	General question (e.g., how to log in)	Answers were provided
6	Password related issue - lost or forgot	Login information was provided or learner was referred back to register

Translation-related Issues

Instances	Issue	Response
3	Translation-related questions	Translation was reviewed and fixed