



**Atlantic Canada
Opportunities
Agency**

**Agence de
promotion économique
du Canada atlantique**

2011-12

**Departmental Performance
Report**

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Minister's Message

For 25 years, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) has played a key role in the economic development of this region by delivering programs and services to help communities and small and medium-sized enterprises in Atlantic Canada grow and prosper.

In 2011-12, Canada continued to recover from the global economic downturn. Initiatives under our government's Economic Action Plan enabled us to stimulate the economy by putting in place appropriate, targeted measures aimed at strengthening communities, protecting existing jobs and creating new ones. ACOA was responsible for the successful delivery of these measures in Atlantic Canada. Thanks to this timely action and our strong financial institutions, Canada's economic performance has remained the most stable among the G7 countries despite ongoing volatility in global markets.



In the last fiscal year, ACOA continued to advance international business activities within Atlantic Canada, in alignment with Canada's Global Commerce Strategy. The Agency supported initiatives such as the Americas Strategy, the India Initiative, and the National Gateways and Trade Corridors Strategy. Moreover, ACOA helped small and medium-sized enterprises in Atlantic Canada to explore and develop opportunities in emerging markets such as India, China, Brazil and the Caribbean Islands.

I am proud to present ACOA's *Departmental Performance Report*, which outlines the Agency's results for fiscal year 2011-12.

The Honourable Keith Ashfield, PC, MP
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and
Minister for the Atlantic Gateway

Minister of State's Message

Our Government is committed to ensuring job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity in Atlantic Canada. This report clearly demonstrates that, through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), we are taking proactive measures to support communities and businesses throughout the region in their efforts to create and seize opportunities.

Notably, in the past fiscal year, we launched our Atlantic Shipbuilding Action Plan, which is delivered by ACOA. The plan aims to ensure that communities and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in all four Atlantic provinces benefit from the positive impacts that will flow from our Government's historic \$33-billion shipbuilding strategy. This historic investment will create jobs, drive innovation and build a world-class industry in both rural and urban areas across the region.

In 2011-12, the Agency continued to help the region's new and existing SMEs with start-up, expansion and modernization activities, and maintained its focus on the development of business skills. It also built on its commitment to increase research and development conducted in this region, to support the commercialization of locally developed innovation, and to encourage the adoption of new technologies that enhance productivity. The Agency also supported the participation of hundreds of SMEs in various trade missions, providing them with unique opportunities to make the connections needed to do business and succeed around the globe. All of this work and these successes could not have been achieved without the great co-operation of our various partners. Over the past year, we have worked more closely than ever with the four provincial governments in Atlantic Canada as well as with community leaders and business stakeholders and associations.

Building on these achievements, our Government, through ACOA, will continue to deliver results for Atlantic Canada's people, businesses and communities.



The Honourable Bernard Valcourt, PC, QC, MP
Associate Minister of National Defence and
Minister of State (Atlantic Canada
Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)

Section I: Organizational Overview

Raison d'être

Established in 1987 (Part I of the *Government Organization Act, Atlantic Canada 1987, R.S., c G-5-7*, also known as the *Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Act*), the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) is the federal department responsible for the Government of Canada's economic development efforts in the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

ACOA works to create opportunities for economic growth in Atlantic Canada by helping businesses become more competitive, innovative and productive, by working with communities to develop and diversify local economies, and by championing the region's strengths in partnership with Atlantic Canadians.

Responsibilities

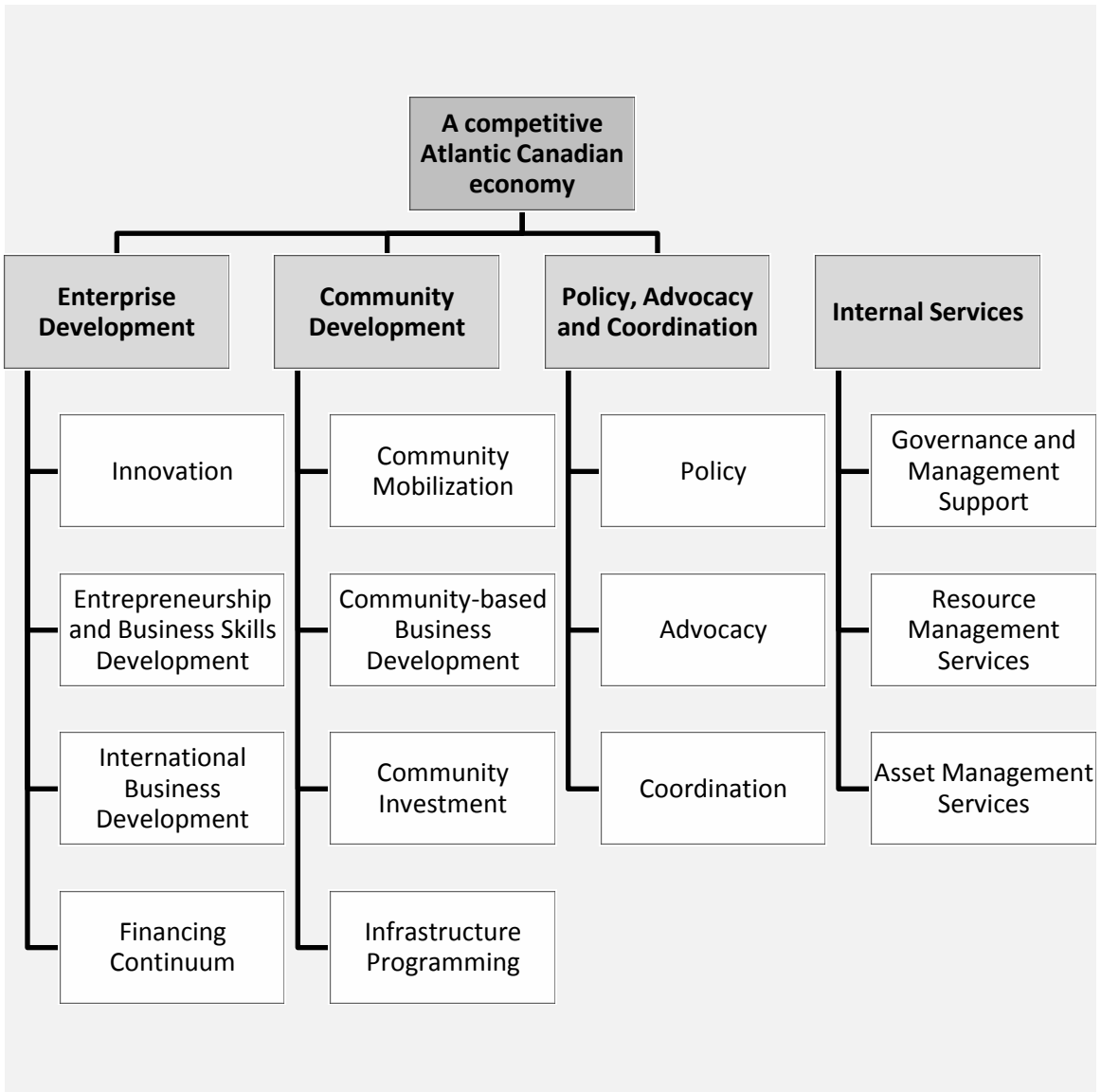
ACOA plays an important role in developing and supporting policies and programs that strengthen the region's economy. Its responsibilities are stated in the Agency's legislation, which mandates the organization "to increase opportunity for economic development in Atlantic Canada and, more particularly, to enhance the growth of earned incomes and employment opportunities in that region."¹ Although the Agency's policies and program tools have evolved since its inception, the overall goal remains constant. ACOA is dedicated to helping the Atlantic region realize its full economic potential in terms of productivity, competitiveness and growth. This is achieved by addressing structural changes in the economy, helping communities and businesses to overcome challenges, and finding new opportunities for growth. ACOA is committed to helping the region make the transition to a more innovative, productive and competitive economy.

The Agency provides services via 31 local field offices throughout the four provinces, along with regional offices located in all four provincial capitals and ACOA's head office in Moncton, New Brunswick. Through its Ottawa office, ACOA ensures that Atlantic Canada's interests are reflected in the policies and programs developed by other departments and agencies of the federal government.

¹ *Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Act*, R.S.C., 1985, c. 41, 4th Supp.

Strategic Outcome and Program Activity Architecture

The diagram below illustrates ACOA’s strategic outcome – a competitive Atlantic Canadian economy – and its Program Activity Architecture (PAA). The PAA is based on the results of policy research and analysis, the periodic assessment of program relevance and performance, ongoing dialogue with stakeholders in the region, and the priorities and directions of the Government of Canada. ACOA’s PAA for 2011-12 comprises four program activities and 14 program sub-activities.



Organizational Priorities

All organizational priorities support the Agency’s strategic outcome: a competitive Atlantic Canadian economy. This outcome reflects the Agency’s legislative purpose to enhance the growth of earned incomes and employment opportunities in Atlantic Canada.

Priority 1	Type ²	Program Activity
Focus programs and services on initiatives that advance the levels of productivity and competitiveness among entrepreneurs, SMEs and communities across the region. Increased emphasis will be placed on enhancing the productivity of Atlantic Canadian businesses.	Ongoing	Enterprise Development Community Development Policy Advocacy and Coordination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2011-12, ACOA invested in 391 projects to advance the levels of competitiveness among entrepreneurs. Projects supported expansion and modernization, improved business skills and productivity, and fostered SME start-up and growth. They also prepared SMEs to capitalize on the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy. • ACOA, through the Atlantic Shipbuilding Action Plan, provided 10 supplier development information sessions across Atlantic Canada, helping more than 800 participants to understand how they could better position themselves to take advantage of the Government of Canada’s renewal of the country’s naval and coast guard fleets. • ACOA invested \$9.2 million³ to enable companies to improve their productivity and business skills, including the implementation of lean manufacturing techniques. • To fuel productivity and growth, ACOA invested almost \$27.3 million⁴ in the expansion and modernization of existing businesses in Atlantic Canada. • The Agency invested close to \$9 million⁵ in entrepreneurship and business skills development activities to foster SME start-up and growth. • During 2011-12, ACOA focused efforts to put rural economies on a sustainable growth track by identifying and assisting high-value projects in rural areas. • In 2011-12, a revised suite of loans was introduced within the Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs). These included lending for youth, first-time entrepreneurs and innovation loans, as well as the Entrepreneurial Training Fund for business skills training to CBDC clients. Furthermore, as some of the new loan products are considered to be a higher risk for CBDCs, a Risk Mitigation Fund was established for the CBDC network. With the new suite of products, a total of 1,480 loans were approved, representing an investment of \$57.1 million. This resulted in 1,263 new jobs in rural communities in Atlantic Canada. The CBDCs also provided 8,630 counselling sessions to clients throughout the region. • ACOA, through the Atlantic Canada Energy Office (ACE), undertook policy research and coordination activities involving the Provinces, industry and, in some cases, other international jurisdictions to enhance the region’s position in fostering oil and gas, and clean and renewable electricity policy and sectoral development. • Population challenges in the Atlantic region continued to strain the ability of employers to attract, develop and retain a skilled workforce. As federal co-chair of the Atlantic Population Table (a pan-Atlantic initiative involving the federal government and the four Atlantic Provinces), the Agency contributed to a number of initiatives supporting business skills and labour force development in each province. In addition to supporting provincial efforts to attract skilled immigrant workers to the region, the Agency delivered tailored projects to integrate youth, immigrant and minority workers into the labour market and to raise the human resource capacity of regional businesses. 		

² “Type” definitions:

- New (newly committed to for fiscal year 2011-12)
- Previously committed to (committed to one or two fiscal years earlier, i.e. 2009-10 or 2010-11)
- Ongoing (committed to at least three fiscal years earlier, i.e. 2008-09 or earlier)

³ EBSD program sub-activity report (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012), ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 7, 2012.

⁴ Financing Continuum program sub-activity report (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012), ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 18, 2012.

⁵ EBSD program sub-activity report (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012), ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 14, 2012.

Priority 2	Type	Program Activity
<p>Provide leadership in helping businesses and communities in Atlantic Canada to succeed in a global marketplace. Special emphasis will be placed on assistance to businesses seeking markets for their R&D outputs and focusing ACOA support on projects offering the greatest potential economic impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2011-12, ACOA helped 207 SMEs to begin exporting, increase their export sales, or expand into new markets including India, China, Brazil and the Caribbean Islands. This was done through matchmaking, trade missions, market studies and trade shows. As a result, ACOA-assisted SMEs were able to grow their exports at a rate 5.8 percentage points higher than non-assisted firms. • ACOA met all objectives defined for 2011-12 by staying aligned with Canada's Global Commerce Strategy and supporting the Americas Strategy, the India Initiative, and the National Gateways and Trade Corridors Strategy. Activities under these strategies strengthened the export capabilities of SMEs, helped them to enter international markets and facilitated their international business performance. • ACOA displayed strong leadership, rallying federal and provincial partners behind an integrated approach to international business development. The implementation of a common logic model, harmonization of the IBDA with the Business Development Program, and a new performance measurement framework contributed to improve efficiency and effectiveness. • ACOA led the international business community in identifying seven emerging industry sectors (aerospace and defence, agrifood and seafood, life sciences, information communications technology, education and training, ocean technologies, and clean/renewable technologies) that could expand abroad, in scoping new export opportunities and in encouraging new methods to grow traditional sectors. • In 2011-12, ACOA worked with communities and stakeholders in developing projects with strong economic impact under the Innovative Communities Fund (ICF). These efforts led to 100 projects being approved under the program, with a total project cost of \$127.8 million and an ACOA contribution of \$34.4 million. The impact of ICF projects was measured through a qualitative review of project results. The findings demonstrated that all projects were successful in achieving their intended objectives as well as those of the program. 	Ongoing	Enterprise Development Community Development Policy, Advocacy and Coordination

Priority 3	Type	Program Activity
<p>Build on the Agency's success in engaging stakeholders and facilitating partnerships to increase innovation capacity within Atlantic Canada. Focus on the commercialization of R&D outputs through the Agency's Innovation and International Business Development program sub-activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACOA invested \$82.4 million toward innovation project costs of \$165.5 million. This means that the Agency's funding leveraged \$1.00 from other sources for every dollar invested and resulted in 57 meaningful partnerships created through the Atlantic Innovation Fund (AIF). • ACOA continued to focus on strong public-private collaboration and investing in leading-edge R&D projects through the AIF. Under the 2011 competitive round of the AIF, 21 projects were approved in early 2012-13, receiving \$48.7 million in funding from ACOA. Many of these projects involved collaboration between universities and the private sector. • Through its Business Development Program, the Agency invested \$31.8 million in innovation projects, including over \$11.8 million in technology adaptation projects.⁶ • In 2011-12, the Agency continued the implementation of its commercialization strategy with the approval of \$1.9 million⁷ in commercialization initiatives and by assisting Atlantic Canadian SMEs and institutions in reaching their commercialization potential. This was accomplished through project investments that included investor-readiness training; access to international markets; just-in-time consulting and senior management mentoring; and cluster development. • The Agency also renewed its funding to Springboard Atlantic Inc., which combines the research and commercialization strengths of its 19 university and college members to create a pan-Atlantic network. The 	Ongoing	Enterprise Development Policy, Advocacy and Coordination

⁶ ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 7, 2012.

⁷ *ibid.*

Agency helped this network to focus on increasing its engagement with industry throughout Atlantic Canada. The network has already been instrumental in bridging the gap between researchers and the private sector, playing a key role in facilitating public-private partnerships nationally, internationally and through Atlantic Canada. Working with its member institutions and private-sector partners, Springboard was instrumental in the creation of six new spinoff companies during 2011-12.

- Throughout 2011-12, the Agency continued its work in the areas of science, technology and innovation, aiming to engage stakeholders and facilitating partnerships within Atlantic Canada's regional innovation system. The Agency participated in working groups on innovation and represented the interests of Atlantic Canadian firms before the Expert Panel on the Review of Federal Support to Research and Development.

Priority 4	Type	Program Activity
Contribute to the delivery of federal priorities and commitments identified through the federal budget, initiatives arising from the Strategic Review and other strategies.	New	Enterprise Development Community Development; Policy, Advocacy and Coordination Internal Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the lead federal department in Atlantic Canada managing economic development programming, ACOA delivered and supported federal priorities and commitments identified in Budget 2011 to address the economic challenges and opportunities in Atlantic Canada. • ACOA developed the Atlantic Shipbuilding Action Plan in response to the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy in order to help SMEs, research institutes and industry sector organizations better position themselves to maximize opportunities in the region. • The Agency identified savings of \$15.2 million, mainly in operating costs, with savings to be fully materialized by 2013-14.⁸ A strategy was developed and implemented in 2011-12 to provide greater value for taxpayers' money. The Agency's objective was to further reduce operational costs with a view to maximizing operational efficiency and eliminating, wherever possible, the duplication of services. The ultimate goal of the exercise was to protect and enhance programs and services directed at the Agency's main clients – Atlantic Canadian SMEs. • The Recreational Infrastructure Canada (RInC) program (under Canada's Economic Action Plan announced in Budget 2009) was extended until October 31, 2011. ACOA continued to be the primary vehicle for delivering and managing the program in Atlantic Canada. As of October 31, 2011, a total of 230 projects had been funded under RInC, having total project costs of \$114.5 million and federal investments of \$33.9 million, which leveraged another \$80.6 million. 		

Priority 5	Type	Program Activity
Continually improve the Agency's ability to provide excellent advice to government and excellent service to Canadians through Public Service Renewal.	Ongoing	Enterprise Development Community Development Policy, Advocacy and Coordination Internal Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2011-12, ACOA continued to place great emphasis on the excellence agenda and Public Service Renewal. The Agency recommitted to important goals to sustain a culture of excellence, keep its employees engaged, and renew its workforce and workplace. ACOA implemented a series of actions designed to engage all employees in efficiently and effectively achieving the Agency's business objectives while ensuring that the Agency continues to be a workplace of choice. These include the implementation of enhanced continuous learning plans, the delivery of Having Difficult Conversations sessions, a Respectful Workplace Initiative, and transforming staffing tools and practices. • The 2011 Public Service Employee Survey Results shows that 84% of ACOA employees would recommend their department as a great place to work, which is 20 percentage points higher than reported in the public service overall. Also, 76% of ACOA employees (up 8 percentage points from 2008) would remain with their department even if a comparable job was available elsewhere in the Public Service.⁹ 		

⁸ *The Next Phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan – A Low Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth*, Annex 1, June 6, 2011, p. 218 and 220.

⁹ *2011 Public Service Employee Survey*, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, 2011. Conducted from August 29 to October 7, 2011, with a response rate of 72.2%.

- ACOA's People Management Program (PMP), implemented in 2011-12, has been selected to appear on the [Clerk of the Privy Council's website](#) as a best practice under "Spotlight on Renewal." The Agency's PMP equips managers with the skills to support employees and effectively address performance issues. The PMP places an emphasis on teamwork, community and collectivity. It focuses on collaboration with manager communities inside and outside the Agency, such as with other federal departments (e.g. Environment Canada) and Federal Councils in different regions. In the Management Accountability Framework Round IX, ACOA once again received a strong rating under Excellence in People Management.
- ACOA's Integrated Business Planning Strategy supports renewal of the work environment by incorporating smart practices and lessons learned into the annual planning and reporting processes. These improvements facilitate broader collaboration across the Agency and improved efficiency in its planning and reporting activities. The Agency's annual Integrated Business Plan, approved in March 2011, was compiled through extensive consultation and collaboration at all operational levels and resulted in the development of key operational and management priorities that reflect departmental obligations and Government of Canada priorities. The plan provided a solid framework by which to develop performance agreements for senior officials and all staff.

Priority 6	Type	Program Activity
Support more effective and efficient decision making by creating and maintaining efficiencies in the delivery of services to internal and external clients.	New	Enterprise Development Community Development Policy, Advocacy and Coordination Internal Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a focus on rethinking business processes and service delivery platforms, the Agency identified opportunities to consolidate back-office functions, including human resources and financial services, information technology, communications and contracting, while maintaining the current service delivery standards and without affecting programming. • The Agency undertook technology-enabled projects to help automate and streamline administrative functions tied to the delivery of its programs and services. Business solutions were implemented in collaboration with the program sectors of economic development, tourism, and international business development, as well as with internal service functions such as human resources, finance, communications, and audit and evaluation. • The Agency has made good progress toward the development and implementation of service standards for its major grants and contributions programs. 		

Priority 7	Type	Program Activity
Facilitate senior management decision making by managing information in such a way as to ensure the availability of timely, accurate and organized information.	New	Internal Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACOA introduced a series of executive dashboards to facilitate senior management decision making on topics such as managing new business, the grants and contributions portfolio, service standards, resources and results. Reviewing these dashboards is now a standing item at every meeting of the senior management team. • The Agency developed operational dashboard indicators to assist staff in better managing performance in their lines of business. The dashboards are updated automatically, ensuring access to the most up-to-date information possible for informed decision making. • The Agency increased its use of electronic systems to classify and manage information and, with the release of a new search web portal, is now able to quickly locate and retrieve electronic information assets. 		

Priority 8	Type	Program Activity
<p>Cultivate a culture that upholds the principles of values and ethics within the Public Service of Canada in order to provide service with integrity and maintain the confidence and trust of the public.</p>	<p>Previously committed</p>	<p>Enterprise Development Community Development Policy, Advocacy and Coordination Internal Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACOA supports and promotes the development of a culture that upholds the principles of values and ethics within the Public Service through a comprehensive strategy, communications plan and learning strategy. Some of the activities undertaken in 2011-12 included communication from senior management to promote a values and ethics culture, and an online discussion forum “Talking About Values and Ethics” surrounding the theme of Respect for People. The Agency also created and delivered respectful-workplace sessions. An internal audit of values and ethics practices was conducted and concluded that ACOA’s values and ethics management program is well designed and conforms to Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat guidance. Furthermore, in the latest round of the Management Accountability Framework, ACOA received a “strong” rating for Area of Management – Values and Ethics. • Through a collaborative process involving representatives of all levels within the organization, ACOA developed a new organizational code of values and ethics that is consistent with the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. This code embodies values and ethics principles, which are embedded in all Agency activities. 		

Risk Analysis

To ensure that the Agency is able to achieve its strategic outcome, it must be successful in the design and delivery of its programs and services. Risk management planning is a critical element in accomplishing those objectives. ACOA's approach aims to identify external and internal risk factors that pose a threat to the Agency's ability to achieve its strategic outcome and, where possible, to develop effective measures to mitigate risks. Within the context of economic development, several high-level external and internal risk factors continue to be the foundation for discussion during the risk assessment process.

External Factors

The world economy is continuing to recover from the global recession that occurred in 2008-09. The economic recovery has been supported by stronger economic growth in emerging and developing countries, while growth in advanced economies has been softer due to the European sovereign debt crisis. The U.S. economy has also struggled to find its footing since the recession, as American firms have been reluctant to hire new workers. In Canada, the economy has recovered more quickly than in other developed economies, with real gross domestic product and employment returning to pre-recession levels. The Canadian economy began to stabilize in mid-2009 in response to policy measures in Canada and abroad.

In Atlantic Canada, the economy has done quite well over the past few years, growing faster than the national average, due to private-sector-led growth in dynamic sectors such as mining and oil and gas extraction, information and communications technologies, and finance. Atlantic Canada's entrepreneurial vitality has been a crucial factor in this economic performance, with growth in private capital investment in the region outpacing Canada's performance since 2008. Additionally, R&D spending in Atlantic Canada, a key factor in improving innovation and productivity levels in the region, has increased faster than the national level, with most of the improvement occurring at the level of private-sector spending.

Slower economic growth throughout the world in the past couple of years, and more specifically in the U.S., combined with a strong Canadian dollar caused additional challenges to the Atlantic region's exporters. While the total value of exports rose sharply, the increase was mostly a result of higher commodity prices, especially in the energy and mining sectors.

The rise in the Canadian dollar, along with increasing global competition, is forcing businesses in Atlantic Canada to become more competitive. One way for a firm to increase its competitiveness is to raise its level of labour productivity.¹⁰ According to Statistics Canada data, Atlantic Canada experienced higher labour productivity growth

¹⁰ Statistics Canada defines "labour productivity" as the measure of real gross domestic product (GDP) per hour worked. The growth in labour productivity is one of the factors influencing long-term economic growth and living standards.

than did Canada. Between 2001 and 2011, labour productivity in Atlantic Canada grew at an average rate of 1.8%¹¹ per year, compared with 0.8% at the national level.

Internal Factors

ACOA continues to operate in a period of considerable transformation. It is actively seeking ways to become more effective and efficient in delivering its mandate.

Risk Management

Progress continues to be made in the implementation of integrated risk management throughout the various levels of the organization. To ensure access to current risk information that supports decision making, the Agency conducts an annual risk assessment process that identifies, analyzes and evaluates key risks that could impede its ability to achieve expected results and deliver its mandate. The results of this process are used to update the Agency’s Corporate Risk Profile, which is the key document for communicating, monitoring and mitigating key risks.

During 2011-12, measures were taken to mitigate the Agency’s three key risks: management information, people management, and technology.

Key Risk/Challenge	Mitigation Measure	Link to Program Activities
<p>Management Information Risk The risk that senior management does not have readily accessible, comprehensive, targeted data to understand the financial and program health of the organization and support decision making.</p>	<p>The Agency continued to improve the availability and use of information to support decision making through executive dashboards for senior management, as well as operational dashboards to support middle management. Results were monitored throughout the year and the review of executive dashboards is a standing item at executive committee meetings.</p> <p>The rating for this risk has essentially remained the same during 2011-12. The Agency will continue its efforts to ensure the timely adaptation of information systems to meet evolving management information needs.</p>	<p>Enterprise Development; Community Development; Policy, Advocacy and Coordination.</p>
<p>People Management Risk The risk that ACOA’s talent agenda (leadership, recruitment, training, promotion, work-life balance, competencies) does not adequately sustain the workforce required to carry out the Agency’s mandate in the future, and that the Agency experiences a significant loss of corporate memory and has difficulty implementing change management.</p>	<p>During 2011-12, Public Service Renewal goals remained a priority for ACOA and served as a means of ensuring that the Agency has the talent required to move the business forward. The Agency placed particular effort in designing and implementing a People Management Program to equip managers with the proper tools and support to effectively manage employees through these times of corporate change. The Agency implemented workforce adjustment measures in such a way to allow enough time for knowledge transfer and efficient change management practices to take place. Results from the 2011 Public Service Employee Survey show that 98% of ACOA employees are willing to put in the extra effort to get the job done, and 84% of ACOA employees reported they get the training they need to do their job</p>	<p>Enterprise Development; Community Development; Policy, Advocacy and Coordination.</p>

¹¹ Source: Calculations done by ACOA using data from Statistics Canada (CANSIM Table 383-0011).

Key Risk/Challenge	Mitigation Measure	Link to Program Activities
<p>Technology Risk The risk that information technology (IT) in the medium term (two to four years) will not have the capacity to provide development and support for a suite of modern, compatible tools for clients and Agency personnel, thereby leading to potential inefficiencies. There is also financial exposure for a large capital funding burden in one fiscal year due to tools and systems needing replacement at the same time.</p>	<p>(compared with 69% at the federal public service level). Also, 80% of ACOA employees agree that the Agency does a good job of communicating its vision, mission and goals (compared with 67% at the public service level).¹² The Agency will need to continue to invest in employees' continuous learning and provide managers with the support needed to effectively manage its workforce.</p> <p>During 2011-12, the risk was mitigated in large part through the focused efforts to replace higher risk systems and equipment. The Agency invested \$150,000 in life cycle replacement of aging computer equipment and an additional \$75,000 in professional services for development and support related to high-risk systems.</p> <p>ACOA's Committee on Information Management and Technology met its mandate by ensuring that IT investment strategies were aligned with Agency priorities. It is also important to note that, with the creation of Shared Services Canada (SSC) in November 2011, many of the tools and larger systems supporting ACOA's operations have been appropriated by the new SSC agency (including nine FTEs). Although many of the risks tied to these systems remain and have simply been transferred to SSC, by its mandate SSC will be consolidating systems and as part of this effort will be decommissioning those that are obsolete. This work will be facilitated by the larger financial and human resources capacity of this new organization, which resulted from the transfer of resources from 43 smaller IT organizations within partner departments.</p> <p>The availability of IT systems has enabled Agency staff to perform their duties in a productive and cost-effective manner, thereby enabling efficient delivery of services and programs to Atlantic Canadians.</p> <p>The likelihood of the risk materializing is largely unchanged. Part of the risk may have transferred with some of the more critical systems now being supported by SSC; however, the potential impact of the risk has not changed.</p>	<p>Enterprise Development; Community Development; Policy, Advocacy and Coordination; Internal Services.</p>

¹² 2011 Public Service Employee Survey, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, 2011. Conducted from August 29 to October 7, 2011, with a response rate of 72.2%.

Summary of Performance

2011-12 Financial Resources (\$ millions)

Planned Spending	Total Authorities	Actual Spending
317.9	341.3	330.4

2011-12 Human Resources (full-time equivalents)

Planned	Actual	Difference
711	683	28

Progress Toward Strategic Outcome

Strategic Outcome: A competitive Atlantic Canadian economy

Performance Indicator	Target ¹³	2011-12 Performance
Increase in Atlantic gross domestic product (GDP) for every dollar of ACOA expenditure in direct support of business	\$4.50	Performance is calculated over a five-year period, which will end in 2012-13. ¹⁴

Performance Summary

(\$ millions)

Program Activity	2010-11 Actual Spending	2011-12				Alignment to Government of Canada Outcome
		Main Estimates	Planned Spending	Total Authorities	Actual Spending	
Enterprise Development	191.0	170.2	170.2	179.6	172.9	Strong Economic Growth
Community Development	161.9	100.4	100.4	111.9	103.8	
Policy, Advocacy and Coordination	13.7	11.4	11.4	12.5	13.7	
Sub-total	366.6	282.0	282.0	304.0	290.4	
Internal Services	41.8	35.9	35.9	37.3	40.0	
Total	408.4	317.9	317.9	341.3	330.4	

¹³ Cumulative five-year target (2008-09 to 2012-13).

¹⁴ Measuring the impact on GDP in Atlantic Canada is a long-term, multi-dimensional undertaking. Thus, the Agency will report results every five years, based on an analysis of data from internal systems, using econometric modelling from The Conference Board of Canada. This indicator will be measured next in 2013, covering the five-year period of 2008-09 to 2012-13.

Contribution to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy

The Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS) outlines the Government of Canada's commitment to improving the transparency of environmental decision making by articulating its key strategic environmental goals and targets. ACOA ensures that consideration of these FSDS outcomes is an integral part of the Agency's decision-making processes.

ACOA contributes to the following FSDS themes under two of its program activities, as indicated by the icons below.



Theme I
Addressing Climate Change
and Air Quality

Program Activity: Policy Advocacy and Coordination



Theme IV
Shrinking the Environmental Footprint -
Beginning with Government

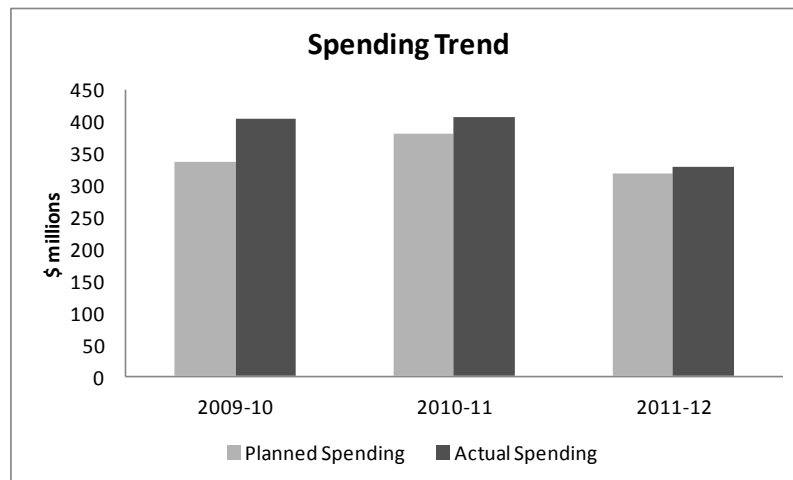
Program Activity: Internal Services

During 2011-12, ACOA considered the environmental effects of its initiatives (subject to [*The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals*](#)), and determined that no strategic environmental assessments were required during the year in review.

For further information on ACOA's activities to support sustainable development and strategic environmental assessments, see [the Agency's website](#).

For complete information on the FSDS, see [Environment Canada's website](#).

Expenditure Profile



ACOA's actual spending for 2011-12 was \$330.4 million. Compared with actual spending of \$408.4 million in 2010-11, this represents a decrease of 19%, or \$78.0 million. Variances in actual spending profiles are due to a decrease of \$0.7 million in operating expenditures and a decrease of \$77.3 million in grants and contributions. The variance in grants and contributions is mainly attributable to the termination of initiatives under Canada's Economic Action Plan, which represent decreases as follows:

- \$55.0 million for the Community Adjustment Fund; and
- \$16.3 million for the Recreational Infrastructure Canada program.

The remaining \$6 million decrease results from normal variations in payouts of other contribution programs.

Analysis of 2011-12

Planned spending of \$317.9 million was augmented by \$23.4 million as a result of transfers from other departments and changes in authorities.

- \$7 million was transferred from other departments to further support community economic development priorities in New Brunswick, along with \$1.9 million for international business development activities.
- A number of changes in spending authorities occurred during the fiscal year, resulting in a net increase of \$14.5 million. Increases in authorities included:
 - \$7.0 million made available from the collection of repayable contributions;
 - \$3.4 million to support construction activities related to recreational infrastructure;
 - \$4.2 million for operating budget carry forward;
 - \$6.2 million for severance pay, parental leave benefits, and leave payouts; and
 - \$0.7 million in various other minor adjustments.

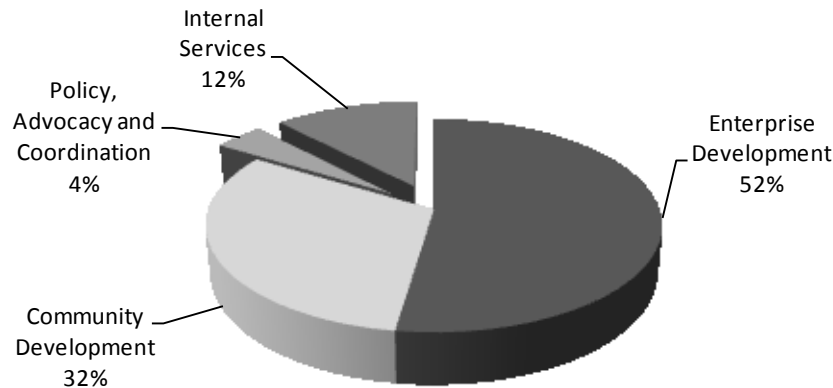
Reductions in authorities included:

- \$5.5 million identified as savings under the Strategic Review; and
- \$1.5 million transferred to Shared Services Canada.

Actual spending of \$330.4 million resulted in a surplus of \$10.9 million from total authorities of \$341.3 million. The Agency will access this surplus through an operating budget carry forward of \$3.7 million and a reprofile of \$7.0 million to future years. The balance of \$0.2 million is returned to the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Analysis by Program Activity

**2011-12 Actual Spending by Program Activity
Expressed as a Percentage**



In the Enterprise Development program activity, actual spending of \$172.9 million resulted in a surplus of \$6.7 million from total authorities of \$179.6 million. This variance was a result of a net decrease in contribution payments of \$2.1 million due to normal year-to-year variations and a reduction in operating costs of \$4.6 million.

In Community Development, actual spending of \$103.8 million resulted in a surplus of \$8.1 million from total authorities of \$111.9 million. The majority of the variance is due to a \$7.0 million reallocation to ACOA from Industry Canada in support of community economic development priorities in New Brunswick through ACOA's Innovative Communities Fund. Due to delays in project approvals, the \$7.0 million was not spent in 2011-12 and has been reprofiled to future fiscal years. The balance of the variance is due to normal fluctuations in program payouts.

In the Policy, Advocacy and Coordination program activity, actual spending of \$13.7 million exceeded planned authorities of \$12.5 million by \$1.2 million. The variance is due to normal spending fluctuations.

The Internal Services program activity reported actual spending of \$40.0 million, exceeding total authorities of \$37.3 million by \$2.7 million. This variance is mainly due to increases resulting from normal spending fluctuations.

Canada's Economic Action Plan (EAP)

On December 2, 2010, the Government of Canada extended the deadline for completion of certain EAP infrastructure projects from March 31, 2011 to October 31, 2011. For ACOA, the extension applied to projects under the Recreational Infrastructure Canada program and represented additional authorities of \$3.4 million in fiscal year 2011-12. Actual spending in fiscal year 2011-12 amounted to \$3.1 million.

The termination of initiatives under the EAP reduced authorities by \$71.3 million from fiscal year 2010-11 to 2011-12.

Estimates by Vote

For information on ACOA's organizational votes and/or statutory expenditures, please see the 2011-12 Public Accounts of Canada (Volume II). An electronic version of the Public Accounts is available on the [Public Works and Government Services Canada's webpage](#), Public Accounts of Canada 2012.

Section II: Analysis of Program Activities by Strategic Outcome

Strategic Outcome – A Competitive Atlantic Canadian Economy

Through its strategic outcome, ACOA aims to ensure long-term benefits for Atlantic Canadians. A competitive Atlantic Canadian economy increases opportunities for economic development in the region, specifically through the growth of earned incomes and employment opportunities. Productivity is an important determinant of competitiveness and a strong source of long-term prosperity for a region. It is a key measure of how well SMEs in Atlantic Canada are performing in comparison with those in other regions of the country and elsewhere in the world. Competitiveness and productivity are critical factors that allow companies and communities to adapt to changing market conditions. The Agency supports and works with businesses and communities to help them become more competitive, innovative and productive and to position themselves for the opportunities of the future. A measure of the impact of ACOA's expenditures in direct support of business in Atlantic Canada is the increase in gross domestic product (GDP) linked to its investments. ACOA's last five-year report to Parliament reported an increase in real GDP thanks to the Agency's expenditures in direct support of business.¹⁵ Furthermore, starting in 2012-13, ACOA will monitor growth in labour productivity for firms that have received Agency funding. This latest indicator will measure the impact of ACOA's efforts to support Atlantic Canadian firms in raising their productivity and competitiveness.

By focusing on the following four key areas of competitiveness, the Agency, along with its many partners, was able to link its regional economic development priorities to its goal of a competitive Atlantic Canadian economy.

Enhancing Productivity Capacity

Recognizing that a skilled workforce is essential for Atlantic businesses to increase the region's productivity and to succeed in the global marketplace, ACOA supported business skills projects such as the Nova Scotia Productivity Study. This study was done in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia to considerably advance existing research on Nova Scotia productivity levels and growth rates across sectors, according to measures of capital investment, stock, and composition, labour stock and quality, with a particular emphasis on information and communications technologies. With the announcement of the

¹⁵ *Five-Year Report to Parliament 2003-2008, Building a Stronger Economy Together*, ACOA, 2008, p. 26.

[National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy](#), ACOA launched the [Atlantic Shipbuilding Action Plan](#) to help businesses capitalize on upcoming opportunities. Under this plan, ACOA organized and presented 10 supplier development sessions throughout the region, attracting a total of 823 participants representing 513 SMEs.¹⁶ These sessions helped to raise awareness of processes and requirements for accessing supply-chain opportunities and provided information on ACOA programs that can help businesses in areas such as innovation capacity, certification, and workforce skills.

Innovation

In 2011-12, ACOA invested \$91.6 million in over 399 innovation-related projects in Atlantic Canada.¹⁷ ACOA's innovation program activities helped SMEs in Atlantic Canada to increase productivity and improve their competitive position by enabling the businesses to make improvements, reduce waste, acquire new technologies, train workers, leverage additional private-sector investments, and commercialize their ideas. The Agency's commercialization strategy focuses on SME productivity and supports the Government of Canada's efforts to increase business R&D and the commercialization of new technologies. In 2011-12, the Agency supported projects that included investor-readiness training; providing access to international markets, just-in-time consulting and senior management mentoring; and cluster development. ACOA's suite of innovation programs – the Atlantic Innovation Fund, the Business Development Program and the Productivity and Business Skills Initiative – are stimulating business investments in Atlantic Canada and closing the innovation gap that exists regionally. The Agency has further strengthened collaboration between academia and industry through its support of and partnership with Springboard Atlantic Inc., a network that connects 14 universities and five provincial community colleges throughout Atlantic Canada. The Agency collaborated with Springboard to increase its focus on engaging industry to bridge the gap between academic researchers and the private sector.

International Business Development

ACOA recognizes the importance of global trade as a driver of growth. As one of three federal partners in the Canada-Atlantic Provinces Agreement on International Business Development (IBDA), the Agency contributed to the Government of Canada's efforts to foster business relations, attract foreign investment and nurture technological co-operation. Thanks to the renewal of this agreement in 2011-12, ACOA continued to help Atlantic companies improve their export-readiness and explore, enter and succeed in international markets. One activity supported by the IBDA is the participation of Atlantic Canadian SMEs in the [International Boston Seafood Show](#), North America's largest seafood event. In March 2012, the show attracted more than 19,000 buyers and suppliers and 1,019 exhibiting companies, representing 42 countries.¹⁸ A delegation of 20 Atlantic

¹⁶ Atlantic Shipbuilding Action Plan Supplier Development Information Session Participant List, April 2012.

¹⁷ Innovation program sub-activity report, AIF Secretariat, ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 7, 2012.

¹⁸ 2012 International Boston Seafood Show, News release, March 26, 2012.

Canadian companies and organizations¹⁹ participated and showcased their products, resulting in sales of over \$5.5 million; anticipated sales over the next year are estimated to be over \$8.7 million. With a budget of \$140,000, this activity represents a significant return. More than 10 companies reported having successfully launched a product or service on the market, the same number have identified an agent or distributor, and 13 have identified future sales opportunities.²⁰

Infrastructure Support

ACOA worked with communities to develop opportunities for economic growth, improve local infrastructure and adjust to changes in the local economy. The Agency invested in projects that help communities overcome economic challenges, develop strategic industry sectors and strengthen community infrastructure. The BioCommons Research Park in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, involved a Building Canada Fund infrastructure contribution of \$984,200 toward water, sewer systems and roadways to support the strategic next stage of economic development of the bioscience cluster in that province. This is the first step in the establishment of the research park that will see the leveraging of several tens of millions of dollars of private-sector investment into labs, equipment and incubation space.

¹⁹ ACOA, [News release](#), March 13, 2012.

²⁰ ACOA, *2012 Exit Survey Report*, March 11 to 13, 2012.

Program Activity: Enterprise Development

Strategic Outcome	Program Activity	Program Sub-activity
A competitive Atlantic Canadian economy	Enterprise Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation • Entrepreneurship and Business Skills Development • International Business Development • Financing Continuum

Program Activity Description

Notwithstanding recent overall economic progress, some significant challenges remain and great opportunities exist for development. One of the most telling indicators of this is that in a number of sectors, productivity remains significantly lower than in leading countries and other regions of Canada. ACOA will work in partnership with Atlantic Canadian enterprises, stakeholders, industry and institutions to improve the growth and productivity of Atlantic Canada's economy, leading to increased competitiveness, earned incomes and job creation.

ACOA works to improve the region's capacity for economic growth through a variety of strategically focused mechanisms, which include: assisting enterprises, particularly small and medium-sized ones, to help them start, expand or modernize their businesses and establish and expand export activities; partnering with universities and other institutions to increase the region's research and development capacity, commercialization and productivity; and promoting and participating in the region's transition to a knowledge economy.

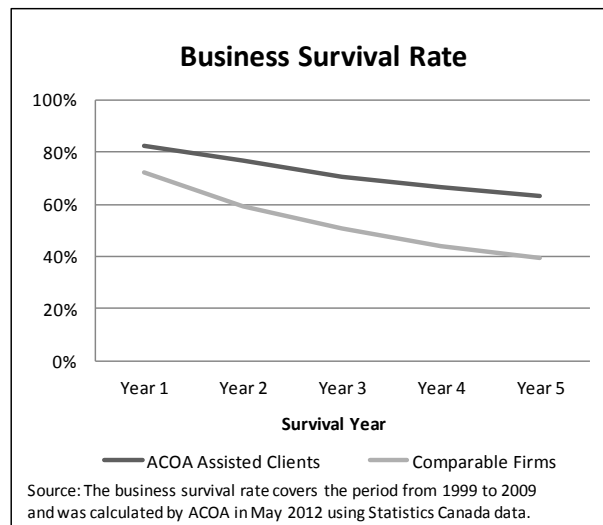
Financial Resources (\$ millions)			Human Resources (FTEs)		
Planned Spending	Total Authorities	Actual Spending	Planned	Actual	Difference
170.2	179.6	172.9	214	203	11

Expected Result	Performance Indicator	Target	Actual Result
Improved growth and competitiveness of Atlantic Canadian SMEs	Survival rate ratio of ACOA-assisted firms	1.3 times higher than comparable firms	1.6 times that of comparable firms ²¹

²¹ Comparable firms are those of similar age, size, sector and geographic region that have not received a direct monetary contribution from the Agency.

Performance Summary and Analysis of Program Activity

To improve the productivity and competitiveness of Atlantic Canada’s enterprises, the Agency provides assistance through four sub-activities to fuel innovation, improve business skills, expand international markets and provide capital needed to sustain growth. Business survival rates can be used to measure ACOA’s performance in terms of competitiveness. A company’s survival depends on many factors, such as the age of the business, location and size. The Agency exceeded its target for the performance indicator above; the five-year business survival rate²² for ACOA-assisted firms is notably higher than the rate for comparable firms. In fact, the business survival rate for ACOA-assisted firms was 63% after the crucial fifth year following start-up for the 1999 to 2009 period, compared with 39% for comparable firms.



The AIF program continues to be a catalyst for increasing the region’s capacity to carry out leading-edge research and development and contributes to the development of new technology-based economic activity in Atlantic Canada. The proposals were evaluated during the 2011-12 fiscal year and 21 projects were approved in early 2012-13, worth a total of \$48.7 million.

During 2011-12, ACOA supported innovation in the region by implementing initiatives that increased the innovation and commercialization potential of technologies developed in Atlantic Canada. A measure of the results of ACOA’s Innovation program sub-activity is “the dollar amount of innovation funding and percentage leveraging.” In 2011-12, the total dollar amount of ACOA’s investment in innovation was \$91.6 million toward project costs of \$180.9 million.²³ This means that for every dollar funded by the Agency, nearly the same amount was leveraged from other sources. It should also be noted that approximately 29% of the innovation funding provided by ACOA (under the AIF and Business Development Program) was in support of projects based in rural areas of Atlantic Canada.

²² Centre for Special Business Projects, Statistics Canada, April 2012.

²³ ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 7, 2012.

ACOA also renewed its funding to Springboard Atlantic Inc. The Agency helped this network focus on increasing its engagement with industry throughout Atlantic Canada. This network has already been instrumental in bridging the gap between researchers and the private sector and has played a key role in facilitating public-private partnerships in Atlantic Canada as well as nationally and internationally.

Ninety percent of participants²⁴ in business skills development activities funded through Entrepreneurship and Business Skills Development (EBSA) indicated that the activities improved their business skills to start, sustain or grow a business. The Agency also reviewed its strategy for EBSA to ensure that it remains relevant and aligned with priorities. The Agency's efforts to develop business skills and assist SMEs are wide-ranging, including those within the Atlantic Shipbuilding Action Plan. Through the plan, ACOA offers SMEs throughout the region, including those in rural areas, financing and business counselling so that they may benefit from potential shipbuilding procurement opportunities.

The Agency contributed to Atlantic Canada's export performance by strengthening the export capabilities of SMEs, helping them enter international markets and facilitating their international business performance. An indicator of performance under the International Business Development program sub-activity is the growth in export sales of ACOA-assisted firms versus that of comparable firms. During 2011-12, the Agency exceeded its target and achieved a variance in export growth of 5.8 percentage points²⁵ between ACOA-assisted firms and comparable firms. Through research and analysis of globalization trends, ACOA identified and nurtured industry sectors with solid growth potential. Because of its strategic location, highly trained and educated workforce, and access to free trade agreements, Atlantic Canada is well positioned to take advantage of opportunities arising from global value chains.

Efforts to promote the Atlantic region as a profitable place in which to do business also continued through business missions, media campaigns, website marketing, participation in trade shows, the hosting of familiarization tours, and embassy/consulate outreach events – much of which was done in consultation and partnership with provincial governments and other key stakeholders to optimize regional coordination on a pan-Atlantic scale and combine limited resources to coordinate activities. ACOA continued to explore and develop opportunities in emerging markets such as Brazil, India and China. These markets offer high growth potential and demonstrate a growing appetite for Atlantic Canadian products.

ACOA's Tourism Strategy focuses government, industry and community investments on tourism products and experiences that motivate people to travel and on bringing these experiential products to market. The strategy provides the support mechanisms required by tourism SMEs to identify and implement high-potential, high-impact and transformative product development. The Gross Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism,

²⁴ ACOA, *2011-2012 Roll-up of EBSA Business Skills Development Activities in Atlantic Canada*, Spring 2012.

²⁵ Statistics Canada, Centre for Special Business Projects, April 2012.

the Bonavista Institute for Cultural Tourism, TourismTechnology.Com and Tourism Best Practices are four such industry support mechanisms. These capacity-building projects were conceived as learning-based activities, designed to improve the market readiness and competitiveness of tourism SMEs in Atlantic Canada. An independent assessment of these projects indicated that 97% of participants were satisfied with the programming and the knowledge transfers delivered by these projects; 80% considered the skills and knowledge transfers applicable to their businesses and business practices; 70% had taken action to incorporate the skills and knowledge gained from the programming into their businesses; 30% had made new investments in their businesses as a direct result of the skills and knowledge gained by their participation in ACOA's capacity-building projects; and 39% were planning new or additional actions to be taken as a direct result of the programming received.

ACOA has worked to address the financing gap experienced by Atlantic Canadian SMEs by improving their access to financing for expansion and modernization projects in the region; 128 projects were approved in 2011-12 for a total of \$27.3 million²⁶ in ACOA assistance. A further \$57.6 million²⁷ was leveraged from other sources, which is also part and parcel of ACOA's approach. By leveraging financing from other sources, the Agency fosters the development of adequate debt financing from banks and credit unions, as well as equity capital from angel investors, venture capital firms and public markets. In this way, ACOA's investments enable business growth and expansion projects to proceed, while providing for the appropriate sharing of cost and risk.

Lessons Learned

A number of evaluations have been undertaken of ACOA's Enterprise Development activities and the Agency actively responds to the main recommendations flowing from these evaluations.

In 2010, an evaluation was completed on the impact of ACOA's work in innovation.²⁸ This evaluation recommended that ACOA expand its innovation strategy to increase the focus on commercialization. In response to this, the Agency is drafting an innovation strategy, which should be finalized in early 2012-13. It includes information provided in ACOA's submission to the federal Research and Development Review Panel and considerations stemming from ACOA's increased emphasis on commercialization.

Furthermore, during 2011-12, the Agency focused on implementing its regional commercialization strategy and on improving the commercialization potential of technologies developed in Atlantic Canada. The Agency partnered with other organizations to develop programs that accelerate technologies to commercialization. As well, the Agency has worked to modify its programming to better target the commercialization of new technologies.

²⁶ ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 18, 2012.

²⁷ Centre for Special Business Projects, Statistics Canada, April 2012.

²⁸ ACOA, [*Impact Evaluation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Innovation Program Sub-activity Final Report*](#), January 19, 2010, pp. 40-41.

A key finding of the 2010 evaluation of the EBSD program sub-activity²⁹ was that ACOA should renew its EBSD strategy. In response, the Agency undertook a review of its approach to ensure an appropriate focus on the business skills needed to support productivity and growth. In 2011, an evaluation of the Agency's involvement in Business Skills Development³⁰ recommended enhanced coordination. As a result, the Agency has implemented a process that involves engaging all program sub-activities to better capture planned business skills activities across the Agency, which in turn facilitates a coordination of Agency efforts.

The Agency addressed the recommendations of the Trade and Investment evaluation³¹ completed in 2009, in which a number of program delivery and coordination issues related to performance were identified. By April 1, 2011, the Trade and Investment program sub-activities were merged into one program sub-activity named International Business Development. The Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the International Business Development Program were permanently integrated into the Business Development Program and performance indicators were streamlined.

In 2010, an evaluation was conducted of the Financing Continuum sub-activity.³² One of the resulting recommendations was that the Agency should provide further clarification of the priorities and expectations relative to the program sub-activity. In its response, the Agency opted to undertake a review of the Enterprise Development program activity as a whole. This led to modifications of the Program Activity Architecture (PAA) that took effect April 1, 2012. In the new PAA structure, the Financing Continuum and EBSD program sub-activities have been re-positioned under a new program sub-activity called Productivity and Growth. The new PAA structure for Enterprise Development essentially combines four program sub-activities into three: Innovation and Commercialization, International Business Development, and Productivity and Growth. This new structure ensures that focus areas are strongly aligned with the Agency's mandate and priorities as well as with the Government of Canada's priority of strong economic growth.

²⁹ ACOA, [*Evaluation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's Entrepreneurship and Business Skills Development Program Sub-activity - Final Report*](#), September 8, 2010, p. i.

³⁰ ACOA, [*Business Skills Development Evaluation Final Report*](#), June 16, 2011, p. i.

³¹ ACOA, [*Evaluation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Trade and Investment Program Sub-activity Final Report*](#), September 8, 2010, pp. 60-62.

³² ACOA, [*Evaluation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Financing Continuum Program Sub-activity Final Report*](#), September 8, 2010, p. 55.

Program Activity: Community Development

Strategic Outcome	Program Activity	Program Sub-activity
A competitive Atlantic Canadian economy	Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Mobilization Community-based Business Development Community Investment Infrastructure Programming

Program Activity Description

The Atlantic economy is built on the region's many geographic, linguistic and cultural communities. From small remote villages to larger urban centres, the opportunities and challenges vary significantly. Communities are the foundation of economic development and are critical for economic prosperity. ACOA recognizes the importance of these communities in an economic development framework and supports their efforts to develop the resources they need to assume full responsibility for their own economic development. For these reasons, ACOA focuses targeted efforts and strategies toward community development and also aims to provide and maintain quality public infrastructure. ACOA works in co-operation with other levels of government, other federal government departments, non-government organizations and community groups to leverage support, coordinate economic development, react to economic challenges and, finally, work with Infrastructure Canada and the Provinces to oversee/ensure the flow of federal funds allocated to each region through the various infrastructure funding streams. This requires a flexible, holistic approach based on the realities of a given community's capacities, strengths and challenges. Community development is a bottom-up process that helps to develop the tools, resources and initiatives that support individual and unique strategic development.

Financial Resources (\$ millions)			Human Resources (FTEs)		
Planned Spending	Total Authorities	Actual Spending	Planned	Actual	Difference
100.4	111.9	103.8	93	105	(12)

Expected Result	Performance Indicator	Target	Actual Result
Dynamic and sustainable communities for Atlantic Canada	Increased capacity in community decision making, planning and delivery	Evidence of impact (resulting from evaluations and supported by data)	The indicator's measurement approach is "Level of capacity to plan as well as implement and engage key stakeholders. These will be measured through summative evaluations as per the Agency's evaluation plan. The next evaluation will be conducted in 2012-13.
	Impact of ACOA projects on Community Development in Atlantic Canada as demonstrated by qualitative reviews	70% of projects successful in achieving intended objectives	100% of projects assessed in a qualitative review of randomly selected projects were successful in achieving their objectives.

Expected Result	Performance Indicator	Target	Actual Result
	Growth in sales of CBDC-assisted clients versus comparable firms	A baseline is to be established in collaboration with other regional development agencies	A baseline has not yet been determined. It will be set in 2012-13.

Performance Summary and Analysis of Program Activity

In 2011-12, ACOA worked in partnership with communities and stakeholders in strategic investments that reflected economic development plans and priorities elaborated and implemented by the region’s rural and urban communities. A total of 258 community development projects were approved, investing \$52.8 million in Atlantic Canadian communities.³³

ACOA’s principal tool for investing in communities (with a focus on rural communities) is the [Innovative Communities Fund \(ICF\)](#). During the year, ACOA worked with communities and stakeholders to develop projects with strong economic impact under the ICF. These efforts led to 100 projects being approved, with a total project cost of \$127.8 million and an ACOA contribution of \$34.4 million.³⁴ These investments were made almost exclusively in rural communities. The impact of ICF projects was measured through a qualitative review of project results. The results demonstrated that all projects were successful in achieving their intended objectives as well as those of the program.

In the latter part of 2011-12, the Agency focused on repositioning the Community Mobilization program sub-activity to be better able to respond to changing economic circumstances in Atlantic Canada. This included a review of approaches to maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of resources in this area. The results of this review will be implemented in 2012-13.

Furthermore, the Agency continued to work with the [Community Business Development Corporations \(CBDCs\)](#) to implement the Community Futures of Tomorrow program that was launched in 2010-11. The CBDCs continued to provide an essential source of investment capital focused on rural businesses as well as business counselling and skills development. They approved 1,322 loans, representing a total direct investment in rural SMEs of \$57.4 million.³⁵ In addition, a total of 8,892 clients participated in counselling sessions during 2011-12.³⁶

³³ Community Development – PAA Approvals (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012), ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 11, 2012.

³⁴ Live Report – Community Development – Innovative Communities Fund, ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 11, 2012.

³⁵ E-Report for the Community Business Development Corporation (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012), ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 25, 2012.

³⁶ E-Report for the Community Business Development Corporation (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012) and Entrepreneurial Training Fund: data reported on May 25, 2012.

ACOA funded 12 Aboriginal projects,³⁷ investing \$1.8 million in Aboriginal communities in Atlantic Canada. For example, the Agency provided financial support to the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs for the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP). This is a research program formed through partnerships between the Aboriginal communities, 12 Atlantic Canadian universities, and provincial and federal departments. The main purpose of the AAEDIRP is to improve the knowledge base concerning Atlantic Aboriginal economic development in order to enhance the lives of Aboriginal people in the region.

In 2011-12, the Agency continued to implement measures to fulfill its duties with respect to the Atlantic region's francophone Official Language Minority Community (OLMC). The Commissioner of Official Languages provided ACOA with an exemplary mark in the Agency's 2010-11 [report card](#), published in fall 2011, for its performance in support of positive measures for the development of OLMCs. Furthermore, in fiscal 2011-12, ACOA approved a total of 38 official-language projects under Community Development, investing a total of \$7.6 million.³⁸

During 2011-12, the Agency continued to support the Government of Canada's objectives set out in the [Roadmap for Linguistic Duality 2008-2013: Acting for the Future](#). The Economic Development Initiative (EDI) is one of the components of the roadmap and its focus is on developing new expertise through innovation, entrepreneurship, partnerships and increased support for SMEs. ACOA contributed to the EDI component of the roadmap by investing \$1.4 million toward 16 projects, some of which are counted in the 38 projects approved under Community Development. The following is an example of a project funded under the EDI.

Succession Planning and Business Meshing, New Brunswick

This project of CBDC Madawaska is primarily aimed at sensitizing business owners to the importance of succession planning. Interested parties are provided requisite training on the subject by local tax specialists, lawyers and bank representatives. A secondary component involves a web-based forum where the region's business leaders can network and share business intelligence with a view to increasing sales and fostering the creation of a more cohesive business community.

³⁷ Community Development – PAA Approvals (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012), ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 27, 2012.

³⁸ *Community Development Official Languages Projects 2011-12*. Data generated on June 14, 2012, from the ACOA Corporate Data System.

The Agency also continued to work in partnership with Infrastructure Canada to strengthen the delivery of the Building Canada Fund – Communities Component and enhance the provisions of the service level agreement between ACOA, Infrastructure Canada and other regional development agencies.

Lessons Learned

The [2011 Fall Report of the Auditor General of Canada](#) included a second audit of Canada's Economic Action Plan (which included the Community Adjustment Fund delivered by ACOA). The report concluded that appropriate monitoring was conducted by ACOA.

In 2010-11, the Agency performed an internal audit on the management of advances for all of its funding programs.³⁹ Findings demonstrated that the Agency exercised due diligence in the disbursement of advance payments and suggested improvements to strengthen the management and monitoring of the advance payments. One recommendation was directed at the Community Futures (CF) Program. This recommendation shaped the framework for the 2011-12 development of guidelines on the management of advances for the CF Program, which streamlines the process of managing advances of operational support to Community Business Development Corporations and uses a risk-based approach to issue advance payments.

³⁹ ACOA, *Financial Management Control - Audit of Advance Management*, Internal Audit Directorate Final Report, March 2011.

Program Activity: Policy, Advocacy and Coordination

Strategic Outcome	Program Activity	Program Sub-activity
A competitive Atlantic Canadian economy	Policy, Advocacy and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Advocacy • Coordination

Program Activity Description

ACOA's Policy, Advocacy and Coordination (PAC) program activity is central to identifying and effectively responding to opportunities and challenges facing the regional economy. PAC provides intelligence, analysis and well-grounded advice on a broad range of issues and topics, and it informs and supports decision making by the Agency and the Minister. In offering strategic, researched policy positions that reflect the region's potential, by influencing national policies and programs that affect Atlantic Canada's development and interests, and in coordinating other policies and programs within the region to form integrated approaches to development, PAC helps carry the Agency's agenda forward and ensure that ACOA overall remains relevant and responsive to the opportunities and challenges in Atlantic Canada.

Financial Resources (\$ millions)			Human Resources (FTEs)		
Planned Spending	Total Authorities	Actual Spending	Planned	Actual	Difference
11.4	12.5	13.7	91	91	0

Expected Result	Performance Indicator	Target	Actual Result
Policies and programs that strengthen the Atlantic economy	Atlantic regional economic policies and programs that respond to regional development opportunities	Continued government support to Agency priorities, collaboration with other federal departments, and engagement with partners in Atlantic Canada in areas that will contribute to increasing the competitiveness of Atlantic Canada's economy	The target was met, as evidenced by the 2011-12 PAC evaluation and by the examples cited below.



Performance Summary and Analysis of Program Activity

In 2011-12, an evaluation of the Agency's PAC program activity was published, covering the five-year period from fiscal 2005-06 to 2009-10. Results of this evaluation indicated that PAC plays a legitimate and necessary role within ACOA and Atlantic Canada and that it is aligned with the Agency's mandate and strategic outcome as well as government-wide priorities and strategies. The results also indicated that PAC effectively meets the needs of the minister, external stakeholders and senior management.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Evaluation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Policy, Advocacy and Coordination Program Activity*, Final Report, March 6, 2012, p. 38.

In 2011-12, ACOA's PAC efforts focused on key issues that addressed Atlantic Canada's challenges and opportunities while aligning with federal strategies such as the Government of Canada's Jobs and Growth Strategy, and the Global Commerce Strategy.

During the year, the Agency continued its advocacy work, promoting the interests of Atlantic Canada in areas such as the [Atlantic Gateway and Trade Corridor](#), aerospace and defence, energy and environment, science and technology, resource industries, and population and immigration. For example, in co-operation with Transport Canada, ACOA continued to lead the coordination and integration of Atlantic Gateway activities across federal departments, provincial governments, private-sector partners, gateway councils and other stakeholders. As detailed in the Atlantic Gateway Strategy, ACOA and Transport Canada identified key international marketing and trade promotion activities such as the development of an international marketing plan and the organization of trade missions to Europe and the United States.⁴¹

The Agency's PAC program activity addressed energy and the environment through its advocacy work promoting Atlantic Canada's energy sector, including renewable energy, and by facilitating the advancement of the region's potential through the Atlantic Canada Energy (ACE) office. The ACE office co-hosted the third international upstream forum in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, and sponsored a Rothesay Energy Dialogue in New Brunswick. These events brought together regional leaders and international representatives to discuss opportunities and challenges facing the sector. ACOA, through the ACE office, also supported trade missions to major offshore and renewable energy trade shows in Houston, Texas, and Aberdeen, Scotland, which helped to advance the region's energy sector. These sectors have also been advanced by ACOA's coordination efforts through the Atlantic Energy Gateway initiative. With Natural Resources Canada, the four provinces and regional utilities, ACOA supported collaborative studies to examine opportunities for environmentally sustainable growth in the clean and renewable energy sector.

The Agency participated in interdepartmental working groups on innovation and represented the interests of Atlantic Canada firms before the federal government's Expert Panel on the Review of Federal Support to Research and Development, articulating the important role of regional innovation systems. The expert panel's report⁴² recognized the importance of support for business innovation and the need for commercialization activities following the research and development phase – areas targeted by ACOA's innovation programs.

Following the announcement of a National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy, the Agency developed the [Atlantic Shipbuilding Action Plan](#) to help SMEs capitalize on business development opportunities that will stem from this major federal investment. The action plan focused on engaging and educating Atlantic businesses on supply-chain opportunities, promoting ACOA programming to support supply-chain development and

⁴¹ [Atlantic Gateway and Trade Corridor Strategy – Connecting Canada with the World](#), 2010, pp. 14-16.

⁴² Government of Canada, Expert Panel Report – Review of Federal Support to Research and Development, *Innovation Canada: A Call to Action*, October 2011.

engaging with partners on skills and labour force readiness. In 2011-12, ACOA delivered 10 supplier development information sessions, reaching 823 participants and 513 SMEs.

In 2011-12, regular reports analyzing the region's economic situation were produced and distributed to senior Agency officials and other government departments providing the economic context to support decision making. ACOA also supported or conducted research and analyses that focused on key issues such as skills and human capital, urban and rural issues, energy, innovation, commercialization, regional productivity and competitiveness, international trade and demographics. For example, in the case of skills and human capital, ACOA provided funding to the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council to analyze the recent performance of the region's labour market and the key labour market issues facing the region. To advance the body of knowledge on rural-urban issues, ACOA provided funding to the Harris Centre at Memorial University of Newfoundland to explore the concept of functional economic regions in Atlantic Canada.

ACOA also continued its efforts to make Atlantic Canada's rural areas and its resource industries more competitive by moving toward more innovative, higher value-added products and services and by diversifying into new markets. For example, ACOA supported two studies related to renewable energy and its role as a generator of economic activity in rural areas. The first collaborative project, involving the government of Prince Edward Island and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), included a study mission and seminar giving participants an opportunity to share best practices and lessons learned in renewable energy development in rural areas. A second project is assessing bio-energy opportunities in the region while helping stakeholders gain insights into the potential for this sector. In addition to research, ACOA also provided funding to the Maritime Lumber Bureau to undertake a significant promotional campaign in an effort to increase the use of locally produced solid wood materials in commercial structures throughout the Atlantic provinces.

In its federal coordination role, ACOA regional officials also maintain contact with their provincial counterparts and engage provincial governments on a wide range of development initiatives in areas of mutual interest and potential joint action. In this regard, the Agency continues to engage with federal and provincial partners and other stakeholders within each of the Atlantic provinces and at a pan-Atlantic level to address issues like skills and human capital that will impact the region's economic development into the future. Additionally, ACOA regional vice-presidents chair the Regional Federal Councils, which contribute to an informed and complementary approach to regional activities by federal departments in each province. This co-operation contributes to a more focused and cohesive federal and federal-provincial approach to issues and opportunities, influencing the effectiveness of government programs, services and leadership offered throughout Atlantic Canada.

Lessons Learned

The size and composition of Atlantic Canada's labour market is changing due to declining birth rates, an aging population and the outflow of trained and educated skilled workers from the region – particularly workers of a younger age. There is an impending skilled labour shortage and a need for a collaborative pan-Atlantic response. ACOA spearheaded the creation of the Atlantic Population Table (APT), a federal-provincial working group comprising representatives of the four provincial governments and federal organizations. The APT worked to find ways to attract and retain workers, to promote Atlantic Canada as a vibrant place to live and work, and to integrate workers into the labour market. A lesson learned from the APT's work is that immigration is only part of the solution to the region's population challenges. In fact, there is a need for a broader focus on business skills, labour markets and productivity in the region, as well as for collaboration with partners such as learning institutions.



Program Activity: Internal Services

Program Activity Description

Internal Services are groups of related activities and resources administered to support the needs of the programs and other corporate obligations of an organization. These groups are Management and Oversight Services, Communications Services, Legal Services, Human Resources Management Services, Financial Management Services, Information Management Services, Information Technology Services, Real Property Services, Materiel Services, Acquisition Services, and Travel and Other Administrative Services. Internal Services include only those activities and resources that apply across an organization and not to those provided specifically to a program.

Financial Resources (\$ millions)			Human Resources (FTEs)		
Planned Spending	Total Authorities	Actual Spending	Planned	Actual	Difference
35.9	37.3	40.0	313	284	29

Although actual spending for Internal Services exceeded total authorities by \$2.7 million, spending decreased by \$1.8 million compared with the previous year.

ACOA is a participant in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS) and contributes to the Greening Government Operations targets through the Internal Services program activity. The department contributes to the following target areas of Theme IV (Shrinking the Environmental Footprint – Beginning with Government) of the FSDS:

- surplus electronic and electrical equipment recycling;
- printing unit reduction;
- paper consumption reduction;
- green meetings; and
- green procurement.

For additional details on ACOA's Greening Government Operations activities, see the list of Supplementary Information Tables in Section III.

Changes to Government Structure

Shared Services Canada

Order in Council P.C. 2011-0881 established Shared Services Canada (SSC) as a department, effective August 4, 2011. Subsequent Orders in Council, P.C. 2011-0877 and P.C. 2011-1297, transferred the control and supervision of certain portions of the federal public administration related to information technology infrastructures services.

The 43 departments named in the Orders in Council P.C. 2011-0881, P.C. 2011-0877 and P.C. 2011-1297 (dated August 3, 2011, and November 15, 2011) must report on the amount of the resources transferred to SSC and on the expenditures they incurred on behalf of SSC. These departments must complete the following table, to show the amount of the transfer and the expenditures.

Impacts on Financial and Human Resources Resulting from the Establishment of Shared Services Canada

2011-12 Financial Resources (\$ millions)

	Planned Spending	Total Authorities*
Net transfer post Orders in Council (OIC)** to SSC	1.5	1.5

2011-12 Human Resources (FTEs)

	Planned	Actual
Deemed to SSC	3	3

* Pursuant to section 31.1 of the *Financial Administration Act* and Orders in Council P.C. 2011-0881, P.C. 2011-0877 and P.C. 2011-1297, this amount was deemed to have been appropriated to SSC, which resulted in a reduction in the appropriation for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

** Total authorities, as presented in the 2011-12 Financial Resources table (and other relevant tables) in the Summary of Performance section, is the net of any transfers to SSC. Actual spending does not include expenditures incurred on behalf of SSC as of the OIC date.

Canada's Economic Action Plan Initiatives

ACOA continued to be the region's primary vehicle for delivering economic development measures under Canada's Economic Action Plan announced in Budget 2009. The Community Adjustment Fund ended on March 31, 2011, but the Recreational Infrastructure Canada (RInC) program was extended to October 31, 2011.

EAP Initiative	2011-12 (\$ millions)		
	Planned Spending	Total Authorities	Actual Spending
Community Adjustment Fund	0	0	0
Recreational Infrastructure Canada	0	3.4	3.1
Total	0	3.4	3.1

Program Activity: Community Development

Recreational Infrastructure Canada

Expected Results	Performance Indicator	Two-year target (2009-10 through October 31, 2011)	Actual Result
Timely, targeted and temporary stimulus to the Canadian economy, and mitigation of the impacts of the global economic recession, by increasing the total amount of construction activity related to recreational infrastructure.	Demonstrated linkages between projects and economic opportunities	Evidence of impact through examples provided by clients	The target was met, as per the information provided below.
	Dollars leveraged on federal investments	2:1 (every \$1.00 invested through RInC will leverage \$2.00)	2.38:1
	Number of projects successfully completed	200	228

A total of 230 projects were approved under RInC, having total project costs of \$114.5 million and federal investments of \$33.9 million, which leveraged an additional \$80.3 million from other sources for a ratio of 2.38:1. ACOA disbursed its entire RInC allocation of \$34.7 million.⁴³

Overall, the Agency exceeded the expected results of the program. The following example demonstrates how RInC has created economic opportunities in a community affected by the economic downturn.

⁴³ Recreational Infrastructure Program Cash Flow Report, ACOA Corporate Data System: data reported on May 11, 2012.

Improvements to Topsail Park Soccer Field – Conception Bay South, Newfoundland and Labrador

A contribution of \$432,824 was provided to the Town of Conception Bay South for upgrades to the Topsail Park Soccer Field, including \$30,809 in 2011-12 to complete the project. Project activities included the supply and installation of artificial turf, lighting and benches. As a result of these upgrades, 1,200 patrons benefited from more playing on an ongoing basis; more reliable field usage during poor weather conditions was provided; and the overall quality and condition of the field was improved. The Topsail Park Soccer Field will support ongoing physical fitness activity for many years to come. The \$1.4-million project created at least 64 person-months of employment during the two-year project.

Results also show that strong regional community-based partnerships were formed during the delivery of RInC. As noted previously, ACOA leveraged a total of \$80.3 million from other sources (\$2.38 per dollar invested), which exceeded the target of \$2.00 per dollar invested.

The number of RInC projects successfully completed over the two-year period ending October 31, 2011, exceeded the target of 200 projects. Of the 230 approved projects, 228 were completed before the revised construction deadline. This demonstrates that RInC accomplished the objective of increasing construction activity in the Atlantic region and helped to mitigate the impacts of the global economic recession in the area.

Section III: Supplementary Information

Financial Highlights

The financial highlights presented in this section are intended to provide an overview of the Agency's financial position and operations. The unaudited financial statements are prepared in accordance with the government's accounting policies, which are based on Canadian public sector accounting standards.

The actual expenditures presented in the tables in Sections I and II were prepared on a cash basis, while the financial highlights that follow were prepared on an accrual basis. Tables reconciling these two accounting methods are presented in the notes to the Agency's financial statements (note 3).

During 2011-12, the Agency adopted the revised Treasury Board Accounting Standard 1.2: Departmental and Agency Financial Statements. The Agency is required to present the departmental net debt, financial assets and liabilities that are held on behalf of government. Amounts for 2010-11 were also restated to facilitate the comparison of data from one year to the next.

Condensed Statement of Financial Position (Unaudited)

As at March 31, 2012 (\$ thousands)

	Change	2011-12	2010-11
Total net liabilities	(39%)	77,403	126,648
Total net financial assets	(40%)	66,881	111,554
Departmental net debt	(30%)	10,522	15,094
Total non-financial assets	(45%)	8,064	14,767
Departmental net financial position	652%	(2,458)	(327)

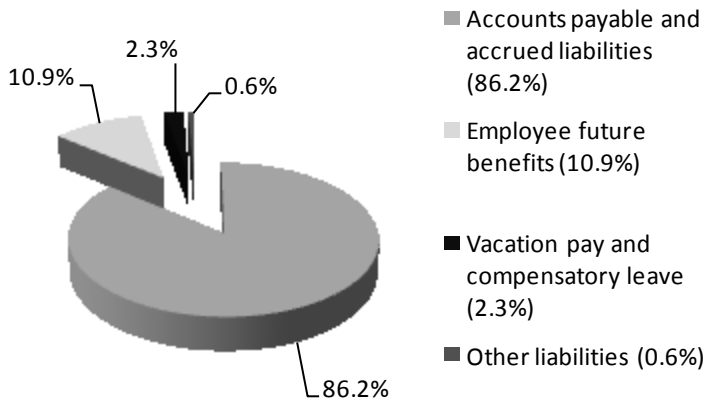
Condensed Statement of Operations and Departmental Net Financial Position (Unaudited)

For the Year Ended March 31, 2012 (\$ thousands)

	Change	2011-12	2010-11
Total expenses	(16%)	275,054	327,835
Total revenues	100%	30	15
Net cost of operations before government funding and transfers	(16%)	275,024	327,820
Departmental net financial position	652%	(2,458)	(327)

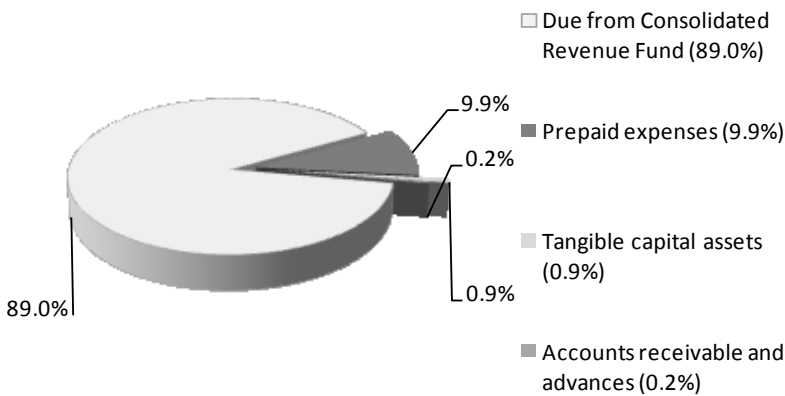
Financial Highlights – Graphs

Liabilities by Type



Total net liabilities were \$77.4 million at the end of 2011-12. This compares with \$126.6 million in 2010-11. In the previous fiscal year, large amounts of accrued liabilities were set up to recognize amounts owing under Canada’s Economic Action Plan and under infrastructure programming.

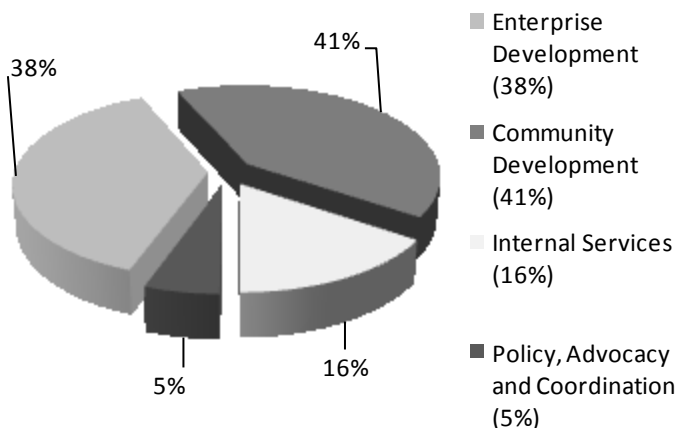
Assets by Type



Total net financial assets were \$66.9 million at the end of 2011-12, a decrease of \$44.7 million (40%) over the previous year’s total of \$111.6 million. The decrease relates to the accrued liabilities included in the Due from Consolidated Revenue Fund account. The decrease in accrued liabilities is explained above.

Total non-financial assets were \$8.1 million at the end of 2011-12, a decrease of \$6.7 million (45%) over the previous year’s total of \$14.8 million. This decrease is attributable to a concerted effort in 2011-12 to reduce prepaid expenses, which are advances issued to clients at year-end.

Expenses - Where Funds Go



Total expenses were \$275.1 million in 2011-12. Of these funds, \$112.4 million (41%) was spent in the Community Development program activity, while \$104.4 million (38%) contributed to the Enterprise Development program activity. Total expenditures have decreased by \$52.7 million (16%), primarily as a result of the sunsetting of programs under Canada’s Economic Action Plan.

Financial Statements

ACOA's 2011-12 financial statements can be found on the [Agency's website](#).

Supplementary Information Tables

- [Details on Transfer Payment Programs](#)
- [Greening Government Operations](#)
- [Horizontal Initiatives](#)
- [Internal Audits and Evaluations](#)
- [Responses to Parliamentary Committees and External Audits](#)
- [Sources of Non-responsible Revenue](#)
- [User Fees](#)

Section IV: Other Items of Interest

Organizational Contact Information

ACOA Head Office
Blue Cross Centre, 3rd Floor
644 Main Street
P.O. Box 6051
Moncton, New Brunswick E1C 9J8
(Courier address: E1C 1E2)

General inquiries: 506-851-2271
Toll free (Canada and the United States): 1-800-561-7862
Facsimile: 506-851-7403
Secure Facsimile: 506-857-1301
Access to Information/Privacy: 506-851-6202
TTY⁴⁴: 1-877-456-6500
<http://www.acoa-apeca.gc.ca/English/Pages/home.aspx>

Additional Information

The following additional information is available on ACOA's website.

- [Repayable Contributions Portfolio of the Business Development Program](#)
- [Information on program sub-activities of ACOA's Program Activity Architecture](#)
 - Innovation
 - Entrepreneurship and Business Skills Development
 - International Business Development
 - Financing Continuum
 - Community Mobilization
 - Community-based Business Development
 - Community Investment
 - Infrastructure Programming
 - Policy
 - Advocacy
 - Coordination

⁴⁴ A teletype or teletypewriter (TTY) is a device that enables people who are hearing- or speech-impaired to use a telephone to communicate by typing and reading messages instead of talking and listening. A TTY is required at both ends of a conversation in order to communicate.