

EVALUATION OF ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS: Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy (AFS) and Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management (AAROM)

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted between February 2018 and February 2019 to meet the requirements of the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Policy on Results*. All Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) regions were included. Evidence was gathered through document review; interviews (42 with DFO employees and 12 with program recipients); administrative and financial data analyses; two site visits to the Gulf and Maritimes regions; and a survey of the Aboriginal Programs and Governance Information System (APGIS) users.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMS

The AFS program dates from 1992 following the Sparrow Supreme Court decision, to provide a framework for Aboriginal fishing for food, social and ceremonial (FSC) purposes under the authority of communal licences issued under the *Fisheries Act*. The AAROM program, created in 2004, provides funding to Indigenous organizations for skilled personnel to undertake scientific research activities and to participate in advisory and decision-making processes related to aquatic resources and oceans management.

KEY FINDINGS



There is a continued need for AFS and AAROM, and both programs contribute to departmental results. However, funding has limited the ability of the programs to fund other recipient activities in order to increase their involvement in collaborative management.



There is currently no common understanding of capacity building for AFS or AAROM among program recipients and program staff. Moreover, the availability of high quality and reliable data are needed to ensure that AFS and AAROM measure the advancement of the capacity of recipients.



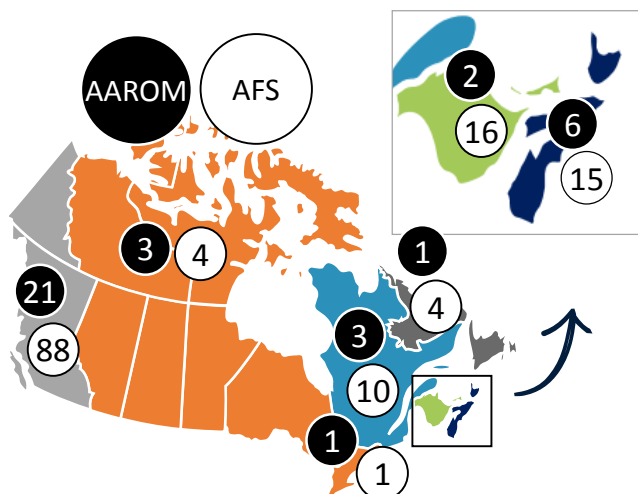
While information contained within APGIS is found to be beneficial to manage the contribution agreements between DFO and AFS/AAROM recipients, the information and data are inconsistently captured.



Greater coordination is needed as limited interaction occurs between AFS/AAROM programs and other DFO and Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) programs resulting in missed opportunities.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building has not been clearly defined by the programs, and, therefore, was interpreted differently by all interviewees. Skills development and technical expertise are most commonly understood as capacity building activities for both programs.



Although there are a number of factors that hinder capacity building, lack of funding and skilled personnel are the greatest challenges to capacity building. Further, the gaps that were identified included the incorporation of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and communication between recipients and DFO employees.

TOOLS USED BY THE PROGRAMS

Recipient Capacity Assessment Tool (RCAT)

The RCAT is a contribution agreement assessment tool designed to measure risk and determine the appropriate conditions to be included in contribution agreements. Interviews suggest that reviewing RCAT assessment questions would improve the tool.

RCAT scores, as a measure of AFS and AAROM recipients' capacity, reflect administrative abilities and do not measure technical capacity.

RCAT scores have shown slow growth: on average 1% of the AFS sample (23 recipients) and 5% of all AAROM recipients improved their administrative capacity over the last five years.

Aboriginal Programs and Governance Information System (APGIS)

APGIS is a national information system used to administer and manage Aboriginal Programs' transfer payments.

The information contained within APGIS is found to be beneficial to manage AFS/AAROM contribution agreements, however, there is opportunity for improvement in terms of training and clear guidance on the expected information to be captured in APGIS for consistent data management and standardization. For example, information, performance data and interactions between recipients and AFS and AAROM programs are inconsistently captured.

COORDINATION

Evidence demonstrates that limited interaction occurs between AFS/AAROM and other DFO-CCG programs (e.g., Science, Species at Risk, Fisheries Protection Program, Oceans Management, Conservation and Protection, etc.) resulting in missed opportunities.

Greater coordination could...

- Reduce programs working in silos.
- Allow sharing of best practices.
- Improve the development of recipients' annual work plans by receiving input from other DFO programs.
- Improve communications with communities.



Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) processes undertaken by DFO science groups were raised as an example where greater coordination would allow better integration of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and data gathered by program recipients within DFO processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

It is recommended that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, define capacity building for AFS and AAROM and also develop tools to measure capacity building to demonstrate the progression of recipient's capacity over time.

2

It is recommended that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, establish formalized coordination between AFS/AAROM and other DFO-CCG programs that are or could be involved with AFS/AAROM recipients.

3

It is recommended that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, establish consistency in data collection, particularly with respect to performance data, the management of contribution agreements and recipient interactions, to ensure that data is being collected and managed centrally in a cohesive manner across the country.