

# Evaluation of the Yukon Learn Society

## Final Report

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# Executive Summary

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## Background

Established in 1983, the Yukon Learn Society promotes and provides free adult literacy services and programs throughout the Yukon. The overall mission of Yukon Learn Society is to provide appropriate services to Yukon adults with literacy needs, which contribute to their ability to reach personal goals and to reach full potential by providing free and personalized services.

## Project Scope and Objectives

In September 2009, the Yukon Department of Education, Advanced Education Branch, commissioned an evaluation of the Yukon Learn Society. Overall, the scope of this evaluation focused on the delivery and management of the Society programs.

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- Conduct a formative review of the Yukon Learn Society structures, planning and programs; and
- Recommend changes, improvements and/or additions to the Program Design to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organization.

This document represents the final report of the evaluation submitted to the project contact Shawn Kitchen, Director, Labour Market Programs and Services, Advanced Education. It summarizes evaluation findings and provides a list of recommendations related to key themes and issues drawn from an analysis of data collected.

## Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation methodology consisted of a document review, and interviews and surveys with key stakeholders associated with the Yukon Learn Society. Specific interview guidelines were used to direct interview discussion content for each of the following groups: the Board of Directors; full-time and part-time staff; territorial level stakeholders; tutors; clients and other stakeholders in the field of Yukon literacy services.<sup>1</sup> A survey was also carried out with volunteer tutors working for Society programming.

The following questions framed the project scope and guided both the formation of methodologies and presentation of findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: For a full listing of individuals consulted, see the methodology section in the body of the report.

Thematic questions covered in this evaluation include:

1. To what extent has the Yukon Learn Society achieved the intended objectives and outcomes?
2. What are the opportunities / barriers to achieving objectives and outcomes?
3. What are the immediate expected and unexpected results of the Society's program?
4. Were work plans followed? Why planned activities may not have been carried out.
5. Were the organization's resources used and combined in the best possible manner to produce the expected results?
6. Is the organization benefiting program recipients?
7. What positive changes have occurred for those people immediately associated with the Society?
8. What barriers exist for new clients accessing the Society?
9. Costs associated with delivering the program and are programs making adequate use of existing community and governmental resources?
10. How effectively are volunteers utilized and supported?
11. How effective are volunteers for both rural Yukon and Whitehorse?
12. What changes, improvements and/or additions to Program Design would improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organization?

## **Key Findings**

Based on responses from staff, tutors and clients and a scan of documents, the Society has a long history of offering a diversity of literacy services to clients and continues to provide well-established adult literacy programming not offered elsewhere in Yukon. Based on observations and comments from staff respondents, the core Yukon Learn Society literacy programs offered at the centre site are:

1. Centre drop-in services including access to library resources, literacy support and a computer lab;
2. Computer literacy courses; and
3. One-on-one tutoring services.

Service delivery by Yukon Learn Society primarily takes place at its 'education centre' site located on Main Street, Whitehorse with limited programming offered in rural communities based on demand and staffing capacity. The Whitehorse site houses all Society staff offices, a library, learning spaces and a computer lab. During site visits conducted as part of the evaluation, this site was observed to be

well used with clients and volunteers accessing services and supporting programs throughout the centre's opening hours.

For the 2008-2009 fiscal year, 229 clients in total accessed Society programming with 208 (91%) from Whitehorse and the remainder (21) from eight other rural Yukon communities. In 2008-2009, the number and scope of computer course offerings expanded to 15 courses with 81 participants for a total of 1109 person hours. The majority of these courses were offered outside of Whitehorse (3) with two in Dawson City, three in Pelly Crossing, two in Carcross, two in Teslin, two in Old Crow and one in Haines Junction.

As of the 2008-2009 year, the Society had four full-time employees located in Whitehorse (Executive Director, Office Manager, Education Centre Coordinator, and Community Coordinator) as well as one part-time summer student to support fund-raising activities and one part-time contract employee (computer technician) to support the delivery of programming. All Society staff and other stakeholder respondents stated that the Yukon Learn Society is engaged in regular, informal dialogue with a wide diversity of organizations, communities and levels of government.

Based on interview and survey responses, key opportunities and barriers that influence the achievement of objectives and outcomes include:

#### Opportunities

- New Main Street Site in Whitehorse;
- Strong commitment from staff; and
- Strong commitment and involvement from volunteer tutors.

#### Barriers

- Lack of community presence and sustainable contacts in rural communities;
- Staff challenges supporting a small group of 'high needs' clients;
- Limited communications with tutors; and
- Socio-economic and marginalized lives of clients.

Yukon Learn Society currently offers limited rural services outside of Whitehorse. Key challenges to expanding Society programs in rural communities as outlined by respondents and in Society reports are:

- Difficulty recruiting, training and retaining volunteer community workers;
- Existing community workers are often overburdened and limited in their capacity to provide in-kind support;
- High cost of travel between communities; and

- Lack of long-term contacts and formal communications with community personnel and other organizations / agencies working in the communities.

All work plan activities were observed as having been achieved during the 2008-2009 year with the exception of one item associated with programming in the communities outside of Whitehorse that were only partially completed. This item included the creation of learning centres in 5 Yukon communities (4 centres were established with none remaining beyond the completion of the project, while the fifth centre was established in Teslin, and later absorbed by the Whitehorse site to preserve resources).

All respondents at all levels stated that Yukon Learn Society is benefiting program recipients not only in literacy goals, but also supporting clients in a holistic manner that takes other needs into consideration.

Presently, the Yukon Learn Society receives core funding from the Government of Yukon through an annual contribution agreement of \$275,000, with \$100,000 targeted toward community service delivery. This amount makes up approximately 61.6% of funding to the Society based on the total revenues for the Society in 2008-2009 of \$446,370. Other key sources of funding include federal grants, City of Whitehorse funds and fund-raising from core events such as the PGI Golf tournament. Seven staff and community respondents stated that, while the long-term funding provided to the Society allows for strategic planning and consistency of programming, current funding levels are not sufficient for the Society to maintain ongoing programming in all Yukon communities as outlined in its mandate.

All staff suggested that demand for services such as computer courses and tutoring exceeded the current supply, especially in the area of computer literacy. The following list outlines key barriers for new clients accessing the Society's programming, in order of those most frequently stated by respondents:

1. Lack of exposure and programming in rural communities;
2. Lack of exposure targeted to potential clients in Whitehorse; and
3. Lack of financial resources to fully meet the current demand from clients.

Based on interview responses and the review of Society documents, the following supports are offered to volunteer tutors based on demand:

- Training sessions;
- Use of tutoring materials and library;
- On-going advice and support from staff;
- Tutoring space at the education centre; and
- Tutor appreciation events.

## Recommendations

The Yukon Learn Society should:

- **Develop a performance measurement framework and plan** linked with its annual contribution agreement to monitor and evaluate ongoing results attainment (recommendation 1.1).
- **Explore service delivery partnerships with Yukon College rural campuses and First Nations** in order to develop a long-term, and sustainable staffing and site structure that expands adult literacy learning opportunities in Whitehorse and rural Yukon communities (recommendation 1.2).
- **Support efforts to establish a more formal communications mechanism / forum between Yukon Government stakeholders** in Advanced Education and Health and Social Services, the Society and other relevant organizations and communities working in the field of literacy such as Yukon College, LDAY and the Yukon Literacy Coalition (recommendation 1.3).
- **Develop a semi-structured case management mechanism** in partnership with Yukon Health and Social Services for those clients that the Society deems 'high needs' (recommendation 2.1).
- **Develop systematic tutor communication tools** such as hosting regular tutor information sharing events and a tutor email 'listserv' to encourage more information sharing and dialogue with and between tutors (recommendation 2.2).
- **Re-assess and confirm its strategic goals** in the areas of community-based service delivery, publications and partnerships in order to prioritize efforts and resources between 2009 and 2012 (recommendation 3.1)
- **Develop a separate annual work plan document** based on the planned activities in the contribution agreement and integrate it with an expanded section outlining the roles and responsibilities of staff members in relation to specific activities in the work plan (recommendation 4.1).
- **Expand its current reporting and monitoring system** for tutor / client activities to include an on-line form or log sent by tutors for encouraging the monitoring of client participation and the development of client portfolios for detailing the achievement of client goals during and after participation in the program (recommendation 7.1).
- **Expand its annual advertising and communications efforts** with other organizations and media in communities outside of Whitehorse in order to

increase exposure and build program partnership opportunities (recommendation 8.1).

- **Explore greater partnerships with First Nations and other relevant organizations** such as Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) holders, the Training Policy Committee, Yukon Government Health and Social Services and the Yukon Mine Training Association in order to expand opportunities for First Nations adult literacy clients (recommendation 9.1).
- **Expand fund raising efforts** in the private sector in an attempt to encourage sponsorships and / or supports of specific Society events and programs (recommendation 9.2)
- **Host an annual tutors ‘conference’** to support the development of tutor practice and build a collaborative community among tutors and volunteers (recommendation 10.1).
- **Expand efforts for recruiting, training and retaining volunteer community coordinators** in each community as a first step toward establishing paid positions (recommendation 11.1).



# Introduction

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## Background

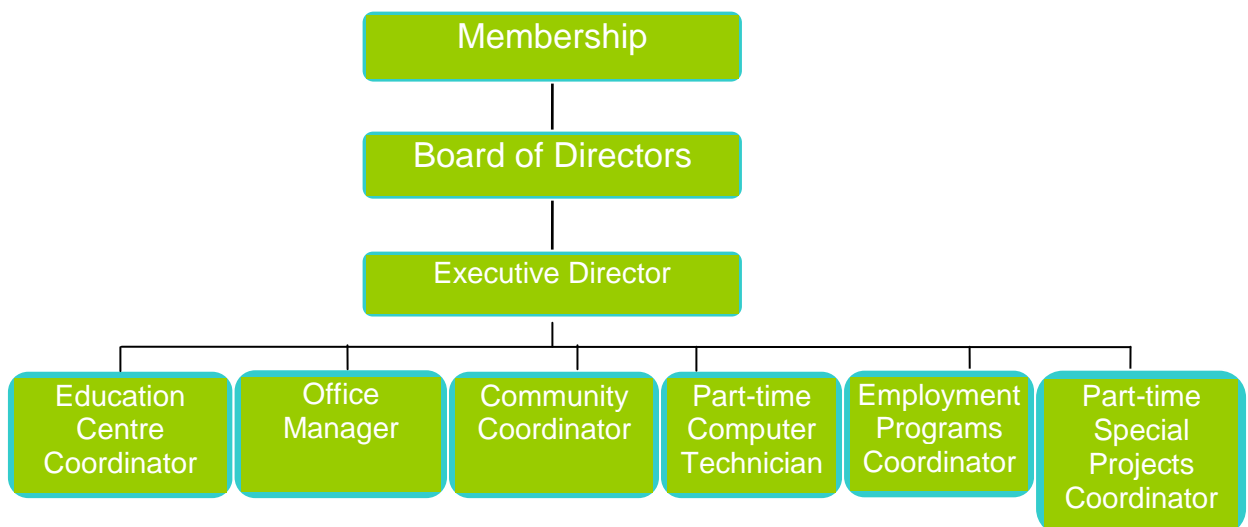
Established in 1983, the Yukon Learn Society provides free adult literacy services and programs throughout the Yukon. The overall mission of Yukon Learn Society is to provide appropriate services to Yukon adults with literacy needs, which contribute to their ability to reach personal goals and to reach full potential by providing free and personalized services.<sup>2</sup>

The core services of the Society include one-to-one tutoring to learners, regular computer courses and drop-in services. These services are directed out of an education centre located in Whitehorse that includes a library, computer lab and office spaces for Society staff members. Currently, key community activities include offering targeted on-site computer literacy training. The overall mission of the Yukon Learn Society is:

*“To provide appropriate services to Yukon adults with literacy needs, which contribute to their ability to reach personal goals and to reach full potential by providing free and personalized services.”*

The Society is governed by a Board of Directors made up of 9 members and administered by four full-time staff: an Executive Director, Education Centre Coordinator, Office Manager and Community Coordinator. The following diagram represents an organizational chart of the Yukon Learn Society and outlines program structure and the relationships between governance, and full and part-time staffing.

**Graph 1:** Current Yukon Learn Society Organizational Chart



<sup>2</sup> Source: Yukon Learn Society website, <http://www.yukonlearn.com/index.php>, October 24, 2009

## Project Scope and Objectives

In September 2009, Advanced Education commissioned an evaluation of the Yukon Learn Society. Overall, the scope of this evaluation focused on the delivery and management of the Society programs. Outcomes and results were covered where possible based on available data.

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- Conduct a formative review of the Yukon Learn Society structures, planning and programs;
- Recommend changes, improvements and/or additions to the Program Design to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organization.

This document represents the final report of the evaluation submitted to the project contact Shawn Kitchen, Director, Labour Market Programs and Services, Advanced Education. It summarizes evaluation findings and provides a list of recommendations related to key themes and issues drawn from an analysis of data collected. This report is structured into three sections: 1. Introduction; 2. Evaluation methodology; and 3. Findings and related recommendations.

Findings and recommendations are provided to identify key issues to be addressed by Yukon Learn Society stakeholders and senior decision makers in order to facilitate the ongoing development and improvement of organizational administration and programming.

## Project Limitations

Key limitations of this evaluation include:

- **A comprehensive evaluation of client success was beyond the scope of this review:** Due to a lack of quantitative data collected by the Society on client achievement of literacy goals, client outcomes were solely gauged through interviews with a sample of clients who had gone through Society programs. In order to accomplish a comprehensive evaluation of outcomes in the future, more systematic data collection will need to take place in order to track clients and verify literacy outcomes and their movement to further studies and / or career choices.
- **Limited sample of rural community interviews:** Consultations for this evaluation included interviews with contacts and clients in Whitehorse and two rural communities. While interviews conducted in the communities outside of Whitehorse provided a general view of rural community outcomes and needs, they were not, however, exhaustive and may not provide a representative perspective from all Yukon communities.

# Evaluation Methodology

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## Data Collection

Evaluation methodology consisted of a document review, and interviews and survey with key stakeholders associated with the Yukon Learn Society. Specific interview guidelines were used to direct interview discussion content for each of the following groups: the Board of Directors; full-time and part-time staff; territorial level stakeholders; tutors; clients and other stakeholders in the field of Yukon literacy services. A survey was also carried out with volunteer tutors working within Society services.

### Document Review

Key files or documents relevant to the Society programming and administration were collected and assessed by the evaluation team as supplied by Yukon Learn Society and government sources. The following listing outlines those documents reviewed:

- Departmental funding contribution agreements;
- Annual work plans and reporting;
- Program financial records;
- Client achievement data and databases;
- Society strategic planning and history;
- Program outcome documentation; and
- Other documents and associated research identified by the Project contacts.

### Interviews and Survey

Primary data collection by the evaluation team was based on 63 semi-structured interviews conducted in Whitehorse, Haines Junction and Burwash Landing and one survey distributed to 25 active tutors. Interviews and surveys were conducted with the following individuals:

1. Yukon Learn Society staff (7 face-to-face interviews and one survey response)
  - Debbie Parent, Executive Director
  - Megan Chesney, Past Community Coordinator and 1 month back fill in November, 2009
  - Danielle Noel, Office Manager
  - Cassandra Ivany, Community Coordinator

- Michael Kulachkosky, Acting Centre Coordinator
  - Aura Vivas, Past Centre Coordinator and part time special projects coordinator.
  - Larry Kwiat, (part-time contract) Computer Technician
  - Dean Sharun, Volunteer Bookkeeper (on-line survey response)
2. Board members (9 face-to-face or telephone interviews)
- Peter Morawsky
  - Mark Davey
  - Donna Smith
  - Yvonne Clarke
  - Lois Holmbert
  - Carol Buchan
  - Murd Nicholson
  - Sheila Smith
  - Jennfer Jay
3. Government of Yukon staff related to the program in Whitehorse (3 face-to-face interviews)
- Brent Slobodin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Advanced Education
  - Shawn Kitchen, Director, Labour Market Programs and Services, Advanced Education
  - Danielle Sheldon, Labour Market Officer, Advanced Education
4. Learners
- 32 current clients (face-to-face interviews) from Whitehorse (28), Burwash Landing (3) and Haines Junction (1)
5. Tutors
- 6 current tutors in face-to-face interviews; and
  - 5 additional current tutors via survey tool
6. Other stakeholders (5 face-to-face or telephone interviews)
- Beth Mulloy, Executive Director, Yukon Literacy Coalition
  - Rea Tromp, Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon
  - Lucy-Anne Carroll, PWMS Coordinator, Kluane First Nations
  - Shelagh Rowles, Dean, Applied Science and Management Division of Applied Science & Management, Yukon College
  - George Green, Literacy Strategy Review Participant

## Key Findings and Recommendations

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An analysis and triangulation of data obtained from the document review, survey and interviews was conducted with the use of an evaluation matrix and thematic mapping. The following section outlines the key findings and recommendations drawn from the analysis and structured using the evaluation questions outlined in the evaluation terms of reference as headings.

The following questions framed the project scope and guided both the formation of methodologies and presentation of findings.

Thematic questions covered in this evaluation include:

1. To what extent has the Yukon Learn Society achieved the intended objectives and outcomes?
2. What are the opportunities / barriers to achieving objectives and outcomes?
3. What are the immediate expected and unexpected results of the Society's program?
4. Were work plans followed? Why planned activities may not have been carried out.
5. Were the organization's resources used and combined in the best possible manner to produce the expected results?
6. Is the organization benefiting program recipients?
7. What positive changes have occurred for those people immediately associated with the Society?
8. What barriers exist for new clients accessing the Society?
9. Costs associated with delivering the program and are programs making adequate use of existing community and governmental resources?
10. How effectively are volunteers utilized and supported?
11. How effective are volunteers for both rural Yukon and Whitehorse?
12. What changes, improvements and/or additions to Program Design would improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organization?

**Question 1: *To what extent has the program achieved the intended objectives and outcomes?***

The objectives of the Yukon Learn Society are outlined as goals in their mandate and listed in the deliverables section of their contribution agreement with the Government of Yukon. The three objectives of the Society are:

1. To provide adult literacy services that are designed to help learners strengthen their literacy skills so that they may develop potential and maximize opportunities;
2. To work collaboratively with literacy stakeholders to:
  - a. Identify adult literacy needs;
  - b. Develop and deliver adult literacy services to meet those needs;
  - c. Recruit and train volunteer literacy practitioners through the Yukon;
3. To engage in dialogue with all stakeholders so that we may;
  - a. Identify potential literacy partnerships;
  - b. Gain knowledge so that we may better serve our clients; and
  - c. Create literacy capacity in all Yukon communities.

Evidence of results under these three objectives is outlined in the section below.

**Objective 1: To provide adult literacy services designed to help learners strengthen their literacy skills**

The achievement of the first objective relating to the provision of literacy services was reviewed based on interview and survey responses with Society staff, tutors and clients as well as a review of data collected by the Society relating to programs. Based on responses from staff, tutors and clients and a scan of documents, the Society has a long history of offering a diversity of literacy services to clients and continues to provide well-established adult literacy programming not offered elsewhere in Yukon.

Evaluation findings also suggest that the Society's dedicated staff are a key factor in the delivery of useful programs that serve a tangible need primarily in Whitehorse, but in other Yukon communities as well. As of the 2008-2009 year, the Society had four full-time employees located in Whitehorse (executive director, office manager, education centre coordinator, and community coordinator) as well as one part-time summer student to support fund-raising activities and one part-time contract employee (computer technician) to support the delivery of programming.

Yukon Learn Society programming in Whitehorse takes place at its 'education centre' site located on Main Street. This site houses all Society staff offices, a

library, learning spaces and a computer lab. During site visits conducted as part of the evaluation, this site was observed to be well used with clients and volunteers accessing services and supporting programs throughout the centre's opening hours.

Key indicators of the type of environment that the Society centre offers are the responses of those that use it: staff; tutors and clients. All staff and tutors stated that the centre is a "comfortable" space in which to work, especially since the Society recently relocated from a previous site suffering from a major mold health problem. All client respondents agreed that the new Main Street centre offers a "welcoming" and "safe" environment for them to access individualized services. Based on observations and comments from staff respondents, the core Yukon Learn Society literacy programs offered at the centre site are:

1. Centre drop-in services including access to library resources, literacy support and a computer lab;
2. Computer literacy courses; and
3. One-on-one tutoring services.

Currently, Yukon Learn Society offers limited services in rural communities and has no permanent presence outside of Whitehorse either in paid staffing or sites. Services in rural communities, therefore, are offered based on demand from community contacts and are organized by the community coordinator staff person housed in Whitehorse to the extent that resources and budgets are available. Current, community-based programming offered by the Society throughout the territory focuses on the following key activities:

1. Expanding the tutor program into the communities; and
2. Offering free literacy /computer courses at varying sites and communities.

In order for a potential client to access Society services and programming, they must first become a member of the Society. Membership is granted annually by providing a minimal fee every fiscal year and is open to persons, organizations in all communities. Information on membership is collected by the Society in a database that includes data such as name, home community, date of membership, previous training and support needs. It is this database that is used to determine numbers of clients and tutors. This practice, however, is problematic and inconsistent in generating a definitive number of clients per year since this database is a listing of members over a 15 month span and not clients per fiscal year. Client numbers are drawn from this list by the Society under the assumption that all members access services. In order to be able to report on definitive client numbers with certainty as necessary for future strategic planning, reporting and evaluation, Yukon Learn Society should collect client data in a more robust and consistent manner.

Based on best estimates drawn from data within the membership database, a considerable and growing number of clients are accessing Society programs since 2007 with clients in most cases located in the Whitehorse area. For the 2008-2009 fiscal year, 229 clients<sup>3</sup> in total accessed Society programming with 208 (91%) from Whitehorse and the remainders (21) from eight other rural Yukon communities (seven from Burwash Landing, five from Ross River, two from Carmacks, two from Mayo, two from Marsh Lake, one from Dawson City, one from Pelly Crossing, and one from Carcross). This number represented a 22.5% increase over the previous year's number of clients accessing Society services. Of the previous year's total, 176 (or 93%) were from Whitehorse, with one from Marsh Lake, two from Carmacks, three from Dawson City, seven from Pelly Crossing and one from Carcross. As of December 2009, 172 clients had accessed Society programs in the current fiscal year 2009-2010. The following table outlines the number of clients that have accessed Society programming between 2007 and 2009.

**Table 1: Member numbers, 2007- 2009**

Year	Whitehorse-based clients	Rural community-based clients	Total number of clients
2007 - 2008	207	12	219*
2008 - 2009	229	32	261*

Source: Yukon Learn Society database.

\*Note: client numbers are assumed as number of memberships by the Society.

Overall trends in the usage of Society services by individual clients were difficult to ascertain since the Society does not collect comprehensive information specifically on the amount of time, and/or number of times that clients access individual services. As a result, it is difficult to determine long-term trends on what types of services individual clients are accessing and how often they access them. However, a general picture of the usage trends of clients can be drawn from information collected on sign-in sheets that clients are encouraged to use every time they utilize the computer lab and status reports that tutors provide.<sup>4</sup>

Drop-in information suggests a significant increase in the use of the computer lab from a monthly average in 2007-2008 of 27.1 hours to 49.4 hours in 2008-2009. The table below outlines the total number of client drop-in hours as calculated each month from lab sign-in sheets.

<sup>3</sup> Note: Two assumptions made with regards to how the Society currently calculates client numbers are problematic since it is assumed that everyone who has become a member has accessed services in some way, and that those people who signed up between Jan 1 and March 31 of the previous fiscal year are included in the annual database since these members are not made to pay fees for an additional year so quickly after paying for the previous.

<sup>4</sup> This information should be viewed only as an estimate since, as noted by staff, clients do not always use this sign-in system. It also does not include data on clients accessing other services such as the library.



**Table 2:** Drop-in contact hours at Whitehorse computer lab, 2007-2009

Total drop in hours	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Monthly Average
2007-2008	33	28	10	0	0	0	0	0	5	65	85	99	27.1
2008-2009	54	39	47	29	19	49	52	48	21	52	58	67	49.4

Source: Yukon Learn Society Executive Directors Reports, 2007-2009

The increase in drop-in hours over the last two years can be attributed in large part to low 2007-2008 numbers due to the closure of the Whitehorse site to clients for five months in 2007 as a result of the previous site's mold problems. Another potential reason for the increase in drop-in numbers, as noted by staff respondents, was that the new Whitehorse centre location has a higher visibility in the community and has made it easier for clients to access the site.

While the data above suggests an overall increase in the level of drop-in service delivery at Yukon Learn Society over the last two years, other quantitative data provides a detailed view of the level of service delivery regarding the one-on-one tutor program. "The free tutor program that we provide is the service that most people know about", noted one staff respondent. This service is administered by the Centre Coordinator staff member and involves the pairing of clients interested in improving their literacy levels with volunteer tutors drawn from their community. The Society pairs clients and tutors and then provides on-going support such as learning spaces available at the Centre, tutoring materials and resources, and tutor training sessions. Once pairings have been made, the frequency and location of tutor sessions are decided by the pair. Ongoing communications between the tutor and the Society take the form of informal discussions if needed and the submission of periodic progress reports by tutors.

Data collected by the Society for 2007-2008 state that there were 12 new tutor client matches with a maximum of 30 tutors and 32 clients working together at any one month of that year. All tutors during this period were from Whitehorse with the exception of one from Carcross. In 2008 – 2009, the number of matches increased to 18 with a maximum number of tutors at the end of the year at 30 working with 33 clients.<sup>5</sup> All tutors working during this time were from Whitehorse.

Aside from anecdotal evidence, outcomes from the tutor sessions can be measured through data submitted in progress reports filled out by tutors each month. This report details number of sessions, type of work completed, number of tutor preparation hours and tutor contact hours. It is data from these reports that is used to calculate the total tutor contact hours per month, which is the key

<sup>5</sup> Source: Yukon Learn Society Executive Directors Reports, 2007-2009

measure used by the Society to determine client progress in the tutor programming. The following table outlines the total number of contact hours between tutors and clients per month between 2007 and 2009.

**Table 3:** Number of tutor / client contact hours per month, 2007-2009

Total tutor hours	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Monthly Average
2007-2008	60	62	50	45	48	74	78	75	35	89	85	95	66.3
2008-2009	55	54	48	30	25	95	90	85	25	86	95	85	64.4

Source: Yukon Learn Society Executive Directors Reports, 2007-2009

As outlined in the above table, the monthly average for tutor/client contact hours has slightly decreased over the last two years to 64.4 hours per month with considerable variation between months.<sup>6</sup> Since this change points to only a 3% overall drop, further data will need to be collected and analyzed in order to better determine long-term trends. While contact hours can be used as a general measure of the amount of tutoring that is taking place, no specific measures are evaluated on an on-going basis by the Society to detail the achievement of increased literacy levels of clients. "It is left up to the tutor and client to determine and work toward their own goals," suggested one respondent.

The delivery of computer literacy courses in Whitehorse and other Yukon communities is another key service provided by the Yukon Learn Society. In Whitehorse, these courses are currently offered at the centre's computer lab and instructed by either the centre coordinator or the community coordinator. Courses in the communities are delivered by the community coordinator with a mobile learning lab. These computer literacy courses are flexible based on client preference and offered in four continuous day segments; approximately 3 hours each in the morning, afternoon or evening. Course content includes computer literacy, word processing, basic math and spreadsheets, internet and basic writing composition. The Society also designs its own customized course materials for use by participants during these courses.

In 2007-2008, 13 courses were offered to 61 participants for a total of 732 person hours. Seven of these courses were offered in Whitehorse, while four were offered in Dawson City and two offered in Carcross. In 2008-2009, the number and scope of course offerings expanded to 15 courses with 81 participants for a total of 1109 person hours. The majority of these courses were offered outside of Whitehorse (3) with two in Dawson City, three in Pelly Crossing, two in Carcross, two in Teslin, two in Old Crow and one in Haines Junction. Three staff

<sup>6</sup> Note: The measure of tutor / client contact hours may best be described as an estimate since, as noted by staff, not all volunteer tutors submit their process reports.

respondents suggested that the establishment of a mobile computer lab with six computers allowed for the delivery of a larger number of computer literacy courses throughout the territory in 2008-2009.

Outcomes from these courses, as stated by two staff respondents, were an increased ability and skill improvements of client participants. These increases were described as “often from a zero-start point, to an achievement of personal independence in the skills area”, as noted by one staff respondent. A sample of evaluations from these courses mirrored this view, with all participants noting a high level of interest and satisfaction with the course offering.

The table below lists the computer literacy courses offered between 2007 and 2009.

**Table 4:** Computer course date, location and participation, 2007-2009

Course Name	Community	Number of Participants	Course Hours	Total person Training Hours
<b>2007-2008</b>				
Computer Basics	Whitehorse	2	12	24
Internet & Email	Whitehorse	2	12	24
MS Word Beginner	Whitehorse	5	12	60
MS Excel Beginner	Carcross	5	12	60
MS Excel Advanced	Carcross	6	12	72
MS Excel Beginner	Dawson City	6	12	72
MS Excel Beginner	Dawson City	2	12	24
Computer Basics	Dawson City	6	12	72
Power Point	Dawson City	3	12	36
Computer Basics	Whitehorse	4	12	48
MS Excel Beginner	Whitehorse	7	12	84
MS Word Beginner	Whitehorse	6	12	72
MS Excel Beginner	Whitehorse	7	12	84
<b>Total number of courses: 13</b>		<b>Total number of participants: 61*</b>		<b>732</b>

Course Name	Community	Number of Participants	Course Hours	Total person Training Hours
<b>2008-2009</b>				
Intro to Comp	Dawson City	4	12	48
Website Develop	Dawson City	6	18	108
Intro to Word	Pelly Crossing	4	12	48
Intro to Word	Pelly Crossing	6	12	72
Intro to Comp	Carcross	6	12	72
Intro to Word	Carcross	6	12	72
Intro to Comp & Word	Old Crow	7	18	126
Internet & e mail	Old Crow	6	12	72
Intro to Comp	Teslin	5	12	60
Intro to Comp	Teslin	6	12	72
Intro to Comp	Whitehorse	6	12	72
Intro to Comp & Word	Whitehorse	6	18	108
Intro to Excel	Whitehorse	6	12	72
Intro to Comp	Haines Jct.	1	35	35
Reception	Pelly Crossing	6	12	72
<b>Total number of courses: 15</b>		<b>Total number of participants: 81</b>		<b>1109</b>

Source: Yukon Learn Society Executive Directors Reports, 2007-2009

\*Total number of participants is a sum of individual course placements and does not take into account that the same individuals may have participated in more than one course.

### **Recommendation (1.1)**

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The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Develop a performance measurement framework linked with its annual contribution agreement to monitor and evaluate ongoing results attainment. This framework would consist of an annual plan specifically outlining strategic objectives, indicators of success, activity targets and timelines as well as involve the establishment of a specific client database for the monitoring and analysis of data such as number and type of clients, level of usage, and client goals.***

### **Objective 2: To work collaboratively with literacy stakeholders**

Literacy stakeholders are defined as other organizations and communities working to support adult literacy and training objectives. Based on Society staff responses and those from other respondents from community organizations, Yukon Learn Society has developed a number of on-going collaborations with literacy stakeholders working in the territory. The key stakeholders with which the Society has recently collaborated as observed during this evaluation and noted by respondents include:

- **Yukon College** – the Society has informal referrals of clients between organizations and has worked together in association with past projects such as the 2007-2008 Community Learning Network Project;
- **Yukon Literacy Coalition** – the Society has recently provided supplementary funds (raised from its PGI and fundraising initiative) to a family literacy initiative lead by the Coalition to be housed in the Whitehorse Canada Games Centre;
- **Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon** - the Society shares the same building in Whitehorse with this organization. This close proximity supports collaboration in the form of client referrals between each other;
- **Yukon Anti-Poverty Association** – the Society provides desk space to the association staff member at their Whitehorse site;
- **Yukon First Nations** – the Society has partnered with a number of First Nations, specifically during the initiation of the Community Learning Network project and for on-going initiation and delivery of literacy programming in a number of communities for First Nations clients; and
- **Other organizations involved in employment, adult training and health and social services in Yukon** – the Society maintains “informal” communications, primarily through the executive director, with a broad

network of other organizations and service providers such as the Whitehorse Correctional Centre (WCC), the Yukon Men's Society, Employment Central and the Association Franco-Yukonnaise to pursue opportunities and partnerships.

The Yukon Learn Society also collaborates with Yukon communities to provide services. The Community Learning Network Project, funded by a federal HRSDC Office of Literacy and Essential Skills grant total of \$199,800, was the most recent example of how the Society has worked to develop formal collaborations with various Yukon communities. This 18 month project, which ended in September 2008, was set up to create a rural community learning environment strategy that would provide increased access to educational opportunities for adult learners in rural Yukon communities.

This project "promoted partnerships and community involvement in the development, promotion, implementation and evaluation of online learning technologies" targeted at rural Yukon residents. Key outcomes of this project included the establishment of four literacy centres in the communities of Watson Lake, Dawson City, Pelly Crossing and Haines Junction, and the main centre in Whitehorse. These centres were developed in partnership with the Liard First Nation in Watson Lake, Yukon College in Dawson City, the Champagne & Aishihik First Nation for Haines Junction and in Pelly Crossing with the Selkirk First Nation & Yukon College. A community coordinator was hired for each site and a community assessment conducted. In later stages, some communities began to develop tutoring services and literacy training courses.

Even though this project helped establish learning centres in four communities during the project timeline, these centres have not been sustained beyond the end of the project due to lack of funding. Yukon Learn Society staff respondents suggested that developing a permanent presence in the rural communities will require additional long-term funding and sustained efforts. Three staff respondents suggested that permanent, paid community coordinators working in the communities are essential to better support Society activities there. The 2008 AGM report supports this view stating that when a community coordinator is in place, "classes, programs or other services are far better attended."

Other key challenges to expanding Society programs in rural communities as outlined by respondents and in AGM reports are:

- Difficulty recruiting, training and retaining community coordinators;
- Existing community workers are often overburdened and limited in their capacity to provide in-kind support;
- High cost of travel between communities; and
- Lack of long-term contacts and formal communications with community personnel and other organizations and agencies working in the communities.

### **Recommendation (1.2)**

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The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Explore service delivery partnerships with Yukon College rural campuses, secondary schools and First Nations in order to develop a long-term, and sustainable staffing and site structure that expands adult literacy learning opportunities in Whitehorse and rural Yukon communities.*** This process should be collaborative in nature in order to optimize the use of resources, develop a more seamless lifelong learning model and minimize overlap of services. Examples of possible collaborations include the development of transition programs between early stage literacy training for adults and entry into College level programs, shared course materials and sites, and shared community infrastructure and management. These efforts could also include exploring alternative service delivery models including on-line methods.

### **Objective 3: To engage in dialogue with all stakeholders**

All Society staff and other stakeholder respondents stated that the Yukon Learn Society is engaged in regular, informal dialogue with a wide diversity of organizations, communities and levels of government. Three respondents stated that this dialogue often takes the form of the Executive Director of the Society and the lead personnel at other organizations communicating on issues of mutual interest. Topics such as efforts to provide expanded services in the communities and the referral of clients were most mentioned by respondents as areas for further dialogue. Four respondents noted that the lack of a formal communications mechanism or forum between government and service delivery organizations is a limiting factor in efforts to expand dialogue between stakeholders.

### **Recommendation (1.3)**

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The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Support efforts to establish a more formal communications mechanism / forum between Yukon Government stakeholders in Advanced Education and Health and Social Services, the Society and other relevant organizations and communities working in the field of literacy such as Yukon College, LDAY and the Yukon Literacy Coalition. The primary objectives for the establishment of this type of 'coordination committee' would be to avoid duplication of services and build a team approach for providing services to clients that may move between various service providers and access literacy or social services on an on-going basis. This committee could be made up of executive directors from organizations and key government and college / school liaisons and could meet approximately 2 times per year to share information on annual plans, client needs and areas for partnership.***

**Question 2: What were the opportunities / barriers to achieving the objectives and outcomes?**

### **Opportunities**

Based on interview and survey responses, opportunities that supported the achievement of objectives and outcomes include:

- **New Main Street Site in Whitehorse**  
All respondents stated that the Society's move into the Main Street location in January 2008 has been a highly positive factor in the successful delivery of services in Whitehorse. All client respondents noted that the site was "welcoming" and "not intimidating". Three staff respondents suggested that the new location has brought in many new clients, especially for computer classes in the computer lab which now has 10 computers. These respondents also stated that the level of drop-in clients has increased "substantially".
- **Strong commitment from staff**  
Eight respondents viewed the current staff as a key factor in the success of the Society's programs. "We are like a big family here," noted one staff respondent, while another stated that "people working here really believe in what they are doing and are committed to helping clients." Two tutor respondents also noted that staff members "are very committed and supportive of the tutors and learners." Positive comments about the staff were also common among client respondents. One client voiced this



opinion well in stating that “I have been nothing but impressed with the place since I walked in the door.” Another client noted that, “I am always welcome here. One thing that never changes is the kindness here.”

- **Strong commitment and involvement from volunteer tutors**  
Four respondents stated that the commitment of volunteer tutors, many of whom have been working with the Society for a number of years, is a critical component to the success of the tutor program and provides positive exposure in the community. “The tutoring program is a core component of what we do,” stated one staff respondent. “It’s wonderful you get to help, make life easier for people,” one tutor noted.

## Barriers

Based on interview and survey responses, key barriers to the achievement of objectives include:

- **Lack of community presence and sustainable contacts in rural communities**  
While it was recognized that the community coordinator position in Whitehorse has begun the process of initiating contacts and delivering programs in rural communities, all staff and community respondents stated that further efforts should be made to develop more formalized and sustainable contacts with committed individuals in rural communities. The current lack of these contacts discourages the development of relevant and on-going programs at the community level. The 2008-2009 AGM report confirms this view by stating that the most requested assistance from communities was “the hiring of community coordinators to work on Literacy issues in their home community.”

As outlined in the section above, the establishment of a network of community contacts would support the expansion of services beyond the current ‘on-demand’ structure of Yukon Learn Society programs outside of Whitehorse. Two respondents suggested that Yukon College rural campus coordinators and / or personnel at AHRDA holders could act as key contacts for Yukon Learn Society.

- **Staff challenges supporting a small group of ‘high needs’ clients**  
Five staff respondents and two community respondents noted that a small group of Society clients (estimated at roughly 10 to 20) have ‘high needs’ that require significant and long-term attention in order to provide appropriate services and sustain literacy skills. “We need to recognize that many clients are having difficulty,” noted one staff respondent. These needs were cited as often being associated with long-term learning disabilities, mental health conditions or substance abuse challenges. While these staff respondents recognized that it was not in Yukon Learn

Society's mandate to provide health and social services, they did feel that it was important to recognize clients' needs and continue to address them in a holistic manner while providing on-going literacy services.

Addressing these needs, however, can take up considerable staff time and demand specialized social service skills that Society personnel are not trained in. With regards to staff time demands, three staff respondents noted that they can spend up to 60% to 80% of their time with roughly the "same 5 to 10 clients in any given week at the centre." Another respondent stated that 5 or 6 people are taking up too much of the staff member's time."

In response, four respondents suggested that developing a 'case management' mechanism in partnership with Yukon Health and Social Services would support the Society's literacy work by providing specialized health support. As an example of the need for social service skills, one respondent stated, "I was doing an intervention with one client the other day and I'm not trained to do that." In response, this staff member along with one other suggested that all staff should be given some form of basic training to better deal with mental health and substance abuse issues. Two respondents also noted that clients with long-term 'high needs' should be directly referred to services or personnel at Yukon Government Health and Social Services or Challenge.

### **Recommendation (2.1)**

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The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Develop a semi-structured case management mechanism in partnership with Yukon Health and Social Services for those clients that it deems 'high needs'. The primary objective of this case management mechanism would be to increase communications between Society staff and Yukon Health and Social Service providers, strengthen linkages between literacy goals and health goals and provide better access to relevant health and social services personnel. This mechanism could also involve specialized training opportunities to Society staff to support service delivery to 'high needs' clients and a formal referral mechanism.***

▪ **Limited communications with tutors**

While it was recognized that training sessions and tutor appreciation events are organized throughout the year, four respondents including two tutor respondents stated that there should be more communications between Society staff and tutors. “We don’t keep track of client and tutor relationship in the long-term,” stated one staff respondent. Examples of increased communications suggested by respondents were more regular communications (via email or telephone) from staff regarding tutor progress and follow-up and the hosting of events when tutors can get together and discuss issues and share resources.

**Recommendation (2.2)**

The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Develop systematic tutor communication tools such as hosting regular tutor information sharing events and a tutor email ‘listserv’ to encourage more information sharing and dialogue with and between tutors.*** This recommendation is dependent on the development and maintenance of a long-term and up-to-date tutor database.

**Question 3: *What were the immediate expected and unexpected results of the program?***

The most recent strategy document used by Yukon Learn Society to help determine the overall direction of programming is the final report of a May 2007 visioning workshop. This document has been periodically updated to reflect the attainment of goals over a five year timeline. The most recent version of this document, last updated in February 2009, outlines four key areas to address. These four areas are:

1. Community Tutoring, Local Tutors and Infrastructure;
2. Computer Technology and Software;
3. Publications; and
4. Ongoing considerations - partnerships.

As of December 2009 and based on an analysis of evaluation findings, the Yukon Learn Society has achieved results in all four areas with a majority of expected activities falling under the first two areas.

Key results in all areas were:

1. Expansion of tutor events and training in Whitehorse (and in the communities during the Community Learning Network Project);
2. Upgraded Education Centre computers and software;
3. Publication of new editions of previously published texts;
4. Maintaining ongoing partnerships with various organizations.

Evaluation findings point to deficiencies in two areas: service delivery outside of Whitehorse since the conclusion of the Community Learning Network Project in 2008; and partial attainment of publication goals as a result of new editions of Society publications. Achievement of results are difficult to measure in the fourth area of partnerships since no targets have been outlined in the work plan under which activities can be evaluated.

Overall, deficiencies in service at the community level demonstrate that the Society should re-examine its program goals and assess whether all activities can be completed under current funding levels. One staff respondent supported this statement by noting that “we could tighten up our mandate.” With regards to unexpected results, all staff respondents specifically noted the increase of drop-in clients as a major unexpected result. This result was attributed to moving to the new central location in Whitehorse.

### **Recommendation (3.1)**

The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Re-assess and confirm its strategic goals in the areas of community-based service delivery, publications and partnerships in order to prioritize efforts and resources between 2009 and 2012. This process should involve internal discussions toward the drafting of a new strategic document to be in place at the end of its current 2007-2012 strategic period.***

**Question 4: Was the work plan followed and were some planned activities not carried out?**

The key document guiding the development and implementation of activities associated with the Society is the contribution agreement (schedule A). It is this document that is referred to as the ‘work plan’ by Society staff and government stakeholders and outlines the key planned activities for the Society to achieve

each fiscal year. The following table lists tasks and outlines the achievement of activities for the last complete fiscal year (2008-2009).

Item	Achieved	Partially achieved
For the current fiscal year, the Yukon Learn Society will:		
1. Provide services in the following areas:		
- Host computer classes	√	
- Provide one-on-one tutoring	√	
- House a learner library	√	
- Provide free access to computer lab	√	
- Provide literacy resources to learners	√	
- Partnering with other community agencies to offer literacy programming to distance learners	√	
-Partner with Government when possible	√	
-Offer referrals to other services for literacy learners	√	
-Partner with other agencies to provide learning opportunities	√	
-Provide tutor training	√	
-Provide opportunities for volunteer and practitioner networking	√	
-Facilitating national opportunities for practitioner training	√	
-Train Yukon Learn Society staff/contractors as necessary	√	
-Make relevant training workshops available to practitioners	√	
-Identify resources needed and partner with agencies to meet literacy requests	√	
-Provide literacy help to distance practitioners	√	
-Provide a toll-free literacy help line	√	
-Administer a memorial fund to provide honorariums to literacy learners	√	
-Work with funders to create a community learning network that will consist of small learning centres in 5 Yukon communities	√	
-Select partners to assist in creating the community learning network	√	

-Host the PGI Golf Tournament	√	
- Conduct fundraising activities	√	
- Design a learning centre to meet the present and future needs of Whitehorse learners	√	
2. Conduct community visits to Teslin, Ross River, Carmacks and two additional communities	√	
3. Work with communities to identify literacy programming needs	√	
4. Assist communities with literacy program support	√	
5. Conduct three tutor training sessions in Whitehorse and one session in three other Yukon communities	√	

Source: Listing from 2008-2009 YG and YLS Contribution agreement

All work plan activities were observed as having been achieved during the 2008-2009 year with the exception of one item that was only partially completed associated with the 'creation of learning centres in all Yukon communities' (whereas only 4 centres were established with none remaining beyond the expiration of project funding in 2008).

#### **Recommendation (4.1)**

The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Develop a separate annual work plan document based on the planned activities in the contribution agreement with an expanded section outlining the roles and responsibilities of staff members in relation to specific activities in the work plan. The objective of this document would be to clarify staff expectations and act as a reporting tool to Board of Directors and government contacts.***

Current reporting requirements for the Society include monthly and annual reporting to its Board of Directors and quarterly activity report updates to the Advanced Education Labour Market Development Officer, Advanced Education. All Board of Directors stated satisfaction with the frequency and quality of reporting by Society administration. One staff respondent noted that more rigorous financial reporting to the Advanced Education branch of the Government of Yukon has recently taken effect and is a requirement with acceptable demands on staff workloads. Two government stakeholder respondents suggested that this financial reporting has further clarified how government grants are used at the

Society. Three staff and two government respondents stated, however, that little reporting occurs with regards to outcomes of program objectives.

**Question 5: Were the organization's resources used and combined in the best possible manner to produce the expected results?**

All staff respondents stated that they believed that resources were well managed and all interview tutor respondents stated that program delivery was appropriate. "For what they have, they do a good job and have a good use of their resources," stated one staff respondent. Those tutors that provided a survey response mirrored this statement suggesting that program delivery methods are appropriate and resources were combined in the best possible way. For further detail into the allocation of resources, see findings under question 9 below.

**Question 6: Is the organization benefiting program recipients?**

All respondents at all levels stated that Yukon Learn Society is benefiting program recipients not only in literacy goals, but also supporting clients in a holistic manner that takes other needs into consideration. Five respondents suggested that the organization fulfilled a community need directed to adult literacy services, not served by any other organizations in Yukon. "Many of our clients come to us because they fall through the cracks," noted one staff respondent, while seven client respondents specifically noted that they come to the Society because it helps them take "positive steps" in their lives and careers. "We do something unique for the community," noted another staff respondent.

All client respondents suggested that the delivery of services provides strong one-on-one support, with three respondents noting that Society programs are "less intimidating" than other programs while helping to improve their basic skills before moving on to possible college level studies. "This place is really easy to come to, I come here once a week," noted one client, while another stated that "working at Yukon Learn is good for my sense of self esteem, now I have hope, as life progresses you find more things that are an asset."

All tutor interviewees and tutor survey respondents, except two, stated that they believed that the Society's objectives were clear. These respondents also believed that they were benefiting the tutor clients that they were working with. One tutor noted that the tutoring program is "a beautiful tool for someone who doesn't have the time to go to the college."

**Question 7: What positive changes have occurred for those people immediately associated with the program?**

### **Society Staff**

Overall, a majority of Society staff provided positive responses with regards to working at the Yukon Learn Society. Four staff stated, however, that there had been “a lot of staff turn-over recently” which was suggested as an on-going challenge. The most common reason offered by respondents for this turn-over was ‘low salary levels’ with five staff respondents suggesting that the wage levels were low at the Society relative to other comparable positions in Whitehorse and that “Yukon Learn wages are not competitive.” In response, the Society is currently undergoing a staff position description and salary scale review for all employees.

While staff turn-over is not a challenge unique to Yukon Learn Society, high staff turn-over is another possible factor in the inconsistent use of long-term data collection systems and effective communications with volunteers since the Society had to fill two full-time positions during the fall of 2009- Education Centre Coordinator and Office Manager. Along with a range of duties, these positions are responsible for maintaining tutor liaisons and database systems respectively. As a result of turn-over in these positions corporate memory was lost, systems had to be relearned and communications re-established - all challenges to long-term monitoring, planning and communications.

Based on interview responses with staff members, key positive changes experienced as a result of being associated with Yukon Learn Society include:

- **Ability to ‘make a difference’ in clients lives**  
All staff stated that they enjoyed working at Yukon Learn Society because they felt they could “make a difference” in the lives of clients in a positive way. For example, two respondents stated that “people who work in NGOs [non-governmental organizations] like Yukon Learn are very passionate and want to work with this clientele.”
- **Working environment with independence to take initiative**  
Three staff respondents stated that they were afforded independence in the ways that they worked within their duties.

With regards to how the organization is administered, six respondents stated that “management is clear and well communicated,” while two respondents suggested that the Society was not managed “as a tight ship” and that staff expectations could be more clearly articulated. Under this theme, one respondent stated that “I’m not often told what is expected of me.” Two staff members also noted that there should be greater efforts at orientation for new employees.



## Clients

*"Excellent tool of support for others, an open door; in a big city there is little access like this with the hands-on [support] and the good rapport. Yukon Learn must have adequate resources...Clients have a place to go and are proud of their learning here." Community stakeholder respondent.*

The most common way client respondents heard about Yukon Learn was through word-of-mouth. The length of client respondents' involvement with the Society ranged from just beginning in the last few days to 28 years and an age range from 16 to 70 years old. These clients accessed a variety of services from attending computer courses to working with tutors. "The whole world opened up. I feel my life opened up to more opportunities after taking the introduction to computers course," stated one client respondent.

Based on interview responses with clients, key positive changes experienced as a result of being associated with Society programs include:

- **Flexible approach to achieving results**

All client respondents specifically noted that the "flexible" and "patient" approach taken by Yukon Learn Society allowed clients to reach goals "at their own pace". For example, one client stated that "Yukon Learn is accessible, quiet. When you come in, you are not asked what you are doing here, not imposed on. You are okay and not with the feeling you are doing something wrong."

- **Caring and supportive staff**

Nineteen clients specifically noted the Society staff as a key success factor in encouraging them to learn and returning. The staff members were often referred to as "caring" and seen as encouraging positive development in literacy and life in general. For example, one client stated that "they really make you feel comfortable," while another noted that "I really like the staff, they help me out, it's easier than a class of 30. I am shy in a class of 30." This view was shared by tutor survey respondents who stated that clients were "happier" and "more confident" as a result of participating in the tutoring program.

- **Encouragement toward positive life choices**

Another theme noted by five respondents was that participating in Society programs represented a positive choice in their life in contrast to many negative influences or circumstances. For example, one client noted that coming to the centre "kept me busy and helped me choose other avenues, and stay away from people who do drugs and drink," while another client respondent stated that "Yukon Learn helps me to stay away from the garbage out there."

A comprehensive review of client achievement after participating in Society post-programs is beyond the scope of this evaluation since the Society does not collect specific data on client post-program choices. However, a general picture of where some clients move onto can be drawn from anecdotal responses. For example, one staff member stated that “many clients go on to take courses at Yukon College, and are comfortable in that learning environment. Other clients have reported the gain of employment, and a better knowledge of professional services they may be in need of, as a result of the course offerings.” One client respondent who ended up gaining employment after accessing Society programs stated that, “for what I took, it really worked for me. I was focused on getting a government job. You have to want to do it and be ready.” One suggestion for improvement in the area of transition supports, as noted by clients, was the offering of certificates for course completion.

## Tutors

Within the 2008-2009 year, the maximum number of active tutors working with the Society was 33. As of December 2009, there were 25 active tutors working. As part of this evaluation, 11 tutors were either interviewed or surveyed for a response rate of 44% of the 25 active tutors, with all interview and survey respondents located in Whitehorse.<sup>7</sup> Involvement of tutors with the Society ranged from 3 months to 12 years. Half were currently working with a client with the other half not currently working with an individual. The most frequent and average response in the survey for how effective tutors felt they were improving client literacy skills was ‘often effective’ (3 out of 5 responses). When asked about positive changes, one tutor survey respondent stated that “tutoring has become more systematic.”

Based on interview and survey responses with tutors, key positive changes experienced by them and include:

- **Supporting community members**  
Two tutor interview respondents noted that they were motivated to become tutors in order to help other community members. Another tutor stated that “I felt proud when [the client] could learn new words.”
- **Building connections in the community**  
One tutor respondent stated that tutoring “was a way of learning and getting contacts in Whitehorse...I came for a holiday and stayed.”

Survey respondents on average stated that there was a ‘satisfactory’ level of communication between tutors and the Society (average score of 3.2). With one

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<sup>7</sup> Note: Electronic surveys were distributed to 25 tutors. Six of these tutors were interviewed individually with similar questions. As a result, the six interviewees did not respond to the survey. Therefore, the specific survey response rate was 26% with available tutors (5 of 19).

respondent stating that there should be “more interaction” between the Society and tutors.

Tutor respondents also noted a number of areas for improvement. One respondent noted that “clients should be assessed, and progress monitored by a reading specialist.” Another tutor respondent stated that “If I am going to offer my valuable volunteer time, I expect to get something in return”, while another respondent suggested that “students should be charged a nominal fee, so that they have better motivation to learn.” These respondents based their comments on the belief that clients need to be encouraged to participate more since some clients just “stopping to come to the meetings” or “the client didn’t show up”.

### **Recommendation (7.1)**

The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Expand its current reporting and monitoring system for tutor / client activities to include an on-line form or log sent by tutors to encourage the monitoring of client participation and develop client portfolios for detailing the achievement of client goals during and after participation in the program. The objective of this system would be to increase the frequency of communications with and level of relevant supports to tutors, encourage reporting compliance among tutors and monitor client success.***

### **Question 8: What barriers exist for new clients accessing the program?**

All staff suggested that demand for services such as computer courses and tutoring exceeded the current supply, especially in the area of computer literacy. The following list outlines key barriers for new clients accessing the Society’s programming, in order of those most frequently stated by respondents:

#### **1. Lack of exposure and programming in rural communities**

Eighteen respondents stated that programming is strong in Whitehorse, but needs expanding in the rural communities and that the lack of a sufficient, long-term presence in the rural communities is a key barrier to new students in those communities accessing Society services.

Supporting this view were conclusions from the formal community survey conducted by Yukon Learn Society in 2004. This survey was completed to identify and determine the literacy needs in the outlying Yukon communities. The 2005 final report for this survey concluded that “some [communities] expressed some confusion on Yukon Learn Society’s role

and their place in the community setting...Many communities feel that agencies based in Whitehorse do not have the best interests of the communities in mind...Often times, they felt promises are made and not followed through. This is detrimental for establishing community ties and relationships.” These statements were mirrored by some respondents in the communities and those familiar with literacy programming in the communities.

### **Recommendation (8.1)**

The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Expand its annual advertising and communications efforts with other organizations and media in communities outside of Whitehorse in order to increase exposure and build program partnership opportunities.*** This recommendation is strongly linked to recommendation 1.2 which relates to the development of expanded services in rural communities.

## **2. Lack of exposure targeted to potential clients in Whitehorse**

Even though client numbers had recently increased and the new Whitehorse site was credited with building the Society’s exposure in the community, five Whitehorse client respondents noted that an on-going barrier to client access was the limited exposure of the Society in Whitehorse. For example, one client stated that “new people don't know what they can get from here.”

**Question 9:** *What were the costs associated with delivering the program and are programs making adequate use of existing community and governmental resources?*

All staff respondents suggested that the Society was working well with its present resources and that the Society is “able to provide a wide range of services on its budget.” Three staff respondents stated that “much more could be done with greater funding;” while one respondent further noted that “I believe that we serve less than half the clients that would come if there were greater funds.” Three staff respondents stated that the Society suffers from “funding shortages” in order to adequately fulfill its mandate outside of Whitehorse. While this deficit was recognized as an important issue to address, four staff respondents stated that it was important to maintain the Society’s core programs as ‘free’ to clients, while one staff respondent stated that “clients don’t take it seriously because they don’t

have to pay.” This comment was mirrored by two other respondents who stated that clients should pay a nominal fee.

Overall costs associated with the program include expenses for personnel salaries and benefits, facility rent, equipment and resources, administration, and program delivery. The following table outlines revenues and expenditures from the 2008 Society budget as drawn from the financial audit for 2008-2009.

**Table 5:** Yukon Learn Society Revenues and Expenditures, 2006-2008

Item	2008-2009 Actual Budget \$
<b>Revenues</b>	
Yukon Territorial Government	284,239
Government of Canada	97,085
Fundraising and other sources	49,273
City of Whitehorse	2,580
Other revenue	13,193
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$446,370</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
Advertising and promotion	10,575
Bank Charges	1,076
Donations	385
Dues and memberships	500
Education and training	125
Equipment purchases	36,876
Equipment rentals	45,961
Fundraising	18,734
GST expense	5,085
Insurance	3,232
Janitor	1,330
Office, meetings and miscellaneous	36,898
Professional fees	13,968
Project reimbursement – wages	17,006
Rent	24,308
Subcontract	475
Supplies and materials	490
Telephone and internet	7,789
Travel and accommodation	13,196

Item	2008-2009 Actual Budget \$
Wages and benefits	249,843
Volunteer expenses	101
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$487,953</b>
Revenues Less Expenditures	-\$41,583

Source: BDO audit of Yukon Learn Society, May 2008.

Presently, the Yukon Learn Society receives core funding from the Government of Yukon through an annual contribution agreement of \$275,000, with \$100,000 of this annual amount targeted toward rural community service delivery. This amount makes up approximately 61.6% of funding to the Society based on the total revenues for the Society in 2008-2009 of \$446,370. Other key sources of funding include federal grants, City of Whitehorse funds and fund-raising from core events such as the PGI Golf tournament.

Seven staff and community respondents stated that, while the long-term funding provided to the Society allows for strategic planning and consistency of programming, current funding levels are not sufficient for the Society to maintain ongoing programming in all Yukon communities as outlined in its mandate. Five respondents specifically stated that wage levels are not adequate in comparison to hourly rates for equivalent positions in other organizations in the territory.

With regards to adequate use of existing community and government resources, five respondents noted the strong connections between the Society and Whitehorse-based organizations such as LDAY and Employment Central as examples of how the Society is using other community resources based on the regular referrals of clients between these organizations. However, four respondents suggested that interactions between Yukon College, First Nations and other organizations working in the field of training and literacy such as the Yukon Literacy Coalition were relatively weaker with room for strengthened ties through partnership and sharing of resources. Two respondents noted that significantly greater collaboration could take place between the Society and Yukon College with regards to literacy services to residents beyond Whitehorse.

### **Recommendation (9.1)**

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The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Explore greater partnerships with First Nations and other relevant organizations such as Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) holders, the Training Policy Committee, Yukon Government Health and Social Services and the Yukon Mine Training Association in order to expand opportunities for First Nations adult literacy clients. Examples of possible collaborations include more systematic referrals between organizations, financial assistance and the development of specific literacy training initiatives.***

### **Recommendation (9.2)**

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The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Expand fundraising efforts in the private sector in an attempt to encourage sponsorships and / or supports of specific Society events and programs.***

### **Question 10: How effectively are volunteers supported and utilized?**

Tutors represent a significant proportion of the volunteer base for Yukon Learn Society. The key contact at Yukon Learn Society supporting volunteers is the Education Centre Coordinator.

Based on interview responses and the review of Society documents, the following supports are offered to volunteer tutors based on demand:

- Training sessions;
- Use of tutoring materials and library;
- On-going advice and support from staff;
- Tutoring space at the education centre; and
- Tutor appreciation events.

Three tutor interview respondents noted training courses provided by the Society as key examples of appropriate supports that helped them to work better as

tutors. The 2008-2009 AGM report states that 18 tutors participated in training sessions throughout the year, while three of the five current tutors surveyed stated that they had not received tutor training with two of these respondents waiting for the next training session. The 2008-2009 AGM report outlines that three tutor appreciation gatherings were also hosted during the year.

Overall, the perception of support provided to tutors was mixed based on tutor interview and survey responses. While all tutor interviewees stated that supports do exist for them at the Society, the level of support noted in tutor survey responses varied with an average response of below 'some support' (score 3.8) with responses ranging from little support to a high level of support. This view may be attributed in part to the fact that the Education Centre Coordinator position had been in flux for an extended period of time and a new full-time staff person had recently been hired.

With regards to possible improvements to tutor supports, two respondents suggested that tutor training could possibly be offered on-line, while three tutor respondents suggested that the Society should "provide an opportunity for volunteers to get together, share notes." Two staff respondents noted that tutors that work in an outreach capacity at other possible tutoring sites such as the Whitehorse Correctional Centre (WCC) would need to be paid positions. This opinion was based on anecdotal evidence suggesting that working at these sites was challenging which in turn made it difficult to retain tutors.

### **Recommendation (10.1)**

The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Host an annual tutors 'conference' to support the development of tutor practice and build a collaborative community among tutors and volunteers.*** This event could also act as a forum through which greater numbers of tutors could be recruited.

### **Question 11: How effective are volunteers for both rural Yukon and Whitehorse?**

The significant majority of Yukon Learn Society volunteers come from Whitehorse. As noted in previous sections, this group of individuals is an important and effective component of the Society's program success, especially in the area of tutoring. In contrast, Yukon Learn Society has had little success in recruiting and maintaining any significant number of volunteers in rural communities. As a result, all active tutors for the current year were from Whitehorse. This situation was summarized by one respondent who noted that "rural Yukon is always a volunteer challenge."



This lack of volunteer support from rural communities may also be linked to poor impressions and limited awareness of the organization within rural communities as outlined in the results from the 2004 community survey conducted by Yukon Learn Society. This view was mirrored by one respondent who suggested that “some communities see the Yukon Learn Society as an organization for Whitehorse and not them.”

These data demonstrate that efforts to recruit volunteers in the rural communities should be significantly expanded. Five respondents suggested that a coordinator in each community could help remedy this situation.

### **Recommendation (11.1)**

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The Yukon Learn Society should:

***Expand efforts for recruiting, training and retaining volunteer community coordinators in each community as a first step toward establishing paid positions*** (linked to recommendation 1.2).

**Question 12: *What changes, improvements and/or additions to Program Design would improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organization?***

The following section provides a summary list of those recommendations detailed in sections above. These recommendations are provided in order to support ongoing efforts by Yukon Learn Society stakeholders to improve programming and administration and have been drawn from respondent suggestions and an analysis of evaluation findings.

## List of Recommendations

The Yukon Learn Society should:

- **Develop a performance measurement framework and plan** linked with its annual contribution agreement to monitor and evaluate ongoing results attainment (recommendation 1.1).
- **Explore service delivery partnerships with Yukon College rural campuses and First Nations** in order to develop a long-term, and sustainable staffing and site structure that expands adult literacy learning opportunities in Whitehorse and rural Yukon communities (recommendation 1.2).
- **Support efforts to establish a more formal communications mechanism / forum between Yukon Government stakeholders** in Advanced Education and Health and Social Services, the Society and other relevant organizations and communities working in the field of literacy such as Yukon College, LDAY and the Yukon Literacy Coalition (recommendation 1.3).
- **Develop a semi-structured case management mechanism** in partnership with Yukon Government Health and Social Services for those clients that the Society deems 'high needs' (recommendation 2.1).
- **Develop systematic tutor communication tools** such as hosting regular tutor information sharing events and a tutor email 'listserv' to encourage more information sharing and dialogue with and between tutors (recommendation 2.2).
- **Re-assess and confirm its strategic goals** in the areas of community-based service delivery, publications and partnerships in order to prioritize efforts and resources between 2009 and 2012 (recommendation 3.1)
- **Develop a separate annual work plan document** based on the planned activities in the contribution agreement and integrate it with an expanded

section outlining the roles and responsibilities of staff members in relation to specific activities in the work plan (recommendation 4.1).

- **Expand its current reporting and monitoring system** for tutor / client activities to include an on-line form or log sent by tutors for encouraging the monitoring of client participation and the development of client portfolios for detailing the achievement of client goals during and after participation in the program (recommendation 7.1).
- **Expand its annual advertising and communications efforts** with other organizations and media in communities outside of Whitehorse in order to increase exposure and build program partnership opportunities (recommendation 8.1).
- **Explore greater partnerships with First Nations and other relevant organizations** such as Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) holders, the Training Policy Committee, Yukon Government Health and Social Services and the Yukon Mine Training Association in order to expand opportunities for First Nations adult literacy clients (recommendation 9.1).
- **Expand fund raising efforts** in the private sector in an attempt to encourage sponsorships and / or supports of specific Society events and programs (recommendation 9.2)
- **Host an annual tutors ‘conference’** to support the development of tutor practice and build a collaborative community among tutors and volunteers (recommendation 10.1).
- **Expand efforts for recruiting, training and retaining volunteer community coordinators** in each community as a first step toward establishing paid positions (recommendation 11.1).

## Conclusion

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Based on findings drawn from this evaluation, Yukon Learn Society can be seen as meeting an important need in the territory by providing a wide range of adult literacy programming including tutoring, computer literacy courses and drop-in services. This range of services is primarily offered through the Society's well-used Whitehorse education centre. Since moving into this location, Yukon Learn Society has seen a steady growth in the demand for its services, especially for its computer courses.

At the same time, there is room for the Society to improve. Recommendations in this report are grounded in the key themes of: expanding rural service delivery; and clarifying the exact number and character of the clientele the Society serves and the volunteers that devote their time supporting the organization. By addressing these themes and the recommendations specifically, Yukon Learn Society will be better placed to effectively report to funders and donors, provide more targeted services and strategically plan for how the Society uses its resources into the future.

These recommendations are provided as targeted and realistic ways in which the Society can address areas in need of attention. Efforts to effectively meet these recommendations will demand a collaborative approach not only within the organization, but between the Yukon Learn Society, Government of Yukon and other service organizations, First Nations and stakeholders throughout the territory.

As a result of on-going funding from the Government of Yukon and a long track record of service delivery from committed full-time staff, Yukon Learn Society is well placed to continue in this role in the coming years. The Government of Yukon is urged to maintain funding for Yukon Learn Society at current levels at a minimum.

# Appendix

## Interview Guide Questions

The following matrix outlines the questions to be considered during the file review, interviews, focus groups and/or surveys during the evaluation. Questions in interview/ focus group guideline documents will be based on this matrix. These documents will be constructed specifically for each group and provided in advance of scheduled meetings.

Theme	Questions	File review	Board of Directors	Territory admin	Society staff	Tutors / community	Clients
Objectives and outcomes	Are Yukon Learn Society program objectives clear and formalized?	√	√	√	√	√	
	To what extent has the program achieved the intended objectives and outcomes?	√	√	√	√		√
	What were the opportunities / barriers to achieving objectives and outcomes?		√	√	√	√	
	Does the Society have strategic planning documents?	√		√	√		
Program results	What were immediate expected and unexpected results of the program?		√	√	√		
	Is the organization benefiting program recipients?			√	√	√	√
	Is the governance and management structure effective?	√	√	√	√		
	Was the work plan followed? If not, why were activities not carried out?	√	√	√	√		
	What types of ongoing evaluation and monitoring take place?			√	√		
	What positive changes have occurred for staff/tutors associated with the Society?				√	√	

Theme	Questions	File review	Board of Directors	Territory admin	Society staff	Tutors / community	Clients
	Are Society's resources used and combined in the best possible manner?		√	√	√	√	
	What positive changes have occurred for clients associated with the program?				√	√	√
	Are program delivery methods appropriate? Describe.				√	√	√
Program results	Are tutor / volunteer supports appropriate and available? Describe.				√	√	
	How effective are volunteers for both rural Yukon and Whitehorse?				√	√	√
	What barriers exist for new clients accessing the Society?		√	√	√	√	√
	What forms of communications occur between the Society and communities?		√	√	√	√	
Resources and sustainability	What are the costs associated with delivering the program?	√		√	√		
	Are funding levels appropriate?		√	√	√		
	Are programs making adequate use of existing community and governmental resources?		√	√	√	√	
Success factors and areas for improvement	What changes, improvements and/or additions to Program Design would improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the program?		√	√	√	√	√
	What are the factors for success associated with the Society?		√	√	√	√	√

The following guidelines were used for surveys.

## Client Survey Questions

### Background

1. How long have you been involved with the Society?
2. How did you first find out about the Society?
3. What programs have you been accessing?

### Outcomes

4. What changes have occurred in your life as a result of accessing the programs of Yukon Learn?

### Program Results

5. Do you think that the Society is a benefit to its clients? How?
6. Can you give some examples of positive changes that have occurred for clients associated with programs?
7. Is the way programs are delivered appropriate? Describe.
8. How effective are volunteers for both rural Yukon and Whitehorse?
9. What barriers exist for new clients to access Society programs?

### Success Factors and Areas for Improvement

10. What are the factors for success associated with the Society's programs?
11. What changes, improvements and/or additions to Program Design would improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the program?

## Tutor Survey Questions

1. Which community do you currently reside in?
2. How many years have you been involved with the Society as a tutor?
3. How many Society clients (learners) are you currently tutoring?
4. If you are no longer working with a Society client, what was the reason for stopping?
5. Are Yukon Learn Society objectives clear and formalized for tutors? Yes or no.
6. What positive changes have occurred for tutors associated with the Society?
7. How effective do you feel that the tutor program is in improving client literacy skills?

not effective      sometimes effective      neutral      often effective      highly effective

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

8. Are the Society's resources used and combined in the best possible manner? Yes or no.
9. Are tutor program delivery methods appropriate? Yes or no.
10. How would you rate the level of support provided by the Yukon Learn Society to tutors?

No support      little support      neutral      some support      high level of support

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

11. Have you received tutor training from the Yukon Learn Society? Yes or no.
12. What barriers exist for new clients accessing Society services in Whitehorse and other communities?
13. How would you rate the level of communications between tutors and the Society?

Very little      Little      Satisfactory      Good

Excellent

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

14. What changes, improvements and/or additions would improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the tutoring program?