The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation

Professionalization of Evaluation in Canada / La Professionnalisation de l’évaluation au Canada

Guest Editors: Heather Buchanan and Keiko Kuji-Shikatani

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Robert Schwartz

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Heather Buchanan and Keiko Kuji-Shikatani

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Editor’s Remarks

There is good cause to celebrate this year’s special issue on Professionalization of Evaluation in Canada. Readers of this volume will be exposed to rich descriptions of the process for arriving at and implementing Canada’s Credentialed Evaluator professional designation. In and of itself this would have made an important contribution to the field. As well as descriptions, articles in this issue provide new empirical evidence of the outcomes of the Credentialed Evaluator intervention and analysis rooted in evaluation literature. Procurers, providers, and scholars of evaluation will find a great deal of interesting and useful information and knowledge in this issue.

Taken together with last year’s special issue on Professionalizing Evaluation: A Global Perspective on Evaluator Competencies (http://cjpe.journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/cjpe/index.php/cjpe/issue/view/22), Professionalization of Evaluation in Canada makes CJPE the go-to place for the latest and greatest in thinking on this matter of increasing global importance.

Robert Schwartz
Editor-in-chief
Un mot du rédacteur

Il y a bonne raison de souligner le numéro spécial publié cette année sous le thème de la professionnalisation de l'évaluation au Canada. Les lecteurs seront exposés aux riches descriptions des processus qui ont permis de concevoir et de mettre en place le titre professionnel d'Évaluateur accrédité au Canada. En soi, c'est une importante contribution au domaine de l'évaluation. Mais au-delà des descriptions, les articles de ce numéro présentent les conclusions empiriques de résultats de l'intervention et de l'analyse de l'Évaluateur accrédité fondées sur la littérature en évaluation. Les clients, fournisseurs, et chercheurs en évaluation trouveront, dans ce numéro, une grande quantité d’informations et de connaissances à la fois intéressantes et utiles.


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Introduction to Professionalization of Evaluation in Canada

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In 2010, after many years of discussion, planning, and consultation, the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) launched a voluntary program to provide members with a professional designation—the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation. This special issue of the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation aims to provide the reader with an in-depth understanding of issues surrounding the inspiration, development, implementation, and continuous improvement of the professional designation program. As guest editors we hope the issue will serve three purposes.

First, the issue provides a formal record of the initiative for the benefit of others who may consider developing a professional designation for evaluators. The issue shares the experience of the Canadian evaluation community in its quest for an identity, a clear demarcation of what is required to successfully undertake evaluation work. It is a public record of this journey to the voluntary Credentialed Evaluator designation, including the twists and turns along the way. The roadmap is designed to inform similar initiatives contemplated by other national, regional, or international evaluation organizations.

Next, we celebrate the efforts and honour the debates that were integral to the success of this initiative in Canada. The importance of voluntary contributions from the CES membership needs to be recognized and applauded. Contributors to this special edition also played significant roles in the journey taken, and, although the authors worked on making the CE a reality, we did not always agree. In fact, some were opposed to a professional designation of any type and others were not optimistic about the nature of the CE as developed. It is a testament to the evaluation community that behaviour and communications were professional and respectful, regardless of personal positions on the issue. Further, once the professional designation was adopted, many in the community who held differing opinions on the CE were quick to invest in its success and become part of the process.

Finally, the special issue is designed to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the evolution of our profession, including the future of this professional designations program in Canada. The articles provide a foundation for moving forward
in Canada, refreshing and keeping vital the professional designations program now in effect. And, importantly, the issue is a work of reflection on the evolution of the evaluation profession in Canada.

The articles are organized sequentially, discussing the inspiration, research, development, implementation, and continuous improvement of Canadian efforts to professionalize evaluation. A summary of each of the nine articles in this issue follows.

- The issue begins with Love’s article on the early debates and initiatives that built the foundation for the CES professional designation initiative. In 1994 he presented the idea of a professional designation in an article, “Should evaluators be certified,” in *New Directions for Program Evaluation, 62* (pp. 29–40). He has since participated in many of the debates within the evaluation community on the professionalization of evaluation.

  From 2006 to 2010, the professionalization issue became a focus of attention within the CES. The events of that period, which culminated in the implementation of the Credentialed Evaluator designation, are covered in the next four articles.

- In the second article Halpern, Gauthier, and McDavid explain how they examined the issue of professionalization through a literature review, consultation with organizations, and a survey of evaluation practice. They describe the production of an Action Plan that suggested the CES develop a three-tiered system of professional designations for its membership: Member, Credentialed Evaluator, and, later, a higher-level Certified Professional Evaluator designation.

- The third article describes the development of the CE designation and how context and process importantly shaped this unique evaluation designation. Buchanan shares some of the thinking and discussions behind the development of the designation, which she describes as straddling conventional definitions of credentialing and certification. She comments on the development process, future opportunities, and challenges.

- In the fourth article Maicher and Frank cover the identification of Canadian competencies for evaluation practice and the process through which they were articulated, reviewed, and revised. Five broad themes or competency domains emerged. Specific competencies, each with associated descriptors, were developed and validated through a consultative process. The article also examines the usefulness of the competencies to evaluation educators, evaluation clients, and others.

- The fifth article, by Kuji-Shikatani, Thompson, and Matthew, examines and reflects on the resources, processes, and structures necessary to operationalize the professional designations program once it had been...
defined. The article describes how the confluence of highly cooperative volunteers from the CES and the interdisciplinary nature of evaluation practice led to a sharing of expertise in system development, policy, governance, and management.

Further articles examine the professional designation program as it has operated over the past five years.

- In article six, Barrington, Frank, Gauthier, and Hicks discuss the decision-making body of the PDP—the Credentialing Board. They describe the demographics of the original Board, its evolution, and the work that it accomplished. The article examines the evolution of the Board members’ perspectives, their reasons for remaining on the Board or leaving it, and their views on the Board’s achievements and potential future directions.
- In the seventh article, Gauthier, Kischuk, Borys, and Roy report on a survey of individual CES members concerning the CE designation. They provide data on the motivations of those who applied for the designation, their experience with the application process, the benefits or drawbacks that they have seen from the CE designation, and the extent to which their expectations of the CE have been realized. The article also provides the views of respondents who did not pursue the designation, reporting on their perceptions of the program, the barriers to application, and their plans for future involvement.
- In the eighth article King provides an outside perspective on the CES Credentialed Evaluator Program. The author uses three theoretical models to analyze the program, positions it in terms of credentialing activities around the world, and offers advice to other voluntary organizations for program evaluation when drawing lessons from the Canadian experience.
- A summative piece by Dumaine speaks to the accomplishments and future of the professional designation program in the CES. He speculates on possible long-term impacts of the Professional Designations Program on the field of evaluation in Canada, and is of the view that the impact of the program will largely stem from the increased capacity of Credentialed Evaluators as they pursue professional development opportunities to meet the requirements for retaining the CES designation.

In this International Year of Evaluation we trust that the thoughts, analysis, and reflections of this special issue will contribute to improving the practice of evaluation and to the ongoing dialogue on professionalization. We hope, too, that it will serve as a celebration of the intense, united efforts of many volunteers that have enabled CES to develop its innovative credentialing program.
Introduction à la professionnalisation de l'évaluation au Canada

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Suivant plusieurs années de discussions, de planification, et de consultations, c'est en 2010 que la Société canadienne d'évaluation (SCÉ) lance un programme volontaire qui permettra à ses membres d'obtenir le titre professionnel d'Évaluateur accrédité (ÉA). Ce numéro spécial de la Revue canadienne d'évaluation de programme permettra au lecteur d'approfondir ses connaissances au sujet des enjeux liés à l'inspiration, au développement, à l'implantation, et à l'amélioration continue du programme des titres professionnels. Rédactrices invitées, nous envisageons, pour ce numéro, trois objectifs.

En premier lieu, ce numéro sert d'archive officielle à cette initiative au profit d'autres qui pensent concevoir un titre professionnel pour les évaluateurs. Ce numéro fait état des expériences de la communauté canadienne d'évaluation en quête d'une identité, d'une démarcation claire des exigences nécessaires pour œuvrer avec succès dans le domaine de l'évaluation. Il se veut une archive publique de ce parcours vers le titre volontaire d'Évaluateur accrédité, incluant tous les tournants et rebondissements rencontrés sur le chemin. La carte a été conçue pour informer des initiatives similaires que pourraient contempler d'autres organisations nationales, régionales, ou internationales d'évaluation.

Nous poursuivons en célébrant les efforts et les débats nécessaires au succès de cette initiative au Canada. L'importance des contributions volontaires de la base d'adhésion de la SCÉ doit être reconnue et applaudie. Les contributeurs à ce numéro spécial ont aussi joué des rôles tout au long du parcours et, malgré le but commun de tous les auteurs de voir naître l'ÉA, nous n'étions pas toujours du même avis. Certains s'opposaient d'ailleurs à un titre professionnel tout type et d'autres n'étaient pas très optimistes concernant la nature de l'ÉA tel que conçu. Le coup de chapeau revient à la communauté de l'évaluation pour sa conduite et communications professionnelles respectueuses, peu importe la position prise. De plus, une fois adopté, la communauté s'est rapidement rangée derrière le titre pour en faire un succès et participer au processus (à titre d'ÉA et de membres du Jury d'accréditation), et ce, même lorsque les opinions divergeaient.

Finalement, ce numéro spécial a été rédigé pour contribuer à la discussion continue que suscite l'évolution de notre profession, incluant l'avenir de ce programme.
des titres professionnels au Canada. En renouvelant l’intérêt pour le programme actuel et sa valeur, les articles représentent les bases nécessaires à notre progression au Canada. Ce numéro se veut donc une importante réflexion et une célébration de l’évolution de la profession d’évaluateur au Canada.


- Le premier article de ce numéro, celui de Love, présente les débats et les initiatives qui ont marqué le tout début du programme des titres professionnels de la SCÉ, créant ainsi ses assises. En 1994, Love présente l’idée d’un titre professionnel dans un article intitulé « Should evaluators be certified » publié dans la revue américaine New Directions for Program Evaluation. Depuis, il a participé à bon nombre de débats au sein de la communauté d’évaluation concernant la professionnalisation de l’évaluation.


- Le deuxième article, par Halpern, Gauthier, et McDavid, explique comment la SCÉ s’est penchée sur la professionnalisation par moyen d’une revue de la littérature, de la consultation avec de nombreuses organisations, et d’un sondage sur la pratique de l’évaluation. Les auteurs décrivent la rédaction d’un plan d’action prévoyant la mise en place par la SCÉ d’un système de titres professionnels à trois niveaux pour ses membres : membre, Évaluateur accrédité, et en temps et lieu, un titre de plus haut niveau, celui d’Évaluateur professionnel certifié.


- Maicher et Frank, dans le quatrième article, discutent l’identification des compétences canadiennes pour la pratique de l’évaluation ainsi que le processus ayant mené à leur expression, évaluation, et révision. Cinq thèmes ou domaines de compétences ont été retenus, et des compétences précises, comportant chacune ses descripteurs, ont été développées et validées par le biais d’un processus de consultation. Les auteures
se penchent aussi sur l’utilité des compétences pour les formateurs en évaluation, les clients d’une évaluation, et d’autres intervenants.

• Dans le cinquième article, Kuji-Shikatani, Thompson, et Matthew, se penchent sur les ressources, les processus, et les structures nécessaires à l’opérateurisation du programme de titres professionnels, une fois conçu. L’article présente une description du rassemblement de bénévoles impliqués de la SCÉ ainsi que de la nature interdisciplinaire de l’évaluation ayant tous deux mené au partage d’expertise en développement de système, politiques, gouvernance, et gestion.

D’autres articles font état des cinq dernières années du programme des titres professionnels.

• Le sixième article, par Barrington, Frank, Gauthier, et Hicks, présente le jury d’accréditation, l’entité décisionnelle du PTP. Ils décrivent la démographie du jury original, son évolution, et le travail qu’il a accompli. L’article examine aussi l’évolution des perspectives des membres du jury, les raisons qui les motivent à demeurer au sein du jury ou à le quitter, ainsi que leur vision de ses accomplissements et de ce que pourrait réserver son avenir.

• Le septième article se veut un rapport sur un sondage auprès des membres individuels de la SCÉ concernant le titre d’ÉA. Les auteurs, Gauthier, Kischuk, Borys, et Roy, fournissent des données sur les motivations de ceux qui font la demande de titre, l’expérience vécue lors du processus de demande, les avantages et les désavantages du titre d’ÉA, et leur niveau de satisfaction vis-à-vis de leurs attentes concernant le titre. L’article présente aussi les opinions des répondants qui n’ont pas demandé le titre, expliquant leur perception du programme, les barrières à son application, et leurs plans pour une future implication.

• Un regard de l’extérieur est proposé par King dans le huitième article au sujet du Programme des titres professionnels de la SCÉ. Par le biais de trois modèles théoriques, l’auteure présente une analyse du programme, situe le programme dans le cadre des autres activités mondiales d’accréditation, et offre conseil à d’autres organisations volontaires d’évaluation de programme pour qui l’expérience canadienne sert d’exemple.

• Dumaine présente finalement un article sommatif concernant les accomplissements et l’avenir du Programme des titres professionnels de la SCÉ. Il offre quelques spéculations sur les impacts potentiels à long terme du Programme des titres professionnels sur le domaine de l’évaluation au Canada, soutenant la position que l’impact du PTP proviendra principalement de la capacité accrue des Évaluateurs accrédités qui poursuivent leur perfectionnement professionnel afin de satisfaire aux exigences pour retenir le titre de la SCÉ.
Au moment où nous célébrons l’année internationale de l’évaluation, nous espérons que les pensées, analyses, et réflexions de ce numéro spécial contribueront à l’amélioration de la pratique de l’évaluation et au dialogue continue sur la professionnalisation. Nous espérons aussi qu’il célébrera les efforts intenses et cohésifs des nombreux bénévoles qui ont permis à la SCÉ de développer ce programme innovateur de titres professionnels.
Building the Foundation for the CES Professional Designation Program

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Abstract: This article provides the historical and conceptual context of the CES professional designation program. It highlights the noteworthy debates, controversies, and deliberations in Canada and the United States that culminated in the decision by CES National Council to find a feasible approach to professional designation. The article outlines the crucial contributions of key CES initiatives, such as the Essential Skills Series, Core Body of Knowledge Project, and Member Surveys, by drawing on the experience of those CES members who led these efforts.

Keywords: foundation of professional designation, history of professional designation, professional designation development, professional designation debates

Are you proud to be known as a program evaluator? You should be. According to the U.S. News & World Report, program evaluator is one of the “best-kept secret careers” today (Nemko, 2008). It surfaced as a “hidden gem” that scored well on the “best careers” selection criteria, such as national median pay, job satisfaction, prestige, and job market outlook. The article explained that program evaluators not only enjoy high status and a good income, they also have solid job satisfaction because they answer important questions, evaluate a wide...
variety of programs, and play an important role in making programs better or assessing whether programs are worth hard-earned taxpayer or donor money. What education, training, experience, and skills does someone need to pursue a prestigious and well-paid career as an evaluator? According to the article, not much of anything. In fact, a headline boldly states that it is possible to become a program evaluator with only a bachelor’s degree and no special training. Lacking advanced technical skills? No worries there either. You can readily hire a consultant to supply them for you—even though the small print acknowledges that some projects require evaluators with advanced graduate degrees from specialized training programs.

Aimed at the general public, this popularized assessment of a career as a program evaluator in the *U.S. News & World Report* succinctly captures several of the persistent paradoxes faced by the evaluation field over the past 50 years—paradoxes that have stoked the demand for a professional designation. Although evaluation continues to grow rapidly around the world, why does it remain a best-kept secret? Although evaluators enjoy respect and good pay, why do the qualifications and competencies required by evaluators seem either obscure or utterly commonplace? Although evaluators shape important policy and program decisions and influence the allocation of countless millions of dollars, why does it appear that virtually anyone can assume the mantle of an evaluator, irrespective of his or her education, competencies, or experience in the evaluation field? Although national and regional evaluation associations in Canada, the United States, and the rest of the world continue to thrive and expand, why are they bereft of serious mechanisms for fostering and ensuring the expertise of evaluators and the quality of evaluation practice?

The decision by CES National Council to develop a Professional Designation Program (PDP) is the culmination of one of the most enigmatic and controversial quests in the history of the evaluation field. The development of the CES PDP was strongly influenced by the work of the early pioneers in the field, in both Canada and the United States. This seminal work from the 1960s to the turn of the century is likely less familiar to readers than efforts made during the last decade. As an eyewitness to many of the pivotal events, I will try in this article to illuminate the myths and realities, debates and initiatives, positive steps and dead ends that built the foundation for the Request for Proposals for an Action Plan for the CES PDP in 2006.

Because history is both collaborative and malleable, preparation for this article benefitted enormously from my discussions with many dedicated program evaluators in both Canada¹ and the United States² who shared their experiences of these historical events with me. Any shortcomings, of course, are mine alone. It is my hope that the lessons and observations from my journey will give useful guidance to other evaluation organizations that are planning to embark on a professional designation quest of their own. Although my article draws the curtain in mid 2006, the article by Halpern, Gauthier, and McDavid (2015) in this special
issue continues the story of the CES PDP with the development of the Action Plan in 2006. This is followed by articles that detail additional important activities and events in the evolution of the CES PDP from 2006 to the present.

Table 1 provides an overview of the long history of pressures, innovations, discussions, and debates that lie behind the decision of the CES to embark on a professional designations initiative.

**Table 1. Chronology of Major Events Leading to the RFP for the CES PDP from the 1960s to 2006**

<table>
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<th>Time Period</th>
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<td>1960s</td>
<td>Birth of modern evaluation spurred by implementation of large-scale education and social programs in the United States and evaluation of the effectiveness of highly visible federal government programs by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.</td>
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<td>Early 1970s</td>
<td>Concerns about the professional competency of evaluators.</td>
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<td>Mid 1970s</td>
<td>First evaluation groups formed in the Canada and the United States.</td>
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<td>Late 1970s</td>
<td>Evaluation societies begin work on evaluation standards and defining evaluator competencies, accompanied by fierce debates about the pros and cons of standards and competencies.</td>
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<td>1980s</td>
<td>CES and AEA formed to meet the needs of evaluators from the full range of disciplines and practice settings. Initial evaluation standards developed and field-tested by several evaluation societies and organizations.</td>
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<td>1990s</td>
<td>Sweeping management innovations greatly increase demand for evaluation in government and nonprofit organizations and expand evaluation approaches, methods, and evaluation use. CES National Council endorses the Joint Committee Standards. CES disseminates CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct and AEA releases Guiding Principles for Evaluators. CES introduces the Essential Skills Series, the first nationally disseminated set of basic courses in evaluation that reflect Canadian approaches to evaluation and Canadian cases and resource materials. CES and AEA commission background research and debate ways to develop evaluation as a profession, especially proposals for developing a professional designation.</td>
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<td>AEA President Len Bickman encourages members to adopt certification, and AEA Board strikes a Task Force on Certification. CES and AEA debates shift from whether to have a professional designation to an exploration of feasible approaches.</td>
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<td>Jim Altschuld presents recommendations of AEA Task Force for a system of “voluntary credentialing” as a feasible option.</td>
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DAWN OF THE MODERN ERA OF EVALUATION

The implementation of large-scale education and social programs in the United States during the 1960s created an unprecedented demand for high-quality evaluations (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). About the same time, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, first under the leadership of Maxwell Henderson and then under J. J. Macdonell, began evaluating the effectiveness of highly visible federal government programs, using the latest social science methodology and then gaining media attention by publicly disseminating the findings (Segsworth, 1990). Management innovations, such as Management by Objectives (MBO) and the application of cybernetics and systems theory, promoted the use of evaluation feedback to guide and build organizations in all sectors. In both Canada and the United States, this period is known as the “First Boom in Evaluation” (Donaldson & Scriven, 2003), not only in recognition of the exceptional growth

Table 1. (Continued)

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| Early 2000s  | **CES launches Core Body of Knowledge (CBK) project to identify key evaluator competencies**
**Evaluation researchers at the University of Minnesota begin a process for defining “essential evaluator competencies”**
**Evaluation and evaluation societies expand rapidly worldwide; International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation formed; second international evaluation conference held in Toronto; the Program Evaluation Standards of the Joint Committee become the de facto international evaluation standards**
**Gauthier, Borys, Kishchuk, and Roy conduct a series of high-quality online surveys, consultations, and conference panels that confirm the need for a professional designation by specific segments of the CES membership**
**University of Minnesota evaluation researchers validate and refine their taxonomy of essential evaluator competencies into six major competency categories. Then the researchers “cross-walk” their competencies with the CES Essential Skills Series and the CES Core Body of Knowledge findings**
**The Japan Evaluation Society uses the CES Essential Skills Series as framework to develop a program to train and certify school evaluators who have a “functional level” of evaluation competencies**
**Centre of Excellence for Evaluation calls for greater evaluation capacity across government and for more evaluators with proper training and competencies** |
| May 2006     | **CES National Member Services issues an RFP for “Fact Finding Regarding Evaluator Credentialing” to produce an action plan to aid in establishing a professional credentialing system including a member registry** |
in the number of evaluations and evaluators, but also for remarkable advances in knowledge about methods for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of policies and programs, especially the application of experimental and quasi-experimental designs, as well as the integration of evaluation into program decision-making and organizational design.

In the larger population centres in Canada and the United States, evaluators from similar disciplines were gathering and exchanging information on a regular basis. In Toronto, for example, there were thriving groups of evaluators from education, health, mental health, children's mental health, social services, corrections, and various provincial government departments and directly operated services who met with their colleagues several times per year, if not monthly. Likewise, established professional organizations, such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), began hosting evaluation sections or topical interest groups for their members. In short, disciplinary and/or sectoral groupings of evaluators appeared to be the typical state of affairs. Given this situation, what was more remarkable, to my mind, was the recognition on the part of so many evaluators that evaluation was sufficiently important and the body of evaluation knowledge was sufficiently unique, that they should work together to build the evaluation field and strengthen their own professional practices through exchanges with evaluators from diverse disciplines, sectors, and jurisdictions.

By the time the Evaluation Network (ENet) and the Evaluation Research Society (ERS) were formed in the mid 1970s, the brand new profession of program evaluation already had seven scholarly journals and thousands of evaluators drawn from many disciplines and practicing in diverse sectors. In 1981 CES was incorporated and, in 1986, ENet and ERS merged to become the American Evaluation Association (AEA). These evaluation societies marked the first efforts in Canada and the United States to form organizations that had the express mission to serve the needs of the growing number of evaluation professionals from the full gamut of disciplines and practice settings, rather than serving only a narrower group, such as educational evaluators, mental health evaluators, or evaluators in large consulting firms. During a time when print media and ordinary mail were the main channels of communications, the needs of evaluation professionals were basic but essential, such as information about evaluation conferences and courses, relevant evaluation publications, and employment opportunities.

Already at this early stage, major tensions were emerging that would colour the debates regarding a professional designation for decades to come. These tensions encompassed conflicting views about the definition and nature of evaluation as a profession, managing the potential dominance of powerful interest groups, hesitancy about the inclusion of internal evaluators and part-time evaluators, and conflict with those who questioned the supremacy and limitations of the social science or economic approaches to evaluation. Moreover, there was the fear that the evaluation field would “follow the money” and that, instead of “speaking truth to power,” evaluators would “support the truth of power.” From my vantage point these perceived threats were largely real but not adequately addressed at the time, leading to ongoing fear and conflict. Although the evaluation field has largely
resolved these early issues, others have replaced them. The lesson, however, is the same: fundamental issues need to be addressed and resolved before a professional designation can progress from vision to reality.

WORRIES ABOUT EVALUATORS’ COMPETENCIES GROW

The need for a professional designation for evaluators was one of the contentious themes that first appeared in this early dawn of the modern evaluation era. Although the demand for evaluation was growing rapidly in Canada and the United States during the First Boom, so were the burgeoning worries that too many evaluators with inadequate competency were designing evaluations that lacked usefulness and relevance. As tangible proof, already by the early 1970s, the professional competency of evaluators was such a concern that AERA was considering the feasibility of requiring the certification of educational evaluators (Worthen, 1972).

In 1977, only a year after the ERS was founded, several government agencies approached it to work with them on the development of evaluation standards (Anderson, 1982). Although the Lilly Foundation was funding the drafting of standards for educational evaluation, the government agencies wanted standards that could be applied to a broad range of sectors (health, education, law enforcement, urban planning), as well to different forms of evaluation (needs assessment, formative evaluation, program monitoring, impact evaluation). The ERS Task Force on Standards was struck. Two of its members were Canadian evaluators: one from the mental health sector in Ontario and the other from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Importantly, evaluation standards and evaluator competencies were seen as two sides of the same coin: standards defined the key elements required for effective and efficient evaluations, whereas competencies defined the knowledge and skills required for effective and efficient evaluators. As a result, defining evaluator competencies was one of the main issues on the table during the initial work on the ERS standards. Of equal importance, the advantages and disadvantages of evaluation standards and competencies identified by the ERS Task Force in 1977 are nearly the same ones that persisted during the professional designation debates over the next 40 years.

On the positive side, according to Anderson (1982), standards and competencies were perceived to have important advantages: standards and competencies developed by the profession had the potential to generate better evaluations, lead to better theory, guide the training of evaluators, provide a yardstick against which funding agencies could measure proposals and evaluation deliverables, and facilitate productive negotiations between evaluators and their employers regarding evaluation designs. On the negative side, concerns were raised that standards and competencies were premature because the evaluation field was too...
young and evaluators didn't agree about the definition of evaluation or the scope and content of the standards or competencies. There were fears that minimum standards and competencies would become normative (maximum) and lead to inferior evaluations, and that standards might constrain the growth of evaluation theory and methodology.

At the same time, initial work was being completed on evaluation standards for educational programs (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1981), a process that also involved Canadian evaluators. CES later applied the lessons learned from the development of the ERS Standards (Rossi, 1982) and the Joint Committee Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1981, 1994) to the development of the CES PDP. For example, these committees worked cooperatively by comparing and field-testing each other's standards (i.e., cross-walked the standards). They made intentional efforts to consult broadly with evaluators and other stakeholders who were not part of the formal committees. They found that attention to process rather than procedure was necessary to develop robust and widely accepted standards. Both committees took care that that the standards were general enough so they could evolve over time, but prescriptive enough to improve the quality of evaluations.

A SERIES OF FORTUNATE EVENTS

The 1990s heralded a series of “fortunate events” that had a profound effect on the field of evaluation. In my opinion, these fortunate events paved the way for the development and acceptance of the CES PDP initiative. By 1990, both CES and AEA saw promoting evaluation as a profession to be a key element of their missions. By that time, evaluation had its own knowledge base, training programs, and professional associations. Evaluation was emerging rapidly as a specialty area and also growing quickly worldwide, as evidenced by the first international evaluation conference that was held in Vancouver in 1995 and brought together more than 1,600 evaluators from 65 countries (Love & Russon, 2000).

In my view, the first “fortunate event” was a series of profound innovations in the management and design of private, public, and nonprofit organizations. Each of these innovations had some form of evaluation either at its core or as a necessary component of its implementation. For government and nonprofits, these innovations were driven by several initiatives, such as New Public Management (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000), Results-Based Management, Outcomes Measurement, and/or by legislation, such as the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) (P.L. 103–62), a United States law enacted in 1993. These innovations were further popularized by books such as Reinventing Government (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993) and by publications and training events of major funding bodies, such as the United Way of Canada and the United Way of America.

These management innovations cast a strong spotlight on evaluation as essential for accountability and program improvements, as well as an integral part of organizational learning and a key aspect of democratic institutions. These
innovations continued throughout the 1990s and created a very strong demand for evaluation expertise. They opened a career path for evaluators and allied professionals (program analysts, knowledge management specialists), increased the status of the evaluation profession, and broadened the purposes for and approaches to evaluation. They set the stage for a major expansion of evaluation across the globe during the first decade of the 21st century. More importantly, these innovations helped to create the “Second Boom in Evaluation” that began in the 1990s and continues to this day (Donaldson & Scriven, 2003). Coupled with retirements, the Second Boom created a fertile ground for the CES PDP by bringing new and often inexperienced individuals into the field—ones who were eager to increase their competencies and find a structured way to build their careers as evaluators.

The second “fortunate event” in the 1990s was the endorsement by CES National Council of the Standards for Evaluations of Educational Programs (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). This was the second edition of the Standards, which were originally disseminated in 1981. Since the late 1980s, the CES Standards Development Committee had been exploring the implications of adopting standards and competencies for program evaluation in Canada. In 1991, Daniel Caron, with the support of the Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, completed a study of the knowledge and skills needed by evaluators to meet evaluation standards and perform the various tasks of an evaluator (Caron, 1993). This exploration reflected the commitment of CES to achieving its objective of promoting the practice of quality evaluation of public and private programs across the country. CES held the strong belief that evaluators from different disciplines and practice settings shared common concerns about the quality of evaluation. This conviction led to a search for standards, codes of conduct, and competencies to guide program evaluation practice and focus attention on issues facing the emerging evaluation profession.

The Canadian Evaluation Society Standards Development Committee (1992) noted that professional organizations often adopt standards to ensure minimum levels of quality and their services, to define exclusive domains of practice, to be able to protect their members in litigation, and/or to promote a collective sense of professional identity. To the extent that the adoption of standards for program evaluation in Canada could achieve such aims, it could be a powerful tool for the development of the profession. Even so, experiences in the United States had shown that the adoption of evaluation standards was not a trivial matter. At stake was the definition of the profession, an understanding of it commitments, and clarifying the extent that the professional society will shape the work of its members. Although there might be much to gain in terms of improving Canadian evaluation practice, there were concerns about the possible loss of professional liberty and innovation, and costs of developing and maintaining the standards.

In my opinion, there were several key process factors that encouraged the adoption of the Joint Committee’s Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) as the overall program evaluation standards by CES. These process factors ensured that the second edition of the Standards were relevant to a broad range of Canadian evaluation settings and also
offer important strategies for organizations contemplating a professional designation program of their own. Of primary importance, the CES was fully engaged in developing the Standards as a sponsor organization, one of 17 members from 12 professional associations. Not only did CES have equal status with the other partners, but the Standards were deliberately intended to also be relevant in Canada as well as the United States. Next, the Joint Committee is a volunteer organization and numerous Canadian volunteers were widely involved over a period of years in writing and vetting the Standards and in quality control and improvement efforts. Further, the Joint Committee adopted a “task force” approach that coupled strong leadership, a clear mandate, and flexible use of volunteers from the sponsoring organizations in a time-limited and focused way to achieve the project mission and goals. This proved to be an efficient and effective way to manage an inclusive and consensus-driven project that relied upon a large number of volunteers from many organizations. Lastly, the Joint Committee followed principles that addressed concerns expressed by the members of both CES and AEA that the Standards would be credible and legitimate by fairly representing the full range of evaluation practice and not be dominated by one set of interests or perspectives. For example, there were explicit principles that mandated the involvement of professional organizations, government agencies, and the general public in the process and intentionally prevented its dominance by special interests. Participants included evaluators and also those who commissioned, used, or were affected by the results of evaluations.

The third “fortunate event” was the dissemination of the CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct a few years later with the express purpose of making the principles for ethical evaluations clear to CES members and those who commission, fund, or use evaluations. Work on the CES Guidelines began in 1988 with a series of consultations with the CES chapters, followed by a discussion paper, additional chapter consultations, panel discussions at the CES annual conference in 1994, and then circulation of the draft version of the CES Guidelines to the membership accompanied by a feedback questionnaire. This was the same year that the AEA released the Guiding Principles for Evaluators but the decision was taken to continue work on the CES Guidelines. Two years later, CES National Council approved and disseminated the final version of the CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct (Canadian Evaluation Society, 1996). It was integrated into the CES Essential Skills Series of professional development courses shortly afterwards.

In my view, the fourth “fortunate event” was the design and pilot testing of the Essential Skills Series (ESS) by the CES Ontario chapter in response to the findings of a needs assessment of members. Nearly one half of the respondents wanted training in basic evaluation knowledge and skills (e.g., principles of evaluation design) that reflected the Canadian context (Love, 1994). The original ESS was a series of four short courses on basic evaluation topics delivered by highly qualified Canadian university faculty who were also experienced evaluators. The ESS featured Canadian examples, case studies, and resources. Participants who completed the four courses received a “certificat” from CES. The ESS proved successful, and it continues to be updated and delivered to this day. Some of the reasons cited for the success of the ESS when it was released for presentation nationally

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across Canada included provision for some modifications for specific audiences and provincial/territorial variations. There was recognition of the strong network of CES chapters across Canada that administered the ESS and selected local facilitators. The CES National Professional Development Committee implemented a process for frequent updating and improvement of the ESS. The original design of the ESS also had a provision for the accreditation of specific educational institutions and other organizations to deliver the ESS courses with the approval of CES. Although this accreditation process was never implemented in Canada, it became a key aspect of the Japan Evaluation Society’s accreditation and certification scheme for school evaluators (Nagao, Kuji-Shikatani, & Love, 2005).

DEBATES ABOUT PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS

In terms of the CES PDP initiative, the last “fortunate event” of the 1990s was a series of intense and sustained background research efforts and debates commissioned by CES and AEA regarding the professional designation of evaluators. The process began in 1994 as an examination of certification and licensure and culminated in 1999 with a proposal by the AEA Task Force on Certification for a system of “voluntary credentialing” for evaluators. The shift in focus from certification and licensure to credentialing had a profound effect on the direction of the CES PDP.

In the 1990s the CES and AEA, as national evaluation organizations, faced the challenge of how to develop evaluation as a profession and promote an appropriate level of professionalism. Since their inception, both CES and AEA were under pressure because evaluation had not yet achieved the status of a full profession. A full profession is an occupation that has the legal power (i.e., licensure) to control access to the profession, enforce its performance standards and ethical codes, and exercise control over graduate training programs by a process of accreditation (Love, 1994). Many CES and AEA members, however, felt it would be more appropriate to view evaluation as a new profession (also known as an emergent profession). Because the absence of legal power to regulate itself and discipline its members is the major difference between a new profession and an established profession (Hodson & Sullivan, 2011), these CES and AEA members felt that the administrative costs and risks of potential litigation were not worth the benefits of becoming a full profession (Long & Kishchuk, 1997; Smith, 1999; Worthen, 1994, 1999). Although members of new professions may have considerable autonomy, one drawback is that they are more likely to be constrained by the policies and guidelines of their practice settings and more accountable to managers or supervisors, rather than to their profession alone. This did not appear to be a compelling concern in Canada, however, because nearly 50% of CES members were internal evaluators who worked for the federal or provincial governments and already had similar constraints affecting their employment (Borys, Gauthier, Kishchuk, & Roy, 2005). In recent years, moreover, the distinctions between established professions and new professions has been becoming more fluid: courts or government often recognize members of new professions as expert professionals; the public may give
new professions respect and legitimacy; and many new professions have codes of ethics, standards, and some form of professional designation or licensure (Hodson & Sullivan, 2011). In short, some felt that positioning evaluation as a new profession carried most of the benefits but limited the risks of a full profession and it gave evaluation the flexibility to capitalize on its strengths and develop a practical but meaningful approach to a professional designation.

In 1994, former CES President Arnold Love wrote an article, “Should evaluators be certified?” in a special issue of New Directions for Program Evaluation that was focused on the preparation of professional evaluators. One of Love’s suggestions, a professional development approach, foreshadowed the CES Credentialed Evaluator program discussed in this issue. Love (1994) argued that instead of licensure based on regulation, the professional development approach based on the strengthening of evaluation-related competencies would have practical advantages for the new profession of evaluation. Some advantages included clarifying the professional identity of evaluators, expanding inclusiveness by embracing evaluators trained in diverse disciplines and with different levels of evaluation responsibility, permitting a flexible combination of formal and informal professional development activities, and giving evaluators incentives to upgrade their knowledge and skills continuously.

In 1995, Saunders and Bickman (1995) proposed that the AEA develop a voluntary system of certification. During his presidential address, Len Bickman emphasized that he supported certification because it would establish a clearer identity for evaluation as a profession and AEA as an organization (Bickman, 1997). The AEA struck a Task Force on Certification, with Jim Altschuld at the head, that examined the literature, surveyed the AEA membership, submitted a final report to the Board in 1997 (Altschuld, 1997), and organized debates about certification at the 1997 and 1998 AEA annual conferences.

Although the focus of the Task Force was certification, Jim Altschuld raised the important distinction between certification and credentialing in his interim memorandum to the AEA Board (Altschuld, 1996). Credentialing required a person to complete certain educational and experience requirements (e.g., practicums, evaluation projects), whereas certification required the testing of skills and competencies. In his view, credentialing better suited the majority of evaluators who were trained in different disciplines and did not have degrees in evaluation. As will be seen below, this important distinction between credentialing and certification had substantial impact on ideas about professional designation in both Canada and the United States.

In 1997, Len Bickman, then president of the American Evaluation Association, asked if Altschuld would lead a task force investigating what would be necessary to create a process for certifying evaluators. Bickman stated that credentialing and certification are processes that can help the field of evaluation establish a clearer identity as a profession. Bud Long and Natalie Kishchuk presented a report to CES National Council that summarized the key aspects of professional designations, the issues debated by other professional organizations, and the feasibility
of various options for professional designation in the Canadian context (Long & Kishchuk, 1997).

The same year, the AEA Board received the draft report about the certification of evaluators from the Task Force on Certification (Altschuld, 1997). As a follow-up to the report, Blaine Worthen and Jim Altschuld organized an important debate at the 1998 AEA annual conference about the key issues regarding certification and credentialing for evaluators. CES members participated in this debate, sharing their ideas about professional designations and their experiences about the value of the CES Essential Skills Series as a way of improving the quality of evaluations and evaluators’ competencies across Canada. The often-heated discussions probed deeply the strengths and weaknesses of the reasons in support of professional designations, such as protection of the public and the evaluation field, enhancing the credibility of evaluators, and better clarification about evaluation and the core values and knowledge of the profession. For the interested reader, Jim Altschuld (1999a) wrote an article offering a very useful summary of the issues debated during that session and the various arguments supporting and opposing each position.

In 1999, CES National Council commissioned a survey to obtain the perceptions and opinions of clients and employers of evaluators about the advantages and disadvantages of certification (Stierhoff, 1999). The response rate to the pilot survey in three provinces and the National Capital Chapter was too low to continue with the full survey. According to the interviewers, a considerable number of potential respondents were not interested in the issues about the certification of evaluators and refused to complete the questionnaire. During the same year, AEA conducted a survey of its members to get a sense whether a certification process was necessary and if it would be effective (Jones & Worthen, 1999). The response rate to this survey was also very low. The AEA members who responded were not confident that a certification process was necessary or that it would be effective. Although the paucity of data did not allow the results to be generalized, the absence of demand for certification among the respondents was clear.

An important lesson learned from these surveys regarding certification of both the CES and AES memberships is that these surveys were hampered by low response rates and insufficient data to accurately analyze findings according to demographics and other factors. In contrast, a few years later, CES employed well-constructed online surveys that had good return rates and were reported in ways that engaged the majority of CES members. These surveys marked a giant step forward in obtaining accurate information that proved essential in guiding the professional designation initiatives of CES.

THE SHIFT FROM CERTIFICATION TO VOLUNTARY CREDENTIALING

In 1999, the tenor of discussions about professional designations began to change. Up to that time, the major debates were focused on whether or not evaluators, or the evaluation field, needed a professional designation based on
certification. Based on feedback from small numbers of evaluators who participated in debates and surveys, it was clear that some evaluators felt strongly that certification was necessary, but others did not. By 1999, the idea of the importance of some form of professional designation began to be accepted in principle, but its feasibility was uncertain. As a consequence, articles, discussions, debates, and fact-finding missions began to closely examine alternative solutions instead of certification.

To illustrate this shift, in an article highlighting the recommendations of the Task Force on Certification to the AEA Board, Jim Altschuld (1999b) suggested that AEA adopt “voluntary credentialing” approach. In a companion article, Altschuld (1999a) noted:

But there is that one unfinished piece of business—credentialing (and certification). Can we continue to think of evaluation as a field or an emerging profession and still have the situation where anyone who wants to call themselves an evaluator can simply do so? That situation is unsettling and not tenable. Indeed, we must conclude that there is an imperative that we attend to this problem. (p. 516)

In this article, Altschuld made his case for the advantages of credentialing compared to certification. Some notable advantages of credentialing were a shorter development period, less expense, affordability even with moderate participation rates, absence of examinations, reduced risk from legal challenges, and greater chance of acceptance by the membership.

In short order, several influential evaluators supported the move toward credentialing. A few years earlier, as AEA President, Len Bickman had established a Task Force on Certification (Bickman, 1997). When Altschuld (1999b) tabled his report to the AEA Board supporting credentialing instead of certification, Bickman urged evaluators to be bold and adopt Altschuld’s proposal. Bickman felt that a profession designation process, whether credentialing or certification, was a way to better define the field of evaluation by describing its unique body of knowledge and competencies. He also felt that a professional designation would establish AEA as the premier organization in evaluation.

As a veteran of the professional designation debates since the 1970s, Blaine Worthen had first-hand experience with the pessimism, concerns, and frank opposition to certification of evaluators over the decades. Even so, he concluded that certification based on competencies was essential for evaluation to reach its full potential and attain the status of a full profession. Worthen (1999) voiced his view that it was not certification at issue, but how to develop a certification process. In this regard, he supported credentialing as a reasonable step toward a certification program:

My earlier criticisms of credentialing were only intended to point out that it is a less desirable alternative, not to suggest that it would be of no benefit at all. As an interim measure, some type of credentialing such as Altschuld (1999a) proposes could be very useful indeed, if marked clearly as a placeholder for a better system. (p. 554)
COMPETENCIES AND CORE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

As the 1990s drew to a close and the new century began, the major remaining obstacle to a professional designation was defining the unique competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes) of effective program evaluators. Since the 1970s there had been a general pessimism that evaluators, trained as they were in many different disciplines and specializations and through many diverse methods, would agree on a common set of competencies relevant to the quality of their practice.

A group of evaluation researchers at the University of Minnesota recognized the importance of defining competencies for effective evaluators as being distinct from defining the standards and guiding principles for effective evaluations. The breakthrough occurred when they devised a systematic process for identifying what they called the *Essential Evaluator Competencies* and validating them by empirical consensus building among diverse evaluators (King, Minnema, Ghere, & Stevahn, 1999; King, Stevahn, Ghere, & Minnema, 2001; Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005a, 2005b). Their work is of special importance because it became the model of competencies in the CES PDP. The reader will find details about the foundational work on competency identification in the article by Jean King in this special issue.

In 2001, CES National Council commissioned a *Core Body of Knowledge* (CBK) project to support its advocacy efforts and to guide the professional development activities of CES and individual evaluators. The CBK project identified the theories, skills, and effective practices needed to plan, implement, and report on valid and reliable evaluations of the programs of governments, other public sector agencies and organizations, not-for-profit organizations, and businesses. In the CBK report, Rochelle Zorzi and her colleagues (Zorzi, Perrin, McGuire, Long, & Lee, 2002) described the key benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements essential for high-quality evaluations. An innovative aspect of the CBK project was the extensive use of online consultations with CES members, two discussion sessions with delegates at the CES 2002 National Conference, and online consultations with members of an international expert reference panel. In addition to identifying key benefits of evaluation, the activities needed to generate those benefits, and several knowledge elements that evaluators employ in their work, the CBK project illustrated that the engagement process itself forged important links among evaluators and generated valuable discussions about evaluation among the participants.

SURVEYS AND SOUNDINGS

In 2005 Borys, Gauthier, Kishchuk, and Roy presented the results of a national online survey that described the professional and practice profiles of program evaluators in Canada, their views of their working conditions, and their sense of belonging to the field of evaluation. These findings from over 1,000 respondents also appear in an article by Gauthier, Borys, Kishchuk, and Roy (2006). This same team of evaluators frequently took soundings of the CES members’ views about professional designations using well-constructed and administered surveys with
adequate sample sizes. In summary, the results of these surveys showed a pattern that a professional designation would be supported by those CES members who were more deeply involved in evaluation, were younger and had the fewest years in the workforce, planned to stay in the field, and felt that they belonged to a community of evaluators.

**STRENGTHENING EVALUATION IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

In 2005, Gussman Associates released a report that summarized the developments and trends in program evaluation in the context of evolving public service management challenges, including expenditure review, new management frameworks, and a need for greater public sector accountability. The report urged the creation of an evaluation identity separate from internal audit, including separately defined criteria and standards for evaluators and auditors and separate administration of the evaluation and internal audit functions. It recommended the development and promotion of appropriate professional standards, competencies, and training for evaluators. To ensure evaluators had sufficient skills and education, the report suggested the creation of a supportive education and training scheme. Evaluators within government would be expected to demonstrate a defined skill set and effectively apply appropriate evaluation approaches to specific evaluation situations. The report also mentioned the use of a national partnership between the federal government and university-based programs that would accredit programs throughout Canada to provide entry-level training and certification of evaluators who worked for the federal government.

During the same time, a small group of evaluators was actively speaking with potential partners in different sectors about the professional designation. This kept lines of communication open and provided rapid feedback about the feasibility of various options. Brad Cousins and Tim Aubry worked with partners in government. Jim Halpern and Jim McDavid reached out to professional private evaluators and to academic evaluator scholars, and Jim Cullen was the CES representative on the Joint Committee during their work on the third revision of the *Program Evaluation Standards*.

**USE OF COMPETENCIES FOR GUIDANCE AND TRAINING**

In the same year, *McGuire and Zorzi (2005)* wrote an article that approached competencies from the viewpoint of a consulting organization. The authors provided a detailed list of the evaluation competencies needed, an appraisal form for an employee to evaluate himself/herself against them, a form for determining the quality of an individual’s work, and a discussion of how such measures might be linked together for enhancing skill levels and staff development. The authors noted that the competencies might be used for hiring decisions, identifying organizational competencies, and forming evaluation teams.
Also in 2005, Jim Altschuld published a synthesis of his thoughts about professional designations in the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation. Altschuld voiced support for a conference or a specialized workshop that would “cross-walk” or forge the multiple listings of skills and competencies into a unified perspective about the evaluation field and what it means to be an evaluator. Altschuld also observed that his review of credentialing showed that there was not a single training program at a university or institute in Canada or the United States that could graduate an individual with all the skills, competency levels, and field experiences necessary to be a skilled evaluator. He suggested that it might be better to use the competencies as a guide to help novice evaluators choose relevant courses from multiple disciplines, such as an evaluation course in education, methodology courses in psychology and statistics, cost-benefit analyses in economics, and public policy courses from political science. Furthermore, Altschuld suggested that the list of competencies could be a helpful reference when assessing the relevance of university, professional development, and continuing education programs for the practice of evaluation at different levels of competence.

This part of the story of the CES PDP draws to a close in May 2006, when the Member Services Committee issued an RFP (request for proposal) to obtain assistance/research into professionalizing evaluation through options for professional designations. The story resumes in the next article (Halpern, Gauthier, & McDavid, 2015).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In his book An Astronaut’s Guide to Life on Earth, Chris Hadfield shares his advice to “focus on the journey, not on arriving at a certain destination.” Let’s apply his advice to the journey that laid the foundation for the CES PDP over a 50-year period from the mid 1960s until 2006. What have we learned from that journey?

The perfect is the enemy of the good. For many years, the evaluation field saw status as a full profession, such as medicine and law, as the Holy Grail. Not only did this pursuit divide the membership and raise the spectre of endless lawsuits, but also it resulted in a vicious cycle of highly polarized debates followed by periods of pessimism and inaction. On the other hand, framing evaluation as a new profession, one that is creative and dynamic, that guides rather than regulates, opens the possibility for more flexible ways of ensuring the quality of evaluations. It also opens the option that some evaluators, but not all, may choose to attain a professional designation.

Understand the key concepts regarding professional designation. Evaluation has had a long history of confusing terminology that can mislead or obscure. Any serious student of professional designations would benefit from carefully reviewing the language of professional designations and become a master of the key terms and concepts: credentialing, certification, licensure, accreditation, and a host of supporting ones (e.g., vocation, professional development, regulation).

Standards and competencies are two sides of the same coin. At the dawn of the modern era of evaluation, the nascent evaluation organizations understood
that standards for program evaluations and competencies for program evaluators were two sides of the same coin. That knowledge took a big sleep for decades, it seemed, but now it has emerged as one of the major lessons of the CES PDP.

**Move forward by driving backwards.** The history of the CES PDP is one of gradually building momentum, through a combination of fortuitous events and level thinking, leading to important breakthroughs. It didn’t always look like progress, and sometimes it felt like failure. In many respects, the stuttering progress was reminiscent of the Mars rover *Opportunity* that was able to continue over 6 years on a mission originally planned for 6 months by driving slowly backwards on its damaged wheels. For example, as the professional designation deliberations continued over the years, suddenly there was a shift in sentiment, and a critical mass appeared in favour of professional designations. Suddenly the question became “How?” and not “Should we?” No longer was the PDP rover stuck in a crater; it had lurched free. Once a critical mass was attained, the lesson was to move ahead right away.

**There is strength in collaboration.** The early history of the CES PDP reads like an ode to collaboration. CES and its members became the long-term winners as a result of countless efforts by CES to build consensus, employ efficient task forces, and consult broadly. CES also benefitted from collaboration with AEA and its indefatigable members who would not let the dream of a professional designation vanish. Going back to the Mars rover example again, when *Opportunity* struggled with a massive failure of its main computer memory, it had to switch to its redundant back-up memory and eventually bootstrap its main memory into functioning. The CES “bootstrap” efforts were helped greatly by back-up support from and progress made by AEA and vice versa. Moreover, even if the CES PDP were to cease tomorrow, the benefits from careful attention to collaboration and consultative processes would continue to live.

As a final remark, in 2015, the International Year of Evaluation, we will celebrate the 50 years that have elapsed since program evaluation began to emerge as a distinct field of practice in Canada and the United States. Both the CES and AEA still see promoting evaluation as a profession and improving evaluation practices as key elements of their missions. Together these two evaluation societies serve nearly 10,000 members, and they have worked in close partnership over the decades in many ways, particularly in the development of evaluation standards and the drafting of competencies for evaluators. I hope that achieving a professional designation will endure as one of their proudest achievements, both now and in the future.

**NOTES**

1 In preparing this article, my recall of the historical context leading to the CES PDP benefitted greatly by reading articles and reports produced by many dedicated Canadian evaluators and having in-depth discussions with them. The following deserve special mention for their direct contributions to this article: Brad Cousins, Jim Cullen,
Paul Favaro, Benoît Gauthier, Gerald Halpenny, Keiko Kuji-Shikatani, John Mayne, Jim McDavid, Martha McGuire, Robert Segsworth, and Rochelle Zorzi.

2 Because the evolution of thinking about professional designations for evaluators in Canada was closely intertwined with similar efforts in the United States, the views, writings, and sheer persistence of the following American evaluators were crucial in shaping my thinking over the decades: Jim Altschuld, Len Bickman, Jean King, Jim Sanders, Michael Scriven, Midge Smith, Laurie Stevahn, Dan Stufflebeam, Craig Rushon, Joe Wholey, and Blaine Worthen.

REFERENCES


**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

Arnold Love, PhD, CE, began his career as a professional evaluator at the start of the modern era of evaluation in the 1960s and he continues to this day as an evaluation consultant working across the public, nonprofit, and private sectors in Canada and internationally. Arnold brings an eyewitness perspective over a 50-year period to the events, debates, and controversies that set the stage for the CES Professional Designation initiative. First as President of the CES Ontario chapter and Chair of the CES Professional Development Committee, and then as CES National President, Arnold contributed to the CES Essential Skills Series and supported its national rollout, participated in the drafting of the CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct and the Program Evaluation Standards, spoke in the many debates sponsored by CES and AEA about professional designations for evaluators, and wrote the seminal article, “Should evaluators be certified?” More recently, Arnold was a member of the consortium that wrote the Action Plan for the CES PDP. He is currently serving his second term on the CES Credentialing Board.
Abstract: The National Council of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) recognized a need to designate a professional status for the practice of evaluation for individuals who meet appropriate criteria. A consortium of experienced CES members developed an Action Plan with policy options based on (a) a literature review, (b) consultations with relevant professional organizations, (c) knowledge and experience brought by consortium members, and (d) the 2005 Survey of Evaluation Practice and Issues in Canada. The Action Plan recommended three successive levels of professional designation, each with progressively more demanding criteria. Out of this plan, the CES adopted the Credentialed Evaluator designation.

Keywords: accreditation, certified professional evaluator, credentialed evaluator, professionalization, professional designations, professional evaluation

Résumé: Le Conseil national de la Société canadienne d'évaluation (SCÉ) a reconnu le besoin de créer un statut professionnel pour la pratique de l'évaluation par ceux qui répondent aux critères appropriés d'admissibilité. Un consortium de membres experts de la SCÉ a développé un plan d'action comportant des options de politiques en se basant sur (a) une revue de la littérature, (b) les consultations avec les organisations professionnelles pertinentes, (c) la connaissance et l'expérience des membres du consortium, et (d) le sondage mené en 2005 sur la pratique et les enjeux en évaluation au Canada. Le plan d'action a recommandé trois niveaux successifs de titres professionnels comportant des critères d'admissibilité progressivement plus rigoureux. C'est à partir de ce plan que la SCÉ a adopté le titre d'Évaluateur accrédité.

Mots clés: accréditation, évaluateur professionnel certifié, évaluateur accrédité, professionnalisation, titres professionnels, évaluation professionnelle

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BACKGROUND

Circa 2006, the National Council of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES), prompted in part by previous work done to survey CES members (Zorzi, Perrin, McGuire, Long, & Lee, 2002; Borys, Gauthier, Kishchuk, & Roy, 2005), recognized the increasing interest within the Canadian evaluation and client communities for options that would offer practicing evaluators opportunities to become designated professionals. In May 2006, the CES Member Services Committee issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for “Fact Finding Regarding Evaluator Credentialing” (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2006). The requirement was to develop a concrete Action Plan with policy options to be considered by the CES Board and members.

The CES was looking to establish a professional credentialing system for evaluators—a process by which an applicant’s educational and practical experiences and achievements would warrant the award of a professional evaluation credential. It was understood that the Action Plan could situate professional credentialing within a continuum of professional designations including professional certification and licensing.

The task of developing this Action Plan was awarded to the three authors of this article. In addition, two primary reviewers and six other reviewers were engaged. Together, these 11 experienced evaluators formed a consortium for the development of the Action Plan.

The Action Plan was developed using information from four sources:

1. findings from the literature review (Huse & McDavid, 2006);
2. findings from the consultation with organizations (Halpern & Long, 2007);
3. knowledge and experience of Consortium members; and
4. findings from the 2005 Survey of Evaluation Practice and Issues in Canada (Gauthier, Borys, Kishchuk, & Roy, 2006).

Key findings of the literature review (Huse & McDavid, 2006) and interviews with organizations (Halpern & Long, 2007) are presented in the next two sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW: CREDENTIALING, CERTIFICATION, AND LICENSING AS OPTIONS FOR PRACTICING PROFESSIONALS

The literature review (Huse & McDavid, 2006) summarized the definitions and applications of several categories/levels of professionalization, as well as the experiences of other selected professions. Altschuld’s (2005) definitions of the key categories (see Table 1) were adapted for the literature review. Altschuld noted, “There is a fairly sharp demarcation between certification and credentialing, especially in regard to legal ramifications” (p. 159), while acknowledging that distinctions among some of the terms “are not absolute, and for some, more a matter of degree than substance” (p. 159).
Table 1. Definitions of Certification, Credentialing, Licensure, and Accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms/concepts</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Credentialing</td>
<td>A set of courses, a program, or other experiences a person must go through to receive a credential. May be done by a professional society or sometimes by trainers as in a credential for having been trained.</td>
<td>Does not specify the skill set attained by the person credentialed, only that they have gone through delineated experiences and courses. Tests or certification exams may be, but generally are not, used for credentialing; instead it is the courses or training experiences that the individual has taken. There does not have to be agreement on a set of core competencies at this stage. The legal implications for credentialing are less than for certification—credentialing is voluntary so it does not exclude practitioners who are not credentialed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>A process by which a person masters certain skills and competencies in a field as assessed by an external body (usually a professional society in the area of consideration).</td>
<td>Most often done through a formal test or set of tests (certification exams) as in law, medicine, engineering, etc. Certifying body may be legally liable for the skills that they designate as being attained by an individual. Certification may have to be periodically renewed, most frequently (but not always) via continuing education. Typically an agreed-upon set of core competencies exists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensure</td>
<td>Licenses are awarded by states/provinces, branches of government, and legal jurisdictions. One must have a license to perform services or undergo penalties if they are performed without a license. Many times the criteria for licensing are the same as certification and are determined by professional societies/groups.</td>
<td>One may be certified but not licensed as in the case of a physician who has passed the necessary medical examinations but is found to have defrauded patients or illegally used drugs. Licensure is a legal step that is recognized in law—it has the effect of excluding any practitioners who are not legally licenced. Licencing jurisdictions set up review panels in cases where there is malfeasance or unsafe practice. Control of licensure resides outside of the professional group but is almost always highly influenced by it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>A mechanism whereby the educational program of an agency or educational institution is examined by an external panel against established criteria for programs. The program, if it passes review, receives a formal document indicating that it is accredited (usually for a fixed time period).</td>
<td>Accreditation is for a program, whereas certification, credentialing, and licensure relate to an individual. Accreditation reviews rely on the courses, experiences, and processes that constitute a program; the competencies that students are expected to achieve; and their proficiencies as determined by tests and other outcome measures.</td>
</tr>
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For the CES Action Plan, we followed Altschuld’s (2005) approach and delineated among

- certification, as an individual-level assessment and, typically, testing of competencies;
- credentialing, as a set of courses or other experiences that a person must go through, which may or may not involve examinations; and
- licensure, as the legally more stringent form of individually tested certification, normally related to the protection of the public.

The following were critical points to an Action Plan for CES:

1. Credentialing is a process that takes into account formal education, training, and experience to designate practicing professionals as meeting agreed-upon professional standards. It may be used by a professional society without sanction from any other authority. The bearer of a credential has received an attestation from a professional body that the person has completed the requisite set of courses (or their equivalents) and/or other relevant experiences. The specification of the formal education component typically required for accreditation consists of the professional association setting the criteria for acceptance of designated education programs. (CES chose to not validate the content of training programs and replaced such validation with the acceptance of the evidence submitted as proof of adequate formal training or the equivalent.)

2. Certification sets formal educational and competency-related criteria for an individual. It may be established by a professional society without sanction from any other authority. The bearer of a certificate has received an attestation from a professional body that, in the judgement of the professional body, the person has mastered certain skills and competencies in a field.

3. Licensing requires authority from a political jurisdiction, typically with strong input from a professional association. Services that are licensed (e.g., medical, legal) can only be legally performed by the lawful holder of the licence.

Licensure is a category of certification, while credentialing is a separate category. This was acceptable for our purposes, as our key focus was the examination of credentialing. Licensure is a very specific and high-level form of certification, involving mandatory standards typically set in legislation for public protection reasons. Cousins and Aubry (2006) also consider licensure to be a form of individual certification, and distinguish credentialing from certification:

A credentialing system does not specify the skill set attained by the person who is credentialed, only that they have gone through delineated experiences and courses. This is consistent with Love’s (1994) distinction between a professional development
approach and a licensure approach to certification. Credentialing aligns with the professional development approach. (p. 18)

The Action Plan proposed for the CES primarily addressed two categories of professional designation for evaluators: credentialing and certification. The main emphasis was on credentialing because the CES had requested this focus and most of the momentum at that time seemed to favour the institutionalization of this type of designation.

Based on the literature review and experiences of other professions reviewed, Huse and McDavid (2006) identified 14 steps typically required for a professional body to offer a credential. Four additional steps were identified for certification, while three additional steps were identified for licencing of practitioners. The credentialing steps played a role in how CES framed the process by which evaluators could achieve the CES-sanctioned professional designation.

Credentialing requires demonstration of the successful completion of specified education program(s) and/or designated experiences. Although accreditation has usually been associated with credentialing, they are distinct both conceptually and in practice. Accreditation simply refers to the assessment of a program within an educational institution to confirm that it is meeting established profession-relevant criteria. The literature review revealed that in almost all cases of a credentialing or certification system, the professional body undertakes an accreditation process with the institutions that offer courses or training programs.

The Action Plan also gave attention to certification from two perspectives: (a) a letters of support approach to the attestation of mastery of skills and competencies, and (b) requiring successful completion of a formal test or set of tests (i.e., certification exams). Licensure was not discussed in the Action Plan. It may be considered at a later stage in the development of the Society’s professionalization plans.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS: THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

In the RFP Terms of Reference for the Action Plan, CES asked that information on 11 issues be sought from other relevant organizations that had or could have had professional designations. The following is a summary of answers to those questions as provided by 16 professional associations. More detailed information is available in Halpern and Long (2007).

Knowledge Base

On what professional standards of practice is the system based?

Of the 16 organizations interviewed, 14 had established at least one professional designation and 2 had considered doing so. Of those 14 associations, 11 stated they had a body of knowledge or a set of “competencies” developed by teams of volunteer members, paid staff, and contractors.
As for knowledge verification, 11 of the 14 associations with a designation appeared to hold their own exams separate from any courses taken. Some also required university degrees (sometimes restricted to specific disciplines) or the completion of courses they sponsored themselves. Of the 3 associations with designations that did not require exams, 2 required the completion of their own courses and 1 required the completion of accredited academic programs. At least half of the associations with designations required several years of experience as a condition for the designation.

**Training and Professional Development Options and Delivery**

What training and professional development options are acknowledged? Are training programs accredited by the organization? Who delivers training?

Training and professional development options came in two forms: accredited academic courses and courses sponsored by the association. Of the 14 associations with designations, some required the accredited programs in addition to their own exams, while others accepted them as a substitute for those exams. Only 1 association relied solely on the completion of an accredited academic program. About half of these associations sponsored courses that met a portion of the designation requirements. In a few cases, an academic course could serve as a substitute for the association course.

**Grandparenting**

Is/was a “grandparenting” system invoked for existing members at the time of system installation? How was grandparenting structured?

Most of the associations adopted some form of grandparenting at the introduction of their designation. However, it appeared that usually the grandparented award was then subject to the same maintenance requirements (e.g., continuing education, fee payment, etc.) as other designation holders.

Only one association expressed regrets at grandparenting existing practitioners. It had been created to unify several similar associations. Some of them had awarded their designations on rather easy terms. Nonetheless, all holders of any of those designations were automatically given the new association’s designation. After several years, there was still a “distinct difference in general between those who have written vs. not written the exam.” Part of the difficulty faced by the new association was that “there were no criteria for bringing members up to single standard.”

**Experience Requirements—Credentialing**

Are professional experience parameters acknowledged and incorporated into the credentialing system? How?

The sole association that relied completely on credentialing had no experience requirement. The other 13 associations were only partially credentialled, with designations that required various mixes of accredited academic courses, in-house
course work, and association-sponsored exams. Of these, at least 7 had some experience requirement, typically two to three years. A couple of these associations allowed experience and academic work to be partial substitutes for each other. In most cases, claimed experience had to be verified by, for example, the candidate’s employers or sponsor.

**Differential Levels of Professional Credentials**

Are differential levels of professional credential identified and maintained? On what basis are distinctions made?

Of the 14 associations with a designation, 5 had more than one professional designation and some had as many as 4. The designations were distinguished by seniority and/or specialty. Although complete numbers were unavailable, it appeared that, in general, neither the more senior designations nor the specialized ones were held by many people.

**Continuous Learning**

Is demonstration of continuous learning required of members to maintain credentials? What sorts of learning experiences qualify?

Of the 14 associations with designations, at least 8 required a certain number of hours of ongoing professional development/continuing education. A typical example would be 80 hours every two years. A variety of activities qualified as professional development, such as courses of study, attendance at seminars or conferences, and voluntary work for the association.

**Set-up Costs**

What are the major set-up costs?

Few respondents could provide estimates of set-up costs, often because the work was carried out many years earlier. There were no estimates for the original accreditation of academic programs and courses, although respondents said that the task required much volunteer and staff time.

For the original exam development, one association placed the cost at about $200,000. About half of this was in volunteer time. Another association estimated that the costs of reviewing both its competencies and designation exam questions was about $50,000, including contracts and staff time, as well as numerous volunteer hours.

**Maintenance Costs**

What are the ongoing maintenance costs?

Few respondents could provide approximate estimates of the ongoing maintenance costs of the designation. Several categories of concerns were highlighted by respondents, as follows.
Dealing with the concerns of, or legal action taken by, clients of the profession because of their dissatisfaction with designation holders. This appeared to be a minor problem for all associations that commented.

Dealing with complaints, possibly coupled with legal action, from people who have tried but failed to obtain the designation. Only a few associations had received such complaints, and none faced legal action.

Dealing with people who have falsely claimed to hold the designation. For the large majority of associations, this had not been a problem.

System Finance
How is the system financed?
Three organizations reported that they charged academic institutions no fees for the original selection and periodic review of their programs and courses. Two organizations charged accredited institutions $100 per year.

There are complex variations from association to association in the structure of the designation fees paid by individual candidates. They depend in part on whether certain courses are mandatory and whether the association holds its own exams. The total bill for the designation process typically falls in the range of $500–1,000.

Fees for the designation are in addition to the annual membership fee. This is usually within the $300–600 range, with outliers as low as about $150 and as high as almost $1,000.

Benefits
Are tangible benefits of the credentialing system in evidence? What are they?
Generally, respondents felt that the major benefit of the designation was to identify and implement qualification standards and improve the supply and quality of trained professionals.

Several informants reported that employers valued the quality assurance provided by the designation, gave credentialed candidates preference when recruiting employees, and may encourage or require that current employees obtain the designation. Most respondents reported greater demand for the services of those with the designation. None of the respondents could identify any negative impacts that the designation had on the organization or its members. Mostly, respondents reported that nonholders of the designation have continued to work in the field.

Legal Status
Within Canada, there are three levels of legal status for professional designations, and any decision to establish a designation would have to include the selection of the level appropriate to the CES. The consortium thought it unlikely at this stage that the “first” level, “licensing,” would be selected. Only one of the organizations consulted had acquired this status.

The second level of legal status is identical in all important ways to the first, with the major exception that “nonholders” of the designation may practice in
the field. In this case, the only “offence” is to falsely claim the possession of the designation. Five of the 14 associations interviewed held this status. The third level is provided by “Certification Marks” under the Federal Trademark Act. It is available to either a provincial or national association. In contrast to the first and second level, it is not an “offence” for a person to falsely claim to hold the designation; rather, the association holding the Certification Marks must seek damages in a civil court.

THE PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan made several recommendations for action by the Society. Acceptance of the recommendations would result in a sequence of professional designations to be maintained and controlled by the Society on behalf of professional evaluation in Canada.

Three successive levels of professional designation were recommended:

1. Member
   Any person who applies for membership in the Canadian Evaluation Society and who commits to adhere to the CES: (i) objectives, (ii) Program Evaluation Standards (CES, n.d.-b) and (iii) Guidelines for Ethical Conduct (CES, n.d.-a), will become a Member upon acceptance of their application.

2. Credentialed Evaluator
   2a. A CES Accreditation Board will be responsible for the determination of which programs of study will be accredited and which professional experience will be accepted as at least equivalent preparation.
   2b. The designation, Credentialed Evaluator, will be awarded upon application by a Member who has successfully completed an accredited program or its equivalent.

3. Certified Professional Evaluator (CPE):
   3a. CES should name a Board of Examiners (CESBE) to manage the CPE designation process.
   3b. The CESBE should develop operational definitions and procedures for each of the requirements of a CPE. This includes both the procedures to be used for letters of support (initial/interim approach) and the process leading to the development of standardized examinations (longer-term/targeted approach) to test core knowledge and competencies. Both the interim and the later routes to certification are valid. The interim route has the advantage of providing direct measurement of mastery as well as becoming available after a relatively short period of preparation. The longer-term route of examinations has the advantages of standardization and may be more cost-effective.
   3c. The designation, CPE, will be awarded upon application by a Member who meets all of the prescribed requirements.
4. Promotion and Publicity

4a. CES should advocate on behalf of the value and benefits of the professional designations.

4b. CES should maintain a publicly accessible directory of Members with their level of professional designation.

4c. CES should engage in advocacy and promote the unique competencies of those of its members who have been awarded a professional designation.

MINORITY REPORT

One member of the consortium prepared a minority report (Long, 2006). His disagreement was based on two concerns:

1. To confirm that a person possesses the knowledge and skills required to perform functions competently, the organization must have a clear definition of the functions of the profession (including its “products”), a complete description of the core body of knowledge (including skills) required to perform those functions, and a valid means of testing for the possession of that knowledge.

2. The Consortium estimate of 5–8 years to develop a proper foundation to meet the criteria in (1) is much too high. With a different approach, the required time would be substantially less. The alternative approach would be to adopt a basic designation and a few advanced specialized ones to accommodate the diverse types of evaluation without requiring all evaluators to become competent in all of them.

REFLECTIONS ON THE ACTION PLAN: THE CONTEXT FOR PROFESSIONALIZING EVALUATION PRACTICE

The Action Plan recommendations submitted to the CES Board reflected a typical evaluative process: we started with terms of reference, parsed those into tasks, and gathered multiple lines of evidence to address the questions. Our consortium was a mix of practitioners and academics who shared the goal of advocating for the professionalization of evaluation practice in Canada, but held different views about what that would mean in practice. The Action Plan was a melding of these views.

The literature review conducted for this study indicated that the option of credentialing had been selected by comparatively few other professions. When credentialing was adopted, it was usually seen as one (initial) step in a multilevel system of professional designations. Many members of the CES lacked formal training as evaluators, and there was a wide range of views among members of the Society regarding the content and purposes of evaluation as a “profession.” The views encompassed different philosophical and methodological perspectives and the standards for practice they entailed.
We were also aware that the Society, as with any professional association, would wish to accommodate as many members as possible. Certification as an option would not be reachable for many members. It was also reasonable to argue that much of the work of an evaluator on an evaluation team did not require the highest level of training and experience—especially when the team had the benefit of access to an evaluator with senior levels of training and experience.

**ACTION PLAN EXPANDS CONSORTIUM VIEW OF CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL EVALUATOR (CPE)**

The Action Plan proposed three levels, including the Certified Professional Evaluator. The level of Credentialed Evaluator was intended to be accessible for larger numbers of evaluators who had completed a program of study accredited by the Society or the equivalent. It was expected that the criteria to define this level of training would be set to justify the ability to work on a wide range of evaluation tasks but would also require collaboration with a Certified Professional Evaluator for more complex work such as program design and attribution studies.

The level of Member was not intended to be evidence of the ability to independently conduct evaluations. It would be appropriate both for those who had competencies in any of a range of evaluation tasks and for those who wished to support the Society. In both cases, there was a need to formally accept the CES objectives, *Program Evaluation Standards*, and *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct*.

**REFERENCES**


**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

Gerald Halpern, PhD, CE, has practiced performance measurement/management and attribution-focused evaluation over four decades. In addition to being a consultant for all levels of government in Canada as well as for the nonprofit sector, his career has included research and evaluation-related appointments in both Canada and the United States. He has been active in CES since 1982 and has received awards for Contribution to Evaluation in Canada and for Service to the Canadian Evaluation Society (2006). He has been an Adjunct Professor at several universities where he has taught program evaluation-related courses.

Benoît Gauthier, CE, is a consultant who has been active in program evaluation for over 30 years, first as a federal public servant, then as a private practitioner. He specializes in program evaluation, strategic and organizational research and intervention, market research, applied social research, and policy analysis. He has received the CES awards for Contribution to Evaluation in Canada and for Service to the Canadian Evaluation Society. He is CES’s President for 2014–2016.

James McDavid is a Professor of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. He teaches and does research and consulting in performance management, program evaluation, and performance measurement in public sector and nonprofit organizations. He has been active in the evaluation field for over 40 years. He has lived and worked in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand, and his recent publications include the second edition of *Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement: An Introduction to Practice* published by Sage.
A Made-in-Canada Credential: Developing an Evaluation Professional Designation

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Abstract: Following extensive research and consultations, the governing body of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) announced in October 2007 “that there is member support to pursue a system of professional designations for evaluators in Canada.” Some 19 months later it introduced a new voluntary service for its members, a Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation. From an acknowledged bias of one of the CE architects, this article reflects on its development, what it is, and how context and process importantly shaped this unique evaluation professional designation. Discussions of the challenges encountered in the development process and the opportunities going forward aim to contribute to the future of the CE designation in Canada and to the growing international interest in and discourse on professionalizing evaluation.

Keywords: certification, competencies, credential, professional designation, qualifications


Mots clés : certification, compétences, accréditation, titre professionnel, qualifications

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Evaluation in Canada in 2007 offered fertile ground for the development of a professional designation. While not unanimous, there was some convergence of thought and energy within the evaluation community to take steps to professionalize evaluation. Research commissioned by the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES, 2007a) provided not only strong support for the development of professional designations, but also an action plan derived from good practice in other professional associations (Halpern & Long, 2007) and a review of the literature (Huse & McDavid, 2006). In response, CES proposed (CES, 2007d) to move cautiously forward on the path toward professionalization through the development of two levels of designation; member and credentialed evaluator. A comprehensive consultation process (Cousins, Cullen, Malik, & Maicher, 2009) gave CES confidence that there was support from members to move forward with these designations.

This is the story of the development of the CES Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation; a realist response to “What works for whom under what conditions and why?” (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The author of this article was intimately involved in the development of the CE designation and brings a declared bias to the thoughts and analysis provided here. The Canadian professional designation is unique, not only as the first of its kind, but also in shape and form. This article explains why and how the CES now provides an opportunity for its members to be credentialed as professional evaluators.

The article begins by defining the scope of the initiative, including some starting definitions. Next, the Canadian Professional Designations Project (PDP) is profiled, and deliverables from the development process are described. Finally, the article reflects on the challenges in developing the CE designation, with benefit of five years’ hindsight.

**SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS**

In October 2007, National Council (the governing body of CES) announced that “CES will proceed with the next steps to establish a professional designation for evaluators in Canada” (CES, 2007b). National Council expressed its belief that there was sufficient member support to pursue a system of professional designations and directed that the approach prescribed in their Response to the Action Plan (CES, 2007d) be pursued. This was a critical starting point for the professional designations project.

The Action Plan (CES, 2007a), discussed earlier in this issue (Halpern, Gauthier, & McDavid, 2015), was clear in recommending that the CES develop three successive levels of designation within the professional association: member, open to all who join the CES and agree to abide by its ethics and standards; credentialed evaluator, to reflect an entry level of education and/or experience in evaluation; and certified professional evaluator, based initially on peer review assessment and, possibly later, examination. National Council opted for a more cautious and incremental process for professional designations, and CES set in
motion the development of member and credentialed evaluator designations. The member-level designation was later removed from the scope of the PDP and considered as a task for the Member Services Committee of National Council. As of this writing, the member designation has not been implemented.

Importantly, National Council did not at that time support the development of the certification level of designation. Nor did they support a system of accreditation, sanctioning of courses, or programs of education or training (as suggested in the Action Plan). CES (2007d) expressed concern with the current state of the education and training infrastructure in Canada and the lack of consensus on a body of knowledge to support either accreditation or the more advanced designation of certification.

Professionalization may come in the form of credentialing, certification, or licensure and these terms are not always used in a consistent manner. For the purposes of the CES initiative on professionalization, Council requested a “study [that] would provide CES with models and processes of credentialing that would facilitate the establishment of such a system and identify the pro's and con's of credentialing versus certification or licensing” (CES, 2006, p. 2). Working definitions for credential and certification drew heavily from Altschuld (2005) and are provided and discussed in some detail by Halpern et al. (2015).

Definitions for credentialing and certification are largely built around the process for earning and awarding the designation. A credential speaks to having completed specified education and/or experience, and certification is generally awarded after an exam and/or portfolio-based independent assessment. As Perrin (2005) points out,

[C]ertification (literally the issue of a certificate) can range from being required to pass an examination or to otherwise demonstrate one’s competencies, to successful participation in an accredited course of study, to certification of attendance at a course (even if someone sleeps throughout the entire course, or perhaps slips out the door after signing the attendance registry). (p. 181)

Gussman (2005) also speaks to process differences and adds that legal considerations, “licensing and certification of individuals involve arduous processes and appear to raise the spectre of potential legal challenges. ‘Credentialing’ is a looser form of certification and this approach leads into the identification of core competencies” (p. 2). Here meanings given to credentialing and certification are linked to rigour in how the designation is awarded (and thus its credibility), as well as serving to define what the designation says about its holder.

The terms credentialing and certification took on additional meaning in CES’s professional designation project. The authors of the Action Plan (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2007a) described their proposed credential designation as entry level, while certification was mastery (as independently assessed). In the Action Plan the three levels of designations were described as a ladder, where Credentialed Evaluators would tend to be more junior personnel and most often work under the supervision of a Certified Professional Evaluator (CPE). In the plan,
the designations have explicit levels of expertise or competence assigned to them, an approach also applied in other professional organizations (Halpern & Long, 2007).

In its response to the Action Plan (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2007d), CES did not establish the credential as being entry level. CES indicated that the credential was to include consideration of experience and education and would not preclude future development of a certification process, should this be seen as necessary by the membership at a future date. CES called for a Credentialing Board to be established as a decision-making body for the credential.

These issues—the meaning of a designation, the process to award a designation, and the extent to which a designation speaks to levels of expertise—were important challenges in the design of the Credentialed Evaluator designation.

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS PROJECT PROFILE

The Professional Designations Project took place from October 2007 to May 2009, when it was approved as an ongoing program and the Credentialed Evaluator designation was established as a voluntary service of CES. A detailed Project Plan (CES, 2007c) was developed at the outset of the initiative and included a discussion of the project scope, approach, roles, responsibilities, and work plan. The project was committed to principles of inclusiveness, transparency, feasibility, utility, and partnering (CES, 2007c). These elements had formed the cornerstones of successful consultations on pursuing a professional designation (Cousins et al., 2009) and were deemed critical both to the development process and, substantively, to the nature of any designation developed. The Project Plan also included a logic model, shown as Figure 1.

Assumptions articulated by National Council (CES, 2007d, p.4) concerning a multitiered system of designations, held strong for the upcoming undertaking:

- that sufficient impetus and justification for system development and installation exists;
- that ample training and professional development exists or will exist;
- that an adequate foundational knowledge base for the profession exists or will exist;
- that setup costs and ongoing maintenance costs would not be prohibitive.

Goal and Objectives

Defining la problematique is an important first step in articulating goals and objectives. What was CES trying to address in pursuing a professional designation? At the outset of the PDP, two distinct but interconnected issues dominated evaluation community discourse: evaluation identity and evaluation quality. Issues of evaluation quality were tied to increased involvement of non-evaluators in evaluation work, a lack of defined entry requirements for the discipline, lack of clarity around the definition of evaluation, diverse and unpatterned career path of
GOAL
To define, recognize, and promote the practice of ethical, high quality, and competent evaluation in Canada through the creation of a system for professional designations in CES

ACTIVITIES
- To build and augment external partnerships and a system of professional designations in Canada
- To identify, define, build, and enhance relationships with organizations that are affected by and can support CES professional designations
- Agreements and plans with provincial, territorial, & federal governments, universities, & other professional groups

IMPACT
There is clarity and definition for and within the evaluation discipline/practice in Canada

IMMEDIATE
- A viable financial plan, administrative system, criteria, process, & marketing plan for designations are adopted by National Council

OUTCOMES
- Increased reciprocal activities and interaction between CES & identified partners & stakeholders

OBJECTIVES
- Undertake a crosswalk of competencies to devise, consult, & approve competencies, ethics, & standards for Canadian evaluation
- To develop & make broadly known the ethics, standards, & core competencies for Canadian evaluation
- To recognize degrees of competency within Canadian evaluation practice
- Define, market, & establish a system of recognized Canadian evaluation practitioners

OUTPUTS
- Core competencies, ethics, & standards are adopted from int’l best practices, Cdn experience, & member consultations
- Business & financial plans, CES Credentialing Board & admin systems & processes
- Approved criteria for CES Member & Credentialed Evaluator

INTERMEDIATE
- Members are satisfied with the system of professional designations
- Members are satisfied with the system of professional designations
- Core competencies, ethics, & standards are adopted from int’l best practices, Cdn experience, & member consultations
- Business & financial plans, CES Credentialing Board & admin systems & processes

IMPROVE
- Members are satisfied with the system of professional designations
- External organizations support, promote, and make use of the Canadian designation system in Canada
- Business & financial plans, CES Credentialing Board & admin systems & processes
- Members are satisfied with the system of professional designations
- Increased reciprocal activities and interaction between CES & identified partners & stakeholders

Figure 1: Professional Designation Project Logic Model
evaluators, and gaps in available evaluation education and professional development (Cousins & Aubrey, 2006; Gussman, 2005).

Rowe (2014) questions whether evaluation quality will be influenced by a system of professional designations, at any level, and is echoed by Perrin (2005): “[A]re shoddy evaluations done predominantly by non-evaluators who might be screened out by certification?” (p. 185). The relationship between professional designations and improved quality has not been established, at least not in the evaluation profession. It is not clear if consumers of evaluation benefit from a professional designation through improved evaluation quality, an issue worthy of further research and study. Although some may argue that improving quality is the only valid reason to pursue professional designations (Perrin, 2005), the PDP’s goal was to begin the process of defining an identity for the community.

The PDP’s goal was “to define, recognize, and promote the practice of ethical, high quality and competent evaluation in Canada through the creation of a system of professional designations in CES,” and its stated desired impact was that there be “clarity and definition for and within the evaluation discipline/practice in Canada.”

The evaluation “identity crisis” involved a lack of clear demarcations and defined parameters for the evaluation function (CES, 2006). Observations ranged from somewhat dire predictions of “evaluation per se in Canada is in need of a distinct identity to ensure its survival” (Gussman, 2005, p. 10) and “if CES does not take control of its own field of expertise, it is possible that other professionals (such as management consultants, management accountants and internal auditors) will ‘fill the vacuum’” (CES, 2007a, p. 5) to a more moderate analysis of “identification with evaluation as a profession is not strong, and quite weak in some sectors and regions” (Borys, Gauthier, Kishchuk, & Roy, 2005, p. 16) and there is support for “development of an identification with a professional community” (Gauthier, Borys, Kishchuk, & Roy, 2006).

The goal and objectives of the PDP were in keeping with the mandate of CES, which is dedicated to the advancement of evaluation theory and practice.

Structure

CES National Council invested a Professional Designations Core Committee (PDCC) with responsibility to move forward on the approach outlined in their Response to the Action Plan (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2007d). This committee included three members of National Council and reported to the CES President and National Council. The core committee was responsible for the project design, management, and implementation. The project structure also included three subcommittees, each chaired by a member of the PDCC (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2007c):

- Credentialing subcommittee (CSC): to define the professional designations for CES and develop and implement a sustainable system of delivery through a Credentialing Board
• Infrastructure subcommittee (ISC): to create a sustainable infrastructure (within CES) for a system of voluntary professional designations for CES members
• Partnerships & Outreach subcommittee (POSC): to build and augment external outreach and partnerships to those who may be impacted by and/or support the professional designation project.

The project spanned the tenure of two CES Presidents, both of whom demonstrated strong commitment to and leadership for the PDP. They facilitated open and frank exchanges among the community (on and off National Council) and ensured there was time and space allotted to the 19-month-long conversation within the executive and governing body of the organization. In addition to offering progress reports at regular National Council meetings, the PDCC convened special teleconference sessions to consult with CES National Council at key points in the development process.

Transparency was important and included openness between the PDP and National Council, as well as between PDP/National Council and the CES membership. At the outset, the full Project Plan (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2007c) was shared with the CES membership, including the terms of reference for the core committee and three subcommittees. Throughout the project, the PDCC published quarterly updates on the CES website, to keep the membership informed of the project’s progress. A plenary session at the 2008 CES National Conference was devoted to reporting on the project’s progress.

Project personnel produced a flyer explaining the nature of the project and had it distributed at all CES training courses. In addition, the CES President sent a letter to the chapter Presidents, soliciting their assistance in communicating the initiative to key contacts in their respective jurisdictions. A generic letter was provided detailing the CES’s plans for a professional designation. Over 60 letters, issued under the signatures of the CES President and the chapter Presidents, were sent to contacts in provincial and federal governments, including Ministers and Deputy Ministers with responsibility for the evaluation function. Finally, a practice note was written for the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation (CJPE) at the mid point in the project, which unfortunately was not published.

Activities
The management of the project by the PDCC was a significant undertaking. Populating the subcommittees was done through an open call to CES members for volunteers to assist on the project. The initial 21 CES member volunteers changed with exits and new entrants over the 19 months of the project, due to volunteer availability and interest. Ultimately the project involved 34 individuals representing all but three of CES’s 12 regionally based chapters. As project volunteers were not forthcoming from Manitoba, PEI, or Nova Scotia, the National Council representatives for these chapters played a larger role in communicating to the chapters and coordinating consultations. The PDCC members were acutely
aware of the lack of a francophone representative on the core committee. There was a concerted effort to engage with the Quebec chapter of the CES and to reach out for francophone members on the subcommittees.

The core committee and three subcommittees worked primarily through distance technologies (Skype, e-mail, and conference calls). The PDCC usually met bimonthly, although a more intense schedule was required in the latter months. Each of the subcommittees operated within its own terms of reference and work plan. Subcommittee meetings were generally convened on a monthly basis but occurred more frequently as deliverables were being produced. The PDCC called an “all committees” meeting on two occasions during the project, to share the progress with all volunteers and solicit their input on key deliverables.

Inclusiveness was an important principle for the conduct of the project. Although the project’s reach across CES chapters was not complete (9 of 12), it served to bring regional views to the development table. The PDP volunteers included practitioners, academics, representatives from both the private and public sectors, and also came from different academic disciplines. Each individual made a significant commitment and contribution to the project and brought unique expertise and skills that were used to the fullest extent possible.

At any given time in the development period, some 23 individuals across Canada were working to build this designation. Not only did this provide a richness of expertise and experience, but the volunteers on the project proved to be ambassadors in their respective regions. They kept the national conversation—the buzz—going during the development process and were experts and champions when consulting on the CE model.

Project activities, as organized by subcommittees, involved (a) research and development, (b) program infrastructure development, and (c) outreach and consultations. In addition to the reporting or accountability communications mentioned in the previous section, communication and consultation with CES members over these 19 months was intense and included the following:

- a member-wide survey on CES proposed competencies
- opinion leader consultations for validation of competencies and descriptors
- CE model consultations in each of the 12 chapters, with consolidated reporting
- two open, national CE model consultations sessions (electronic)
- CE application and mock credentialing board testing process
- two plenary sessions at CES conferences (2008 and 2009).

PDP volunteers either conducted the consultations or prepared the materials for consultations within chapters. Results of all consultations were analyzed and reported to National Council and now serve as a valuable historical record and resource.

Other project outputs included the development of CE application and member guidance documents, procedures for applications and appeals, Credentialing
Board terms of reference and operating guidelines, and a job description for an Application Administrator. A program proposal for the new Professional Designations Program was developed and included a new CES organizational chart with associated new roles defined, a cost-sensitivity analysis for pricing the CE, a CES policy statement on the PDP and identified bylaw implications, an implementation plan, and a monitoring and evaluation plan. The model for the CE was developed with significant effort and attention on competencies, as discussed in detail below.

Resources

The PDCC investigated options for independent funding support at the outset of the project, in the hope of hiring external resources to lead and/or undertake the project. Two grant applications were unsuccessful, and the project was largely accomplished with volunteered resources. Project budgets were prepared and monitored. The CES spent a total of $18,250 over the 19-month development period; these funds were used primarily for translation (65%) of communications materials and teleconference meetings. In addition the CES received 450 days of volunteer time from its 34 volunteers (as tracked by the PDCC). This is an estimated value of $350,000 for in-kind service! The total cost of developing the CE was $365,000, with 95% of that amount being in kind.

CREATING THE DESIGNATION: THE HOUSE THAT CES BUILT

Roughly the first year of the project was focused on “pouring the foundations” for the professional designation. Substantively the CE was built on three pillars: ethics, standards, and competencies as prescribed in the Action Plan (CES, 2007a) and Response (CES, 2007d). The PDCC and its subcommittees incrementally built these foundations for a professional designation before turning their attention to the actual substance of the designation.

For the purposes of this initiative, the PDP defined ethics as speaking to behavioural norms and standards as the foundation for evaluation work product. This approach reflected how the CES evaluation community tended to define these two important underpinnings to professionalization. The PDP found, as have others (e.g., Picciotto, 2005), significant variation in the use of the terms ethics and standards, as well as approaches to articulating these. Some evaluation associations incorporate ethics into standards and some into guidelines or tools for practice.

Ethics

CES had adopted its Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in 1996, following extensive development and consultation by an ad hoc committee of National Council, the Standards Development Committee. Member consultations had informed a discussion paper (CES, 1992) followed by panel discussions, revisions, and approval. A further review was undertaken in 2006 by the Administration Committee of
National Council, accompanied by presentations at the 2006 CES conference, and no modifications were felt necessary.

The PDP undertook research into ethics in 10 or so other evaluation professional associations to examine various approaches. Only one (in this admittedly limited review)—the Australasian Evaluation Society (AES, 1997)—specified a distinct Code of Ethics. The CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct is somewhat less comprehensive than the AES Code, which includes elements of ethical conduct related to the members’ obligations to their professional association, to evaluation colleagues, and to the public at large. The CES guidelines operate at a lower level, limiting issues of accountability to the project, fiscal, and client management issues.

A Comparison of Evaluation Ethics (CES, 2008) was developed and accompanied the PDCC recommendation to National Council that the current Guidelines for Ethical Conduct be reaffirmed. The PDCC felt that the CES guidelines, in combination with adoption of standards (discussed next), was a sufficient base on which to move forward with the designation. This was passed by National Council in February 2008.

**Standards**

CES has long been an active member of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE), a joint United States and Canadian organization incorporated exclusively for developing evaluation standards. The program evaluation standards and other standards produced by the Joint Committee are endorsed by the American National Standards Institute through a rigorous process of consultation, validation, and field testing by the Canadian and US evaluation communities. The American National Standards Institute and the Standards Council of Canada are members of the International Standards Organization (ISO), which sets standards across countries for business, government and society.

The PDCC prepared some history on the standards and recommended these be formally adopted by CES. CES National Council voted unanimously in March 2008 to adopt the Program Evaluation Standards of the JCSEE as Canadian guidelines for quality practice. The standards are reviewed and revised every five years by the JCSEE.

**Competencies**

The development of Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice (CCEP; CES, 2009) was a critically important and stand-alone accomplishment of the project. Maicher and Frank (2015) examine this aspect of the PDP in detail, the substance of the CCEP, and the development of the associated descriptors that serve to define each competency. The CES-approved suite of competencies is largely based on work conducted in the United States evaluation community (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005) and was informed by ongoing support of key colleagues King and Stevahn during the PDP.
Two issues are important as context for this article. First, the development of competencies was perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of the PDP—it was not the substance or content that was problematic, but the rationale for their development and use in the professional designation. The project was operating with somewhat conflicting directions. Although research had pointed to the need for competencies as a basis for certification (CES, 2007a), the PDP was mandated to build a credential, typically based on accredited courses or programs, education, and experience elements. However, CES (2007d, p. 7) identified “as a pivotal first step the undertaking of a cross-walk or cross referencing of existing professional evaluation knowledge frameworks as a basis for deciding criteria that would underlie a system of professional credentialing.” National Council favoured the development of competencies as means of articulating the knowledge base—the skills and knowledge an individual needs to be an evaluator.

Second, there were and continue to be variations in the use of competencies that cause some confusion and debate on the CCEP. In some workplaces, such as the federal government, competencies are specified at levels (such as junior, intermediate, and senior) and are used to support job descriptions, recruitment, and salary classification systems. This was not the approach taken in the PDP, which looked to identify key elements in the evaluation experience and keep the competencies generic so as to include (and not preclude) acceptance by those who specialized in certain evaluation approaches or sectors.

Credentialed Evaluator Designation

As the PDP team gained confidence in the three pillars and the positive feedback it was receiving on this work, they moved forward with the credentialed evaluator designation. First, National Council was engaged in further discussions on the designation in their fall 2008 meeting. CES National Council reinforced their vision that the credential qualifications were to incorporate a mix of experience and education and agreed on what the designation was designed to say: *The holder has provided evidence of education and experience required to be a competent evaluator.* This is an important definition, as it is not attesting to the competence of the individual (something that would be more applicable to certification processes), but to the fact that CES has identified what education and experience elements are critical to evaluation practice and that the CE has provided proof of same. The CES was fortunate to have as its president a lawyer and active member of the Barreau du Québec (Quebec Bar) who was able to confirm this CE definition would not infer legal liability on the part of CES.

The designation qualifications are

- **Qualification 1:** evidence of graduate-level degree or certificate. The applicant is asked for evidence of education—a copy of their degree.
- **Qualification 2:** evidence of 2 years (full-time equivalent) evaluation-related work experience within the last 10 years. Statements of work experience are supplemented with letter(s) of reference.
Qualification 3: education and/or experience related to 70% of the competencies in each of the five domains of Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice. Applicants draw selectively from their education and/or experience to describe in a short narrative how the competency has been accomplished. A minimum of 70% of competencies in each of the five domains are required.

An important element of the CE is a requirement for ongoing professional development to maintain the designation. Credentialed Evaluators must undertake and report a minimum of 40 hours of professional development over three years.

Development of the requirements for the CE designation was guided by principles of inclusiveness and feasibility. Requirements were developed by the PDP team with the CES membership in mind, creating a designation that would be relevant to the experience and education of the Canadian evaluation community. The CE was not defined at a level (junior or expert), but was shaped on the characteristics of those members who were successfully practicing evaluation.

Several factors influenced the education qualification in the designation. Canadian evaluators have diverse educational backgrounds, largely in health, education, psychology, and sociology. Approximately 60% held a master’s degree, 20% a bachelor degree, and the balance had a doctorate or postdoctorate-level education (Buchanan & Kuji-Shikatani, 2014). The most obvious choice for an education requirement, a degree in evaluation, was nowhere to be found in Canada. In most cases evaluation was being taught in graduate programs that otherwise specialized in a specific academic discipline, although graduate certificate programs in evaluation were starting to be developed (Cousins & Aubrey, 2006). How then to set an educational qualification for the credential? If not evaluation-specific subject matter, what did the education system contribute to the evaluator’s knowledge and skill set?

The PDP looked to the Canadian education system to see how undergraduate and graduate levels were differentiated, regardless of discipline. Table 1 provides generic competencies that a holder of the specified qualification is expected to master, in varying degrees at different levels (Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, 2009).

Skills important to evaluation, including research, critical thinking, and capacity to work creatively and autonomously in situations of ambiguity and uncertainty, were best aligned with a master’s level of education. The PDP team set the educational qualification at a graduate level. Either a graduate degree or a certificate, from the Canadian education system or judged to be equivalent to such, would be acceptable.

Acceptable options for graduate-level education were also defined. Applicants without the stated requirement were invited to pursue a process of identifying how their background experiences equated to the required formal education, through
**Table 1. Ontario Qualifications Framework (excerpt)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Baccalaureate/bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Master’s degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual &amp; methodological awareness/research and scholarship</strong></td>
<td>An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to a) Evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; b) Devise and sustain arguments or solve problems.</td>
<td>a) A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that (i) enables a working comprehension of how established techniques of research and inquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline; (ii) enables a critical evaluation of current research and advanced research and scholarship in the discipline or area of professional competence; and (iii) enables a treatment of complex issues and judgements based on established principles and techniques; b) On the basis of that competence, has shown at least one of the following: (i) the development and support of a sustained argument in written form; and (ii) originality in the application of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application of knowledge</strong></td>
<td>a) The ability to review, present, and interpret quantitative and qualitative information; b) The ability to use a range of established techniques; c) The ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</td>
<td>Competence in the research process by applying an existing body of knowledge in the critical analysis of a new question or of a specific problem or issue in a new setting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
 Descriptor | Baccalaureate/bachelor’s degree | Master’s degree |
---|---|---|
Professional capacity/autonomy |  
  a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement, and other activities requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making and working effectively with others;  
  b) The ability to identify and address their own learning needs in changing circumstances and to select an appropriate program of further study;  
  c) Behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility. |  
  a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: (i) the exercise of initiative, and of personal responsibility and accountability; (ii) decision-making in complex situations, such as employment;  
  b) The intellectual independence required for continuing professional development;  
  c) The ethical behaviour consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research;  
  d) The ability to appreciate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts. |
Awareness of limits of knowledge | An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and how this might influence their analyses and interpretations. | Cognizance of the complexity of knowledge and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines. |
a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). In addition, degrees obtained outside of Canada were acceptable if deemed equivalent to those from Canadian universities. A grandparenting clause was specifically included in the CE designation for the education qualification. In order not to disadvantage those CES members whose evaluation practice began when an undergraduate degree was more commonly the foundation of professional preparation, the education requirement was waived for current members who did not have graduate-level education. Current members were defined as those whose name appeared in the June 1, 2009 CES membership list.

The selection of two years for the experience qualification was somewhat arbitrary. Here again there was extensive discussion among the PDP team and with National Council. Two years of experience was considered to provide sufficient time for an applicant to have been exposed to and undertaken the behaviourally based elements in the competencies. It was not considered either entry-level or expert, but in combination with the other two qualifications two years was seen as a reasonable amount of experience to be competent. This is an important feature of the CE requirements: they are taken as a whole, in combination or as a package, with no individual requirement being sufficient. Setting the required length of experience at two years was strongly supported in the member consultation process, which also lead to the addition of “within the last ten years” in recognition that evaluation is not always the full-time focus of Canadian practitioners (Borys et al., 2005).

The third requirement was developed to allow applicants to demonstrate (to reviewers on the Credentialing Board) how their education and experience aligns and equips them with the approved evaluation competencies. The initial CE model presented to the membership proposed a requirement that applicants show education and experience for 60% of competencies in each domain. The requirement was adjusted to 70%, based on feedback from the consultation process. The PDP team considered this third requirement to be somewhat of a portfolio-based approach, allowing members to self-assess and articulate their experience and education. The qualification recognizes that not all evaluators need to know everything (Perrin, 2005; Zorzi, McGuire, & Perrin, 2002) and was designed to allow for the acknowledged diversity in the community. Diversity applies to both the routes taken to the profession as well as the range of approaches used by evaluators. Perrin (2005) applauds and values this diversity as a source of strength in our community, and cautions against any professional designation constraining or limiting these characteristics. The PDCC was of like mind.

As the expression says, the devil is in the details, and the details of the CE qualifications were not without challenges, especially the requirement to demonstrate alignment of education and experience with competency statements. Of note, a small group of opinion leaders (some of them co-authors of the Action Plan, Canadian Evaluation Society, 2007a) identified issues with the use of competencies in a credential. They first expressed concerns following the 2008 conference and again when the PDCC engaged them as a challenge group to
critique the proposed CE model in early 2009. The discussion centred around three key issues:

1. The use of competencies is a fundamentally flawed application of the credentialing level of professional designation, more appropriate to the level of certification where the designation speaks to the application of skills and knowledge.
2. The proposed model for the CE falls somewhere between a credential and a certification.
3. The credentialing system should be fact-based, not assessment-based.

The “challenge group” remained unconvinced and developed an alternative proposal (April 21, 2009) submitted to the PDCC and National Council and presented during information sessions in the National Capital chapter (the home chapter for the authors of the alternative). Although this alternative did not receive significant support in the consultations on the CE model, the group was quite correct in labelling the PDP’s CE model as “somewhere between a credential and certification.” The PDP was knowingly introducing a novel approach: credify, a term that may be defined as

*credify* v.t. a process consisting of 2/3 credentialing and 1/3 certification to award a professional designation.

The three-pronged qualification for the CE was the PDP response for a professional designation with “meaning and substance” that spoke to the Canadian evaluation community and experience. The use of competencies in the application and review process was intended to provide the designation with definition, credibility, and a level of consistency. The project struggled to arrive at the proposed model and looked carefully at alternatives, some of which follow.

Where credentialing typically recognized the education and/or experience of an individual, research had shown many different approaches (Altschuld, 2005; CES, 2007a). In some cases, a credential simply recognized completion of education or training. If the CE designation was to limit itself to an education qualification, it would be awarded to those with a degree in any discipline, saying nothing about the individual’s knowledge of evaluation. The CES offers an introductory training program on evaluation—their Essential Skills Series. Aligning the CE to completion of this training was also not appropriate because it is only a four-day, high-level course and not designed to produce fully rounded practitioners.

A credential solely based on experience provided challenges as well. The CES evaluation community came to evaluation from many diverse experiences, and frequently not as a result of a planned evaluation career path (Borys et al., 2005). Two or five years in a job with the title “evaluator,” as shown in a CV or through references, did not necessarily speak to the evaluation competence of an individual. Using only a combination of experience and education, as is often the case in a credential (CES, 2007a), was also problematic. Without some type of assessment,
what was a CES credential saying if a member held a master’s degree and had 2 (or 20) years of evaluation experience in their CV?

Thus the PDP sought to build a practical designation (*what works*) for the Canadian evaluation community (*for whom*) within the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation context of Canada (*under what conditions*) to begin the process of defining an evaluation identity (*and why*). The PDP team consciously chose to straddle conventional wisdom around credentialing and certifying in their CE model. The PDP team believed the competencies, ethics, and standards were collectively a strong response to identity questions, and their inclusion in the designation was important in responding to the defined *problematique*.

The reader may ask why the CES did not move directly to an exam-based certification process. The answer is that the CES was not convinced the Canadian evaluation community was ready for an exam-based approach. In addition to not being mandated to develop a certification process, the PDP team understood there was room to move into designations in a more cautious and perhaps gentler approach. Although the competencies were well received in consultations, they were new and untested. In some respects, they “flew below the radar” (*Buchanan & Kuji-Shikatani, 2014*), as member consultations focused attention on the CE model and the three qualifications. There was a need to assess the application of these competencies, to see if they resonated with the community as defining features in a designation and as a professional identity.

The PDP was committed to the requirement to build a feasible designation. The costs of developing an examination and the administration behind that process far exceeded what was being considered in the CE model. And, in spite of efforts on the part of the PDP team, it was impossible to confidently estimate the level of demand for a CES professional designation. Best estimates ranged from 10% to 60% of the CES membership (*Borys et al., 2005; CES, 2009*), too broad a spread to be helpful.

The model for the Credentialed Evaluator therefore incorporated elements of education and experience, and saw the need for an applicant to convincingly align both of these to most competencies. Requisite skills of an evaluator, analysis and dealing with evidence, was felt to be an appropriate backdrop for this third requirement. The PDP team was mindful that their mandate included the establishment of a Credentialing Board as a means of peer assessment for the designation (*CES, 2007d*). The CE defines the holder as having the experience and education to be competent—not that CES has certified the holder as competent, as might be the case in a certification (exam) process.

This quasi-portfolio-based approach to the application process was designed to give the applicants wide latitude. Many different experiences and education could contribute to acquiring the required skills and knowledge in the competencies, as was (and is) the situation in the Canadian evaluation community. At the same time, the review and decision-making process through a Credentialing Board was seen to bring a level of consistency, credibility, and quality to the designation.
The PDCC believed the process was as important, if not more, than the outcome of the project. “Perhaps the most critically important and energizing part of the work is not in the result (i.e., CE), but rather in the cross-country conversation and debate on evaluator identity” (Buchanan & Kuji-Shikatani, 2014, p. 42). The process described in this article shows the importance of leadership, inclusiveness, and consultation to the success of the professional designations project. These are three critical issues that other organizations embarking on a similar path should note.

The development of the CE highlights another important leadership dimension beyond the strength of individual leadership. The professional association took the lead in the discourse on the evaluation function, as opposed to responding. There is some debate on the extent to which the practitioner-based membership of CES is influenced by or, some may argue, led by the actions of the evaluation function within the federal government. Certainly with a significant proportion of CES members employed in or contracted by the federal government, the influence is strong. With the PDP and adoption of the CE, CES took the lead in describing its professional parameters, in defining what evaluation is and what it takes to do it.

Efforts to make the federal government “system” more intimately engaged with the designation and development process were not particularly successful nor, in hindsight, undertaken as strategically as might have been done. Information was exchanged with key stakeholders in the federal government, and in all cases there was continued interest in the development process. However, the PDP failed to more substantively engage the federal or provincial governments in a manner that would recognize the credential within the human resource systems of government. To do so would not have been an easy task. There are policies, job descriptions, salary classifications, and collective agreements that would be implicated. However, in view of the dominance of government-based work in both the supply and demand side of evaluation, this issue is important and continues to require attention.

Two of the four starting assumptions articulated by CES (2007d) can, thus far, be seen as successfully realized: (a) that sufficient impetus and justification for system development and installation exists and (b) that set-up costs and ongoing maintenance costs would not be prohibitive. With benefit of innovative implementation of the designation program (Kuji-Shikatani, 2015), a critical mass of CEs now exists and the program is financially viable. There are about 250 designated Credentialed Evaluators (as of June 2014) representing about 17% of the CES
membership. CES annual reports show marginal positive revenue over expenses in the audited statements for 2010, 2011, and 2012. Initial budget forecasts and price-sensitivity analyses seem to have held strong in these early years of the program.

The other two starting assumptions pose continued risk for the professional designations program. First, it was assumed that “ample training and professional development exists or will exist” (CES, 2007d, p. 4). The limited availability of opportunities in evaluation education and training was an important consideration in the design of the CE qualifications and in the level of required ongoing professional development (set somewhat below that of other professional organizations). The PDP worked as co-developer of the first business case establishing the Consortium of Universities for Evaluation Education (CUEE, 2008). The CUEE continues to grow and build educational programming to support the evaluation profession (Kuji-Shikatani, McDavid, Cousins, & Buchanan, 2012), and the CES is an important partner and contributor to the CUEE.

On the professional development side, the CES is perhaps on less stable footing. It has a bifurcated approach to professional development, owning and delivering some courses and purchasing or simply advertising independent offerings from private providers. It is not clear that the number or nature of offerings of professional development have increased or been made more accessible. The new professional designations program will require a more strategic and proactive effort to ensure the evaluation community across Canada has access to continuous learning opportunities.

Finally, CES (2007d, p. 4) indicated that a system of designations assumes that “an adequate foundational knowledge base for the profession exists or will exist.” In this regard, the PDP led to some progress through the development and approval of evaluation competencies and their associated descriptors. However, there is a critical need for this knowledge base to be examined, researched, updated, and managed as the living and evolving entity that it is. Perrin (2005) warns of an overreliance on credentials and the “certification of skills for yesterday.”

The CE program is a major accomplishment, and it requires ongoing management, leadership, and direction, notably in relation to the knowledge base and professional development. It is not uncommon in volunteer-based organizations that energy and momentum is successfully corralled for the purposes of innovating, but gains can be lost in day-to-day delivery and management. There is a vital need for CES to develop systemic mechanisms for regular review, validation, and updating of the key pillars of the CE and to actively support new professional development needs.

NOTE

1 The group of CES opinion leaders was led by Benoît Gauthier and included Shelley Borys, Gerald Halpern, Marthe Hurteau, John Mayne, Simon Roy, and Bob Segsworth. Communications (through e-mails) and working notes of the PDCC documented the exchange recounted here.
REFERENCES


**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

Heather Buchanan has 20 years of experience as an independent consultant specializing in evaluation and, notably, building evaluation capacity in Canada and internationally. She holds a Master’s degree in Public Administration and the CE designation from the CES. She led the professional designations project and has continued to support professionalizing evaluation as a member of the Credentialing Board. Heather was the recipient of CES awards in 2003 for leadership and in 2010 for contribution to evaluation in Canada.
The Development and Initial Validation of Competencies and Descriptors for Canadian Evaluation Practice

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Abstract: This article presents the Canadian experience of establishing competencies as part of a professional designation project. First we discuss the foundations of the competencies, including the preliminary work of compiling a cross-walk of evaluator competencies, a document that then served as the basis for consultations across Canada. The next steps were to extract five broad themes or competency domains, each containing specific competencies, and to develop descriptors for each competency. A group of Canadian evaluation experts was then asked to rate the competencies and their descriptors. The results of this preliminary validation exercise are highlighted. To conclude, we note how the competencies and their descriptors are currently being used and look ahead to next steps.

Keywords: competency, competency domain, credential, descriptor

Résumé : Cet article présente l’élaboration de compétences dans le cadre d’un projet de titres professionnels au Canada. En premier lieu, l’on discute des fondements des compétences, incluant l’étape préliminaire de compilation d’un référentiel des compétences des évaluateurs, un document ayant ensuite servi de base pour des consultations pancanadiennes. Les prochaines étapes consistaient à identifier cinq thèmes généraux ou domaines de compétences contenant chacun leurs compétences spécifiques, ainsi qu’à élaborer des descripteurs pour chaque compétence. L’on a ensuite demandé à un groupe d’experts évaluateurs canadiens de coter chaque compétence et ses descripteurs. Les résultats de cet exercice préliminaire de validation sont soulignés ici. Pour conclure, l’on note comment on se sert actuellement des compétences et de leurs descripteurs et l’on se penche sur les prochaines étapes.

Mots clés : compétence, domaine de compétence, accréditation, descripteur

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In 2007, the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) embarked on an ambitious initiative called the Professional Designation Project. This project required, as one of its foundational pieces, a set of competencies for Canadian evaluators. CES saw the refinement of existing lists of competencies and the creation of descriptors as a reflective process that would provide guidance for the evaluation profession and contribute to a continuous monitoring and review of professional parameters and practice. As Eoyang and Berkas (1998) point out, systems do not move inexorably toward an end-point. The intent of developing these descriptors was to provide a base that could be built upon or revised as current knowledge and environments change. As such, the competencies and descriptors are not static and were not developed as end-points. They are meant to be reviewed on a regular basis.

PURPOSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES FOR CANADIAN EVALUATION PRACTICE

The document CES competencies for Canadian evaluation practice (2010) serves as a pillar for the professional designation instituted in 2009/2010 by CES. However, the competencies also serve other important functions. They provide evaluators with a defined suite of skills and knowledge to strive for in their personal and professional development. They provide educators with guidance on what is important in evaluation education and training. And they provide those who have a need for evaluation services with a view of what they can expect from a professional evaluator. Most importantly, the competencies provide a coherent set of conceptual and pragmatic professional attributes to guide evaluation practice. It should be noted that the evaluator competencies are core attributes and not a comprehensive set of requirements that anticipate and predict all unique contexts and evaluation activities. In addition, other organizations have produced their own lists of competencies, specific to their particular needs and environments. The CES competencies are meant not to supplant these but to provide a generic set applicable in many different contexts.

Given the diversity of the field of evaluation, CES National Council was “cautiously optimistic” that these competencies, subject to validation, would form the basis for a credential and guide decisions about training. The optimism seems well founded as some universities are now using the competencies to help structure courses.

STRUCTURE OF THE CREDENTIALING SUB-COMMITTEE

As National Council moved forward with a system of professional designation for its members in August 2007, the Professional Designation Core Committee (PDCC) was established to facilitate development and implementation. Reporting to the PDCC, the Credentialing Sub-Committee’s mandate was to assist with establishing competencies and also to write and validate descriptors. The membership of the committee fluctuated over the 19 months of work; overall approximately 14 evaluators from most regions of Canada were involved. The members
self-selected and worked as core or associate members. Core members were part of the decision-making process and regularly communicated through teleconferencing. Associate members functioned on an as-needed basis or as their other commitments allowed. All were generous with their time and inputs.

COMPETENCIES

- Competencies are defined as knowledge, skills, experiences, and dispositions of persons belonging to a profession (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005). They are used to determine that a professional has the background, knowledge, skills, and disposition to practice the profession safely and effectively (Ghere, Stevahn, King & Minnema, 2006). Competencies may be seen as abilities whose quality can be measured against well-accepted standards. They can be improved through training and experience (Stevahn et al., 2005; Parry, 1996; Gullickson & Howard, 2009; Russ-Eft, Bober, de la Teja, Foxon, & Koszalka, 2008; Huse & McDavid, 2006).

The competencies were developed using the following substructures:

- Cross-walk of existing knowledge to distill current knowledge (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2008)
- CES Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice subdivided into domains (Buchanan and Kuji-Shikatani, 2014)
- A document that elaborated and described the competencies (Canadian Evaluation Society Credentialing Sub-Committee, 2010).

COMPETENCIES FOR CANADIAN EVALUATION PRACTICE

Tracing the history of the development and formal use of evaluator competencies, Wilcox and King (2014) highlight the critical importance of a defined taxonomy of competencies to the establishment of a profession. In An Action Plan for the CES with Respect to Professional Standards for Evaluators (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2007), the authors argued for a taxonomy specific to Canadian practice. The Competencies for Canadian Evaluation practice were developed within the Professional Designations Project following an extensive review of the literature. The committee conducted a cross-walk of literature and training programs of several organizations and governments to access existing knowledge (Buchanan and Kuji-Shikatani, 2014). Common competencies were extracted from this cross-walk. They build on, and support, those that were produced by Stevahn et al. (2005).

The competencies list was adopted by the CES Council in May 2009. The list was revised after extensive consultation with the membership (Buchanan & Kuji-Shikatani, 2014). The competencies were subsequently elaborated by adding descriptors compiled by the Credentialing Sub-Committee. A further consultation and validation process with expert evaluators throughout Canada was undertaken to enhance the credibility and reliability of the descriptors.
In addition, six of the members of the Credentialing Sub-Committee conducted an internal validation of both competencies and descriptors. All of the members were long-time professional evaluators or teachers of evaluation. An attempt was made to be inclusive of the many diverse areas and fields that utilize evaluation. Not all members of the subcommittee were in agreement with all of the descriptors proposed. The objections centred on the proposed number of descriptors and the wish for increased specificity. However, the subcommittee members agreed that the descriptors could go forward to the validation stage where other experts could make suggestions.

The subcommittee considered it necessary to add a competency in the Technical Practice domain to better address qualitative methods. To accompany “assesses the validity of data” and “assesses the reliability of data,” the subcommittee added “assesses trustworthiness of data.” As defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is a standard in qualitative methods that parallels validity and reliability in quantitative methods. Since the development of the concept in the 1980s, trustworthiness has been applied to ensure rigour in qualitative methods (e.g., Patton, 2002). The International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction addresses trustworthiness in its organization’s taxonomy of competencies (Russ-Eft et al., 2008).

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESCRIPTORS
This section will describe the development of the descriptors.

Are descriptors needed?
In exploring the need for descriptors, the subcommittee found that competencies were generally clarified though various kinds of elaboration. CES members, too, indicated that the initial set of competencies needed elaboration. The descriptors would help give users of the competencies (Credentialed Evaluator [CE] applicants, CE selection board, academic course developers, and others) a shared understanding of the competencies.

Fundamental working principles articulated by the PDCC were considered in the development of descriptors. These principles were inclusiveness, partnering, utility, feasibility, and transparency. The Credentialing Sub-committee also took into account the following variables as it conducted its work on the descriptors of the competencies.

- **Clarity.** Can the descriptor be understood and interpreted reliably?
- **Feasibility.** Can the descriptor be implemented in various contexts?
- **Behavioural language.** Does the descriptor say what is to be done rather than what is understood or known?
- **Actionable.** Does the descriptor indicate action by beginning with a verb?
- **Succinctness.** Does the descriptor briefly distill the essence of the criterion?
- **Consistency of format.** Are all descriptors written in the same format?
The writers researched the descriptors for all competencies by using current literature (including numerous texts by prominent evaluators) and observations of current practice. The descriptors were subsequently reviewed by the members of the subcommittee and further distilled, changed, and corroborated. It should be noted that some members would have preferred more rigorous assessment criteria for awarding the credential. One member had previously presented a minority report to suggest a more rigorous certification process than credentialing (Long, 2007).

As the work proceeded, descriptors with similar intent or meaning were combined to achieve a manageable set, while keeping the diversity of practical applications in mind. The writers were very conscious of the number of descriptors produced so as to avoid unnecessary complexity.

The competency descriptors shown in Table 1 are samples of the total set, which can be accessed in the document at http://evaluationcanada.ca/. In the table, the heading provides the domain; on the left are the competencies and on the right the descriptors.

**Table 1.** Samples of Competency Descriptors Across Five Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 1.1</th>
<th>Descriptors of the Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Apply the five dimensions of the Standards: feasibility, propriety, utility, accuracy, and meta evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Recognize the Standards are illustrative and to be used with discernment as required in diverse contexts and propriety obligations</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 1.4</th>
<th>Descriptors of the Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considers human rights and the public welfare in evaluation practice</td>
<td>1) Address the Joint Committee Program Evaluation Propriety Standards, particularly P1 “Responsive and Inclusive Orientation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Engage in open and participatory practices demonstrating that public welfare was considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Contextualize evaluation work within human rights regimes and rights-based approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Consider roles and responsibilities of duty bearers and rights holders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Identify diverse public welfare contexts and outcomes, including gender equality, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, social class, disability, culture, religious beliefs and practices, customs, and cultural norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) Consider the balance between social and individual welfare for the good of society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.0 Technical Practice Domain
Relevant competencies focus on the specialized aspects of evaluation, such as design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting. Two sample competencies are provided.

Competency 2.3 Determines the purpose for the evaluation
Descriptors of the Competency
1) Specify the evaluation questions
2) Verify the accuracy and the appropriateness of the questions with stakeholders
3) Clarify expectations and explore possible unintended answers
4) Take into account values and assumptions underlying the purpose
5) Monitor conditions that could modify the purpose on an ongoing basis
6) Negotiate changes as required, taking the needs of the stakeholders into account

Competency 2.6 Develops evaluation designs
Descriptors of the Competency
1) Identify technically adequate designs, in the context of program/policy and strategic objectives, that address the evaluation questions; and investigate and document their quality
2) Differentiate process and outcome questions and establish appropriate indicators
3) Establish evaluation feasibility and appropriateness through stakeholder consultation and program documentation
4) Anticipate problems and limitations of the design
5) Propose innovative ideas and new solutions to problems
6) Choose most effective and efficient design given the available resources
7) Employ triangulation, where appropriate, by using one or more of the following: multiple methods, multiple researchers, multiple data sources, multiple theories

3.0 Situational Practice Domain
Competencies focus on the application of evaluative thinking in analyzing and attending to the unique interests, issues, and contextual circumstances in which evaluation skills are being applied. Two sample competencies are provided.

Competency 3.1 Respects the uniqueness of the site
Descriptors of the Competency
1) Assess and appreciate the characteristics and conditions of the evaluation site for the program/project evaluation

Competency 3.2 Examines organizational, political, community, and social contexts
Descriptors of the Competency
1) Assess the organizational structure and culture of the program/project
2) Recognize and monitor the political influences that may affect the evaluation
3) Understand and be responsive to the community in which the evaluation will occur
4) Understand and be responsive to the social context in which the evaluation will occur

(Continued)
4.0 Management Practice Domain
Competencies focus on the process of managing a project or evaluation, such as budgeting, coordinating resources, and supervising. Two sample competencies are provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 4.1</th>
<th>Descriptors of the Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defines work parameters, plans, and agreements</td>
<td>1) Develop a scope statement for the evaluation, listing the tasks to be included in the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Develop a work plan to include all phases of the evaluation including tasks, deliverables, milestones, scheduling, and resources, and who is responsible for each task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Attend to emerging realities of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Conduct contract negotiations between the stakeholders requesting funding for the evaluation and evaluation consultant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 4.3</th>
<th>Descriptors of the Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attends to issues of evaluation feasibility</td>
<td>1) Apply the Canadian/US Joint Committee Program Evaluation Feasibility standard and the ethical guidelines of the Canadian Evaluation Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Determine if the evaluation project should not occur, or if it should not occur at the time the evaluation is requested (evaluability evaluation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.0 Interpersonal Practice Domain
Competencies focus on people skills, such as communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, collaboration, and diversity. Two sample competencies are provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 5.1</th>
<th>Descriptors of the Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses written communication skills and technologies</td>
<td>1) Describe the program, its context and environment, and assumption in clear and understandable language that is easily accessible to the stakeholders addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Write reports that effectively communicate the processes of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Write concise summary reports for different audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Write conclusions and recommendations that can be easily understood and assimilated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Communicate negative findings with a view to learning and improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) Use communication technology effectively (e.g., e-mails, social networking tools, etc.)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 5.6</th>
<th>Descriptors of the Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses facilitation skills (group work)</td>
<td>1) Draw on several facilitation techniques (role play, brainstorming, simulation, building consensus, debriefing, Delphi, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Employ open, honest dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Motivate others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Integrate diverse perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Deal with challenging dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) Reach sustainable decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE VALIDATION RESEARCH

Validating is “finding or testing the truth of something” (Wordnet, Princeton University, 2014). For the purpose of developing competencies and descriptors, validation meant ensuring that the Canadian evaluation community considered them to be the key attributes of competent evaluators.

The foundation upon which the Canadian competencies were built had already been the subject of repeated validation exercises. The Taxonomy of Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators, first published by King, Stevahn, Ghere, and Minnema in 2001 and later revised by the same team (Stevahn et al., 2005), acted as the foundation for the Canadian Cross-walk of Program Evaluator Competencies (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2008). In the initial validation, the authors of the Taxonomy used a Multi-Attribute Consensus Reaching procedure with 31 participants representing diverse evaluator roles, training, and experience in Minnesota, USA. After the 2001 publication, King and the others consulted with over 100 individuals to obtain further input into the initial set of competencies. The team incorporated this input into the revised taxonomy in 2005. They also conducted a thorough cross-walk of the competencies with reference to three documents: The Program Evaluation Standards endorsed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994), the Guiding Principles for Evaluators endorsed by the American Evaluation Association (2005), and the Essential Skills Series endorsed by the Canadian Evaluation Society (1999). Using a similar approach, CES held broad consultations in Canada on the CES version, including a 2008 CES member survey to which 99 of the 1500 members (approximately 5%) responded (Buchanan & Kuji-Shikatani, 2014). Of these, a majority (75%) agreed that “overall the CES Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice provided a good basis for the development of credentials” (p. 37). Additional consultations were held across Canada by CES chapters, reaching approximately 17% of the membership.

The Credentialing Sub-Committee developed the following objectives for its subsequent validation exercise:

1. To seek expert opinion and feedback on the proposed competencies and their related descriptors to augment the base for CES adoption of these.
2. To refine as needed the draft evaluator competencies.
3. To refine and ensure that the descriptors reflect key aspects of the competencies.

It was felt essential to have input from selected experts of the evaluation community. The committee proceeded with measured caution, keeping in mind that we were building a foundation that could generate further refinement and development. At this early stage in the CES experience with professional designations, a rigorous validity study was not undertaken. The aim was to generally increase reliability and validity, and it was felt that a fairly informal approach was appropriate at this stage. The credential to be offered by the CES was to indicate
that “[t]he holder has provided evidence of education and experience required to be considered a competent evaluator” (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2010). The credential was not meant as a certification, that is, proof of attainment as measured by an examination or some other process. An external body such as a credentialing board would aim to determine the skills the applicant may have received in their education or training and review experiential evidence related to the competencies. The descriptors provided details of desirable background, knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to the competencies.

RESULTS OF THE INITIAL VALIDATION EXERCISE

Invitations went to the 46 evaluators who were on the list of CES award winners at that time (recipients of more than one award were counted once). A total of 17 invited experts responded (6 addresses were returned as not valid).

Respondents represented three sectors: universities (4), private firms (11), and government (2). Eight were located in Ontario, with the rest fairly equally distributed over all other provinces. Primary areas of work indicated by the respondents show a broad cross-section: health care, education, youth, government, policing, organizational development, human services, policy, business, training, UN, and teaching. In answer to the question about evaluation specialty, 14 respondents described a wide variety: (a) outcomes; (b) all aspects of evaluation; (c) health and social services; (d) research evaluation; (e) teach, research, practice; (f) federal government; (g) organizational development and design; (h) general; (i) community-based evaluations; (j) generalist program design; (k) assessment cost-effectiveness; (l) program design; (m) economic and financial aspects of evaluation, data-based measurement of effects; and (n) conducting multimethods program evaluation.

Respondents rated domains, competencies, and descriptors for their appropriateness to Canadian evaluator practice. The categories on the four-point scale were “inappropriate,” “somewhat appropriate,” “appropriate,” and “very appropriate.” Comments were invited. The ratings revealed overall strong support of the taxonomy among the expert reviewers. Ratings for individual domains, competencies, and descriptors were generally quite high, with some exceptions.

COMPETENCY DOMAINS

Combining the “appropriate” and “very appropriate” categories (see Table 2), the results for the domains showed the strongest support for Technical Practice (100%) and the least for Reflective Practice (77%). The only domain that received the "inappropriate" rating was Reflective Practice (2 of the 17 respondents). However, as the domain names were not yet associated with competencies, lack of familiarity with the term may have influenced the initial responses. When the competencies provided definitions of the domain, it became clear that only two of the competencies for the Reflective Practice domain were rated low.
**Table 2. Ratings of Domains**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Somewhat appropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>Very appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>38% (5)</td>
<td>38% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Practice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14% (2)</td>
<td>86% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Practice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>42% (5)</td>
<td>50% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Practice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
<td>62% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Practice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>46% (6)</td>
<td>46% (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES**

Support among the expert reviewers for competencies was strong. For the most part, competencies in all domains received “appropriate” or “very appropriate” ratings. Competencies in the Technical Practice domain received very strong support, with three competencies earning 100% “very appropriate” ratings. For an overview of the results of ratings for the 45 competencies, here are the highest “very appropriate” ratings for competencies in each of the domains:

*Reflective Practice* (total of 6 competencies)
- Applies professional evaluation standards (81%).

*Technical Practice* (total of 14 competencies)
- Understands the knowledge base of evaluation (100%)
- Develops evaluation designs (100%)
- Defines evaluation methods (100%).

*Situational Practice* (total of 9 competencies)
- Serves the information needs of intended users (73%).

*Management Practice* (total of 6 competencies)
- Identifies required resources (73%).

*Interpersonal* (total of 9 competencies)
- Uses written and verbal communication skills (71%)
- Demonstrates professional credibility (71%).

Of the 45 competencies, only the following five received below 75% when “appropriate” and “very appropriate” ratings were combined. Note that the three that were rated under 70% were considered “somewhat appropriate.”

- Pursues professional networks and self-development (74%)
- Attends to issues of evaluation use (66.7%)
- Attends to issues of organizational change (73.2%)

doi: 10.3138/cjpe.29.3.54
Shares evaluation expertise (66.7%)
- Coordinators and supervises others (66.7%).

Comments on the competencies gave suggestions for refinement and for additional competencies, and in some cases questioned the competency. Here are some examples:

**Missing: develops reliable and valid measures/tools as well as appropriate software skills.**

“Attends to issues of evaluation use” doesn’t seem strong enough. Instead of “shares evaluation expertise” (or in addition to) I’d like to see something on evaluation capacity-building.

**One can be a competent evaluation manager without supervising others.**

**Demonstrating credibility isn’t a competency on its own ... demonstrating evaluator competencies then demonstrates credibility.**

In response to the comments, several changes were made: clarifying wording, removing redundancies, splitting double-barreled competencies, and adding new competencies, to arrive at a final total of 49 competencies.

**DESCRIPTORS OF EACH COMPETENCY**

Support among the expert reviewers for the 200 descriptors was generally strong. With “appropriate” and “very appropriate” ratings combined, the results were as follows:

- 27 (14%) received 100%, mostly in the technical practice domain.
- 37 (19%) were in the 90% range.
- 158 (79%) were over 75%.
- 42 (21%) were under 75%.

The following are examples of descriptors with ratings of 100% (“appropriate” and “very appropriate” combined):

- Understand the program and the logic model
- Clarify expectations
- Take into account values and assumptions underlying the purpose
- Negotiate changes as required, and specify the evaluation questions.

Examples of descriptors with ratings under 75% (“appropriate” and “very appropriate” combined) include the following:

- Contextualize evaluation work with human rights regimes and rights-based approaches (53.9%)
- Develop monitoring strategies of change (47.6%, lowest rating).
The high approval for the descriptors in the Technical Practice domain echoes the strong support for this domain (Table 2). Although the Reflective Practice domain received the lowest acceptance (Table 2), most descriptors in this domain were rated very high, suggesting we may be correct in attributing the lower rating for the domain to an initial lack of familiarity with the term. The exception to the high Reflective Practice descriptor ratings were those for Competency 1.4: “Considers human rights and the public welfare in evaluation practice.” This competency’s five descriptors ranged from 28% to 35% (“appropriate” and “very appropriate”).

Respondents who commented on the descriptors offered many varied suggestions for improvement. These comments were carefully noted and changes were made in accordance with the recommendation, resulting in a final total of 206 descriptors.

The overall results of the expert review showed strong support for the taxonomy as a whole. Having drafted the descriptors, we were pleased with positive feedback on our efforts but were also happy to see suggestions for improvement. Both competencies and descriptors need further refinement and updating by experts from broadly ranging evaluation practices.

CHALLENGES

As members of the subcommittee helping CES develop the first evaluator professional designation in the world, we encountered several challenges. Chief among them were the resources required to carry out this project. All members of the subcommittee worked on a pro-bono basis and invested significant amounts of their time and expertise. While the competencies were built on a foundation of work conducted by others, the descriptors required extensive primary research that was at times curtailed by pressing timelines.

Our initial goals, particularly with respect to the validation process, had been somewhat more ambitious than the resources could support. Context and environment determined much of what could be realized. Rather than implement the multisteped approach that was envisioned, we proceeded with a simplified methodology. Although it had been our intent to employ several data collection methods and analyses, in the end we did what was feasible. Initially, the selected experts were to be randomly assigned to three methods of data collection, one group for the questionnaire, one for interviews, and one for a Delphi study. In actuality our resources and volunteer fatigue allowed for only the survey. Even then, the number of survey questions taxed the respondents, and some reported that it took them over one hour to complete.

Considerable fluctuation in committee membership occurred during the 19-month process. Committee changes necessitated bringing everyone up to date repeatedly. Discussions on resources and debates that had already taken place were reopened. The core members worked to achieve a balance between efficiency and extensive open consultation in an effort to address the principles of inclusiveness and transparency. This lengthened the process.
Doubts about some aspects of the taxonomy lingered among members of the subcommittee. These limitations were discussed among the group:

- There may still be too many dimensions.
- There may be unnecessary overlap.
- Descriptors vary in appropriateness.
- Some descriptors seem applicable to senior evaluators and some to more junior evaluators.
- A definition section may be needed, particularly with reference to the competencies themselves and the Reflective Practice domain.
- There was some feeling that Reflective Practice refers to values and ethics rather than to competencies.

Irrespective of these challenges, every effort was made to achieve a common platform of practice for the evaluation community and the evaluation users. It is understood that the platform will need to be stabilized and built upon. Evaluation is a diverse field of knowledge with changing practices and theories that cover several disciplines. The present competencies and descriptors will, we hope, be refined and complemented in the future.

CONCLUSION

Building a framework for valid evaluator competencies presupposes certain knowledge, skills, and dispositions. We perceive validity as the single most important aspect of identified competencies. Validity helps ensure the competencies are actionable and serve their intended purposes. Judgements based on competencies should be useful to evaluation, and beneficial to the evaluator and to the evaluation community.

A precise description of what is meant by each competency helps ensure that expectations are clear. Descriptors increase the accuracy of the competencies and support judgements based on defensible criteria. Accuracy is particularly central, because in evaluation, as in other complex and variable systems, the quality of inferences is influenced by the precision of terms.

The Reflective Practice and Interpersonal domains are particularly infused with judgements drawn from competencies and descriptors. In those domains, ethics and values strongly affect behavioural outputs specific to contexts and programs but the linkage is more tenuous than in the technical domain. Thus, the guidance provided for ethics and values in particular must be seen as trustworthy. The ethical guidelines of the Canadian Evaluation Society and the Program Evaluation Standards from the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation are critical and need to be regularly consulted by evaluators. Specificity of descriptors lessens individual interpretations and threats to their intended purpose.

Our hope is that the competencies and descriptors will fulfill all the purposes intended, helping evaluators to improve their evaluation skills, and guiding all
who seek to improve the quality of evaluations and the credibility of the field of evaluation. So far we have seen the competency document employed in the CES credentialing process and in new developments in evaluation education. We have also seen employers and agencies begin to orient their evaluation projects and hiring practices to this source. We are grateful to the many hands that contributed to the development of this important taxonomy over many years.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
What can the future bring? We would like to see a systemic mechanism of review of competencies and descriptors—one that has a regular cycle and process. Potentially, working groups could be convened, one for each domain. These groups could each consist of two to three Credentialing Board members and Credentialed Evaluators and be organized through the Vice President. To ensure coherence and check for unnecessary repetition, one member from each working group could convene with the others to review all the recommendations together. Results could then be validated at a conference workshop or presentation and approved by National Council. 

The field of evaluation may become a discipline with an elaboration of a theory that would encompass broad principles and at the same time reflect situation- and context-specific parameters. It may be a theory of change or a theory of evaluation or both. The competencies and descriptors are the basic underpinnings meant to define evaluation competencies today; they will be influenced and modified by a theory as much as they will influence it. As competencies are refined and modified, further research to validate them is required. In this process, evaluation societies could expand their network of partnerships and collaborations and together produce research that brings the field of evaluation forward as a credible and essential part of all programs, policies, and initiatives.

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Launching the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) Designation

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Abstract: How do you make a professional designation program happen within one year? What resources, processes, systems, and structures are required? This article describes how the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) implemented its national Credentialed Evaluator (CE) program through the dedication of volunteer members of the CES. The interdisciplinary nature of evaluation practice shaped the development of systems, policy, administrative procedures, governance, and management for the credentialing process. Consideration of political issues and communication with the stakeholder community were essential to the credibility of the implementation process.

Keywords: administration, designation system, implementation, infrastructure, operational, process

Résumé : Comment mettre sur pied un programme de titres professionnels en une seule année? Quelles ressources et structures, quels processus et systèmes sont nécessaires? Cet article décrit le processus d’implantation du titre d’Évaluateur accrédité, grâce au dévouement de membres bénévoles de la Société canadienne d’évaluation. La nature interdisciplinaire de l’évaluation a façonné la conception d’un système, de politiques, procédures administratives, gouvernance, et gestion pour le processus d’accréditation. La crédibilité du processus de mise en place a été soutenue par la prise en compte essentielle des enjeux politiques et de la communication avec la communauté d’intervenants.

Mots clés : administration, système des titres, implantation, infrastructure, opérationnel, processus

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© 2015 Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation / La Revue canadienne d’évaluation de programme 29.3 (Special Issue / Numéro special), 70–85 doi: 10.3138/cjpe.29.3.70
A thunderous standing ovation from more than 700 CES members at the 2009 Ottawa Conference confirmed “Yes” to the CES Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation. Thus began the journey of launching the CE designation process based on the fundamental principles of inclusiveness, partnering, utility, feasibility, and transparency in place since the planning stage (Buchanan, 2015). Every aspect of the CE designation process had to be operationalized by the next annual conference. This article, written from a phenomenological tradition, describes the various issues that needed to be collaboratively addressed, resolved, and operationalized with limited resources to implement the CE designation, and they will contribute to building knowledge about professionalization of evaluation.

CREDENTIALED EVALUATOR PROPOSAL TO PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS PROGRAM

When the CE proposal was approved in 2009 by the CES National Council, the initiative moved from a project to a CES Professional Designations Program (PDP) that required an appropriate CES infrastructure and the collaborative efforts of the whole council. During the May 2010 National Council meeting, the CES President and Council endorsed the appointment of a two-year Vice President, Professional Development Program (VP-PDP) to oversee the implementation of the PDP (Professional Designations Project Core Committee, 2009). The VP-PDP recommended the establishment of a small advisory group, comprising key players from the project volunteers or Council, to act as a sounding board for the VP and project staff. This allowed the PDP to operate with ongoing collaborative support from various experts. Every step of the PDP process was new, and several activities had to take place simultaneously. The first task for the VP-PDP was to find a project coordinator who would provide leadership and drive the implementation process. This paid position alleviated some of the volunteer effort needed and allowed the program to be up and running quickly, thus keeping the momentum that had built up during the design phase.

BECOMING A CREDENTIALED EVALUATOR (CE)

There would be three qualifications for the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation: an educational requirement, experience requirement, and alignment of education and experience with evaluation competencies (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2010a). Each had to be operationalized in a manner that was clear for both applicants and CE decision makers.

For the education requirement, applicants must have a graduate-level degree or certificate from a postsecondary institution listed by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Applicants are asked for the name of the university or college, degree or certificate, date that it was conferred and years attended, and specialization (if applicable). Applicants can scan their diploma or certificate and upload it to an online portal. For applicants who completed their graduate work
outside Canada, there are links to an International Degree Equivalencies tool. For applicants who have not completed a graduate degree or certificate but believe their experience is equivalent to graduate work (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2009), there would be the possibility of submitting a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for a separate fee (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2010b).

For the experience requirement, applicants must have two years (full-time equivalent) evaluation-related work experience within the last 10 years and are asked to provide statements of work experience supported with letter(s) of reference. Applicants are asked to briefly describe the highlights from their work and work-related experience in evaluation. This may include such categories as employment (including teaching), practicum (such as work-based experiential learning including internships, practicum, and evaluation work for thesis), volunteering for a not-for-profit doing evaluation, and any other work experience in evaluation (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2010b).

For each category, the applicant provides the position title and briefly describes the main responsibilities, the type of evaluation activities undertaken, the name of the employer or organization, and the duration of each evaluation work-related experience. The applicant is also asked to include a completed Reference/Sponsor form attesting to the accuracy of the length and description of work experience that has been presented (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2010b).

To demonstrate the relevance of education and/or experience to at least 70% in each of the five domains of Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice, applicants are asked to declare achievements under each domain by checking the competencies they have attained and draw selectively from their education and/or professional experiences to provide evidence of alignment to at least 70% of the competencies in each of five domains (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2010b).

The applicant need not have both experience and education related to a competency, but should demonstrate evidence of the competency through education (including training), through experience, or in combination. When writing the narrative on selected competencies and information on relevant education or professional training, applicants might include the name of the program, course and/or number, and the name of the postsecondary institution or organization providing the learning opportunity. When citing experience relevant to a competency, applicants might mention employment, teaching, practicum, thesis work, volunteer activities, and other forms of work (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2010b).

The online application process was developed so that the process could be completed over time and the application submitted when all required information is provided and the terms of the CE designation signed. Applicants are notified if the application is incomplete or if they require additional education or experience requirements. If complete, the application is sent to the Credentialing Board (CB) for review. If the reviewers recommend that an application be denied, the candidate is given advice on how to strengthen the application. Unsuccessful candidates can submit a revised application any time within three years following the set-up.
of their account. Appeals can be registered by applicants within 30 days of being notified they have been denied the CE or have received a decision that further preparation is needed. Applicants are encouraged to review and improve their application for the appeal. Appealed decisions are considered by two reviewers, with a third reviewer consulted if the first two are not in agreement. Development of the details of the application and the assessment process greatly benefitted from the knowledge and expertise of CES volunteers (Borys, Gauthier, Kishchuk, Roy, 2005; Cousins, 2006). The steps are depicted in Figure 1: CES Professional Designations Program Application Process.

THE TECHNOLOGY FRAMEWORK

The technology to process the CE applications, renewals, and appeals was primarily online. CES required professional assistance to apply available technologies for online processing of applications and reviews, and for extracting information from the CES membership database. One of the first major tasks of the PDP project coordinator was to hire a web developer to create the PDP website. The site had to respond to the needs of applicants, Credentialing Board members, the project staff, and credentialed evaluators. Applicants required access to a secure web interface to submit payments, prepare the application, upload evidence to support the application, and receive feedback. Credentialing Board members required access to a secure web interface to review applications and documents and to submit their assessments. The administrator required access to the member database and functions to support, control, and troubleshoot the system. Credentialed Evaluators needed a site where they could record and upload information on their professional development activities as required for maintaining the designation.

The web developer worked closely with the project coordinator to confirm and further specify the required online functionality. Advices from an information technology (IT) expert helped with many web-related questions and provided advice to the CES National Council, the PDP project coordinator, and the web developer. The PDP web application was developed on a new dedicated server that could accommodate growth. The Internet providers would provide reliable service and ensure data integrity and security. All functions were to respect common database and web application conventions to support the PDP process depicted in Figure 1.

The web developer was tasked with building a user-friendly, high-quality web application in a cost-effective manner following web application design industry standards and meeting CES budget costs and schedules. While the application submission and review process were being operationalized, the fine details of the PDP-related policies and web texts continued to be refined by various CES member volunteers and approved by the National Council. These documents included the Credentialing Board Terms of Reference and Role and Responsibilities; Privacy Policy from the CES Administrative Committee; the Terms of Reference for the PDP Application Administrator; the PDP Application Guide; and texts and forms that would appear in the PDP website. Other documents included the
Figure 1: CES Professional Designation Application Process
PDP text for the CES home page that introduced the CE designation, application support materials such as examples of narratives on competencies, and communication materials. All web content underwent discussion and approval. Early in the website development phase, a decision was made to first develop and test the English site. This was no easy task, as all of the outstanding text required for error messages and corrections had to be identified.

For the French-language version of the site, the translation of text, especially the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice, needed to be refined extensively and repeatedly by French evaluators to address the nuances of the professional/technical language. Ultimately an academic who teaches evaluation in Quebec fine-tuned the French document, which was then endorsed by the francophone members of the CES National Council. Once all the web content was translated, the web developer continued to build the French site.

The launch date for the PDP website was set for May 2010 with the first release in English and the French version shortly after. CES was responsible for providing all page content, page layouts, colours, and image art such as logos. This meant that every step depicted in the PDP process diagram required texts and reference materials in both English and French presented in a user-friendly manner. The site had to work effectively and retain all data that the applicants and reviewers provided. This was accomplished within a budget that was under $10,000 in approximately 6 months for the IT expertise, excluding the cost related to the server contracts.

PROGRAM FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The PDP requires an annual cost-neutral budget that takes into account forecasts of revenue and expenditures and is designed to be fully incorporated into CES budgeting processes. In steady state, it is funded through fees for CE applications and annual renewal of a CE designation (Professional Designations Project Core Committee, 2009). Determination of the CE application fee was based on sustaining the program including the provision of administrative support, the cost for the Internet site, web support, and other costs associated with the program.

Initially, the plan was to connect the CE application fee payment, the CES membership database, and the PDP internet portal.

The initial set-up for payment of fees resulted in applicants experiencing delays in receiving their CE account information. This took place in 2010 when online payment was fairly expensive for small organizations like the CES. The $485 application fee is a one-time, nonrefundable expense for processing the application and its review. Once awarded, CEs are required to pay an annual $50 maintenance fee in addition to the annual membership. The CES Treasurer assists the PDP in working with the planned revenue and operating expenditures defined in the 2009–2010 budget proposals. The VP-PDP was also supported in financial planning by frequent reports on revenues and expenditures, which helped in the development of a budget for Year 2, based on first-year experience. PDP represents

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a major service change for the organization and forced CES to re-examine how
the organization operated. For example, at the beginning of the PDP development
process, it was found that when a CE applicant paid the application fee, verifica-
tion of membership status and data had to be done manually. Initially CES hoped
for a CE application payment system that could verify membership status with the
general CES membership database. However, due to administrative contractual
obligations, the CES National Council decided to put the work on hold.

RESOURCING THE PDP
The CES hired a PDP Application Administrator whose role is to ensure that a
systematic and fair CE designation process is established and implemented with
the support of the webmaster. As well, the position is responsible for ensuring
that the Credentialing Board (CB) is informed of aspects necessary to sustain its
effective operation. The PDP project coordinator, web developer and VP trained
the Application Administrator. However, immediately before the launch of the
CE designation website in May 2010, the project coordinator received an offer
for a full-time position, and the finalization of the resources necessary for the
launch fell on the VP-PDP and the new Application Administrator. The launch
remained on schedule thanks to a collaborative effort of dedicated CES members.
The Application Administrator worked on an operational procedures manual to
ensure continuity when there was a change in incumbent. Figure 2 outlines the
CES organizational chart during the PDP start-up and operationalizing period
to June 2013.

CREDENTIALING BOARD (CB)
The CES President worked with the Council to establish a Credentialing Board
(CB) in time for the launch of the PDP. The President sent letters to all CES
Fellows and winners of CES awards to offer an honourary CE designation and
invitation to join the CB. The CB’s role is primarily to make fair, timely, and equi-
table decisions on applications and appeals for a CE, using guidelines and criteria
established by CES National Council. More than a dozen Canadian evaluation
experts accepted the challenge of forming the first CB. During the PDP proposal
development stage, the Terms of References to establish the CB was draft ed col-
laboratively by the Infrastructure subcommittee with input from CES member
volunteers and approval by the National Council. Three key internal documents
related to the CB were developed:

- *CB Terms of Reference*, which define the Role and Responsibilities, Board
  Membership, Communication and Accountability, Time Commitment,
  and Entitlements.
- *CB Procedures*, which include Procedures for Credentialing Review, Pro-
  cedures for Reviewing Appeals, CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct and
Launching the CE Designation

Figure 2: CES Organizational Chart During the Operationalizing of PDP (to June 2013)
Confidentiality, Communication and Reporting Requirements, Orientation and Training of New CB Members, Time Commitment, Frequency of Meetings and Entitlements, Board Member Appointment, and Reappointment.

- CB Guide for Reviewing the Application for CES Credentialed Evaluator (CE), which provide the definition for the CE Designation and articulate the Application Review Process.

Members of the CB, using the PDP Internet-based portal, can review the applications from anywhere in the world. A mock application was set up so that the CB members could review it, enter their assessments online, and discuss them through teleconferencing and discussion forums. Six weekly sessions were conducted from May 25 to June 29, 2010, with the discussions summarized by the President and posted on the CB discussion forum.

The PDP site became operational in May 2010, and by October approximately 60 CES members had opened an application account. The VP-PDP and the Application Administrator tracked applications from submission to the start of review by the CB. Attention was paid to the turnaround time of the application and the comments provided if reviewers perceived a need for further learning by the candidate before further consideration of the award of a CE designation. To improve interrater reliability, another CB teleconference was conducted on October 5, 2010, with strong interest among the CB members to understand the different perspectives that colleagues bring to bear on CE applications.

The CB guidelines were refined during this time to incorporate learning gained throughout the teleconferences. For example, CBs requested that consultation among application reviewers be sanctioned as part of the review process. As such, the Application Administrator will now give a CB member the name and contact information of the other reviewer of an application so they can be consulted. During this period of learning for the CE, the VP convened individual meetings with the reviewers on their respective assigned applications to help them appreciate what is expected within the applicants’ narratives, facilitated CB member learning and sharing of examples, and requested that the National Council establish a small Quality Working Group to support the VP-PDP in assuring consistency in the awarding of CE designations.

MARKETING THE CE TO MEMBERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

At the 2010 CES National Conference in Victoria, BC, the PDP was launched through conference presentations and training sessions on the application process. Application guides were posted on the CES website as texts, Internet video format, a downloadable document, and a PowerPoint presentation. From the moment the CE designation was launched, PDP worked closely with the CES webmaster to keep the PDP section updated for communicating with the CES members. Web postings included a list of CEs to showcase the growing numbers of
credentialed evaluators, a list of CB members with their bios, an overview of the
PDP, a link to the application site, PDP updates, and links to related sites (CES
PD, chapters, CUEE).

After consultation with the CB, updating the site was put on hold, as some re-
viewers suggested that the way the information currently appeared on their screen
was acceptable and CES should wait until the evaluation to determine what changes
were needed. Also, a proposed fast-track application process was new, and time was
needed to learn from the pros and cons of the process. On the other hand, CB mem-
bers agreed with making modification to the applicants’ site to make it easier for the
applicants to provide information that would not affect what is required to qualify.
After much consideration, it was decided that PDP would wait for the fast-track
process to get established before revisiting the modification to the applicants’ site.

Early in the implementation, communication on the PDP to CES members
included a progress report, grandparenting reminders, English and French letters
to applicants notifying them of decisions, and answers to inquiries. The CES Presi-
dent continued to promote the PDP in communication and advocacy work. The
Past President liaised with the University Consortium on the need for additional
evaluation education and the critical importance of distance learning approaches.

Responding to communication requests from CES chapters and those outside
CES became a daily activity for the VP-PDP. Tasks related to communication
included customizing presentations and communication materials to specific
audiences, sharing PowerPoint slides with chapters, and briefing CES members
before chapter events and international evaluation conferences. The PDP was
represented at the Thought Leaders Online Forum on Competencies and Creden-
tialing organized by the American Evaluation Association.

By the spring of 2011, CES members connected with the PDP were being
invited by their respective chapters to introduce the PDP and provide training
at chapter events. Questions asked in these sessions ranged from the qualifi ca-
tion requirements to advice on what evidence could be submitted. Members
of the National Capital chapter developed a PowerPoint presentation with the
participation of successful CE applicants. Input for various information sessions
and experience from the initial implementation of the CE led to an updating of
the Application Guide.

With the first CE approval and designation, the CES website began an up-
to-date listing of the CEs’ names. The number of CEs approved and in-process
provided indicators of the interest for the CE designation among the CES mem-
bership. By April 2011, 15 CES members had been awarded the CE designa-
tion, bringing the total number to 46 CEs with 5 working on further learning
requirements and another 100 CES members preparing their CE applications in
their Internet-based portal. PDP-related activities during the CES 2011 National
Conference in Edmonton included a Credentialing Update and CE Application
Information session that was attended by new CEs, who shared their application
experience, and the CB members, who provided useful advice to those interested
in applying for the CE designation.

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TEMPORARY FAST-TRACK PROCESS

During the second face-to-face CB meeting at the Edmonton 2011 National Conference, a year from the launch of the CE designations, CB members voiced concern over the lower than expected rates of application for the CE. They suggested that the success of the professional designations program is linked to demand and supply. Those commissioning evaluations see the designation as a quality measure and use it as a factor in the choice of evaluators, both those who are employed in evaluation positions and those engaged in contract assignments. A critical mass of CEs is seen to be important and, as more CEs use the CE designation as part of their business practice, interest will spur demand for the credential in both internal and external evaluation practice in Canada. As the rate of application accelerates, especially by senior practitioners who work as evaluators in government, nonprofit, and private sectors, the demand will grow. However, seasoned evaluators weren’t applying for the designation. Experienced evaluators saw the application process as unattractive, thus limiting application submissions from a significant number of very experienced long-term CES evaluation practitioners. It was believed that as experienced senior evaluators among the CES membership apply for/acquire the CE, future applications would be from less-seasoned CES members as the CE process was intended to be (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2011).

The CBs suggested a temporary “fast-track” process to bring in those members who CES believed were already at and well beyond the CE level of experience. A streamlined or fast-track process has been used by other professional associations in connection with new designation programs. It would also honour the long-term CES members and recognize their extensive experience and expertise in the field of evaluation. The regular CE application process is designed to be a reflective, self-assessment process, and feedback already showed that it was valued by those awarded the CE through the regular process (despite the time required to complete the application). Operationalizing the fast-tracking process proposed by the CB was discussed with the National Council using the discussion forum, and decisions were made through e-vote to go through with the process. The decision was reached to invite “experienced evaluators” from the CES membership to apply for the CE through an expedited and streamlined application process that did not impact the decision process for awarding the CE. Fast-track applications were reviewed by the CB applying the same criteria (graduate level education, 2 years of professional experience in evaluation, and 70% of CES competencies) to the decisions on awarding the CE. The fast track was meant to be a temporary process available for only one year, and application fees remained the same.

Long-term CES members were identified and invited to apply based on at least 7 years with a good CES membership record, graduate education, and a declared evaluation primary or major component of work. These criteria were used as a proxy for “experienced evaluator,” and CES recognized that it might not fully capture all those who could access this expedited application process. The invitations were not exclusionary, and other experienced CES members who wanted
Many CES members who did not receive the invitation wrote with evidence that they qualified; that letter was reviewed by the CES President, VP-PDP, Past President, and PDP Advisory Group members that constituted the PDP Committee and those members were advised if they could apply through the fast-track process. The process for a fast-tracked application was included in the letter but also posted on the CES website. The fast-tracked submission involved submitting a CV with evidence of fulfilling the educational and professional experience requirements in research, management, and/or provision of consulting services in program evaluations and demonstrating mastery in the five core competency domains within the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice through management of one major evaluation and/or consulting assignment of one major evaluation in which the applicant served as the project director. It was clarified that the engagements must be substantial and comprise actual evaluations that combine several methods and demonstrate multiple lines of evidence (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2011).

Operationalizing the “fast-track” process meant that a modification of the PDP website, including bilingual application and guidelines for the review process of the fast-tracking option, was necessary. Letters to invited CES members and a notice to general membership with information on fast-tracking application process were posted on October 6, 2011. Fast-track application reminders for invited CES members set the deadline for their application as September 8, 2012, a year after the initial invitations.

The VP-PDP found that many SQEP-CES members who would qualify to apply through the fast-track process did not receive the invitation because of glitches in the membership information between the CES National database and the SQEP database. PDP sent an invitation to the SQEP CES members with deadline extended to the end of May for them to apply through the fast-track process, ensuring that they also had a year to benefit from the temporary process.

When CES members asked to be fast-tracked, the request was reviewed in consultation with the PDP Advisory Group. CE decisions resulted from the same decision process: applications were reviewed by two members of the CB in accordance with the review guidelines and a third review was undertaken if there was not a unanimous decision by the first two reviewers. The CBs could request additional information if required. Decisions were made either to award the CE based on the fast-track application received or to recommend that the applicant go through the regular CE application process with suggestions on further preparation. The temporary “fast-track” process was completed in 2012–13, bringing the total of CEs to over 200 and creating a critical mass of CEs, enabling those who commission evaluation and/or employ evaluators to list CE as a definite asset or requirement.

During the 2012 National Council meeting, discussions from the CB meeting were shared, including the recommendation that the grandparenting clause should be a permanent feature because it was put in place to benefit long-time CES
members, that the graduate-level education (certificate or degree) qualification should be enforced, and that the PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) be taken out of the qualifying option. The grandparenting clause became a permanent feature, but the discussion on PLAR continues.

MAINTAINING THE CE

To maintain the CE designation, members need to demonstrate ongoing learning through professional development activities, which is the fourth requirement for the CE designation. Renewal is accomplished at three year intervals with a required 40 hours of professional development or learning over that period. Each CE receives an “account” within the PDP-CE system where he/she may input courses and development activity at any time. Accounts are accessed by the Application Administrator at the 3-year mark, and the CE is contacted if the account demonstrates less than 40 hours of development activities. The account can then be updated by the CE when membership renewal takes place.

Developing the CE maintenance requirements, process, and system needs were the responsibilities of the CES National Professional Development Committee supported by the Application Administrator and the web developer. The minimum 40 hours of Continuing Education Credits (CECs) must be obtained over the three years from the date the CE designation was granted. The CECs must be in an area related to the CES evaluator competencies and must have hours of credit from activities in at least 3 of the 8 Categories of Eligible Learning Activities for CE Renewal, including conferences; workshops and institutes; learning events of less than one-half day; development and/or delivery of a workshop, seminar, or presentation; university or college course completed; preparation-research time to teach a university or college course; writing and publishing; and organizational involvement with CES. These are logged into the CE’s PDP account.

PROMOTING THE CE DESIGNATION

To promote the CE designation, CEs and the CB received lapel pins in the hope that the pins would become conversation starters, allowing every CE and CB to promote the value of the CE designation. It was hoped that the pins would be available at the 2012 Halifax conference, but they were produced in time for the 2013 Toronto conference. A Discussion Forum was set up to accommodate the new Valuing CE working group to promote the value of CEs to users and employers requiring evaluation. By May 2013, various CB and CES Executive were continually asked to speak and write about the PDP globally and CES members began to see increased references to the CE designation in requests for proposals and job descriptions. There was also increased reference to the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice in evaluation capacity-building courses for professionals and for postsecondary and graduate-level education in Canada and internationally.
GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

The CE designation continues to be administered through the PDP under the management of the VP-PDP. Dimensions of the Professional Designations Program are provided in the CE Guidelines and CB Terms of Reference and Guidelines. The VP-PDP, as a member of CES Executive and National Council, ensures delivery of the CE is well integrated with other CES services through collaboration with existing CES Standing Committees and Administrative support (Professional Designations Project Core Committee, 2009). The VP-PDP continues to be responsible for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on this program. The National Council has overall accountability for both adherence to the intent and requirements of this program and reporting on same to CES Members at large.

MODIFICATIONS AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PDP

The PDP website has been functioning well, with minor adjustments based on user inputs with respect to the application submission, the reviews, and the administrative work. However, even in the short time that the website was being developed, the speed of change in technology forced changes to it to accommodate users of different programs to connect to the site.

The CE application process will no doubt be refined in the future in response to the needs of the members. The PDP website has already been changed from the initial launch to accommodate the “fast-track” application and review system that was set in place for a limited time. It has also been expanded to include the CE maintenance site. CES has since decided to retain web support service to assist the Application Administrators with technical issues through a secretariat service provider.

The PDP proposal required periodic review, updating, and validation of designation qualifications, CES Ethics, Standards & Competencies, as evaluation is not static and the fundamental underpinnings of this program require review and renewal at regular intervals. The CE policy approved in May 2009 states that this activity is to be undertaken in concert with the Membership and Administration committees, using the existing mechanism for representation on the Joint Standards Committee (Buchanan, 2015; Maicher & Frank, 2015).

Questions regarding the qualifications continue to come in. For example, in the winter of 2011, the VP received inquiries about whether certifications from other professional organizations are equivalent to certificates from colleges and/or universities and whether Board exams after an undergraduate degree or diploma in general constitute a postgraduate program. In such cases, members argued that the exams are merely the final step of that undergraduate degree (administered by the professional body rather than the school) and, for some internationally trained applicants, it is the exam that must be passed to be recognized.

The Application Administrator has been monitoring and maintaining time logs to see how much time is invested in each application so that the turnaround
time for decision and the cost associated with the PDP can remain neutral (Professional Designations Project Core Committee, 2009). Feedback from both the applicants and the CB has been carefully monitored with the technical support of the web developer. For example, CB reviewer pages have been refined as CB members identified typos. By May 2012, the VP-PDP and Application Administrator investigated areas that needed modification to improve the usability for applicants, reviewers, and administrators. Where consistent problems occurred, clearer and more concise instructions and messages were added to the system. Work on improving how the system is recording and producing statistics for the program continues.

CONCLUSION

Every effort was made throughout the launch and operationalization of the PDP to ensure that program processes were well articulated and documented, as a volunteer-based organization such as CES operating with a small number of paid staff (in some cases none) would find it difficult to maintain the consistency of its operation. The PDP administration involves a paid Application Administrator managing the application and review process using an Internet-based PDP site that was customized for CES use. The detailed documentation helped CES, which does not have a physical office and dedicated paid staff, to focus on the work of the PDP. Based on CES commitment to inclusiveness, the PDP was established to be accessible from anywhere in Canada. Despite the PDP process being overwhelmed with the fast-tracked applications and the web support being very limited, there have been few technical issues, and plans are already in development to further refine the tools for PDP.

With the right technology, small organizations such as CES can operate a fairly complicated process involving extensive interaction with its membership. The collaborative nature of the PDP planning, implementation, and monitoring processes necessitated vast amounts of information to be articulated and deciphered, with lessons learned and next steps to be determined developmentally.

In the end, the well-documented process helped CES share its experience with the larger community of evaluators. This special issue of CJE is one example—as are sharing through journals, conferences, and international efforts such as EvalPartners—of collaboratively exploring with a wider audience whether CE is supporting professionalization efforts by defining, recognizing, and promoting the practice of ethical, high quality, and competent evaluation in Canada and beyond.

REFERENCES


AUTHOR INFORMATION

Keiko Kuji-Shikatani, CE, is an internal evaluator (Education Officer, Research Evaluation and Capacity Building Branch, Student Achievement Division, Ministry of Education), infusing evaluative thinking in collaborative teams to build capacity for the use of evidence to inform decisions and implementation. Keiko’s doctorate from OISE, University of Toronto, focused on building monitoring and evaluation system to increase the chances of best serving the target population optimizing the use of limited resources. For over 25 years, she has been sharing her evaluation practice and research focusing on evaluative thinking, evaluation use, and evaluation capacity building in Canada and internationally.

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View from the Credentialing Board: Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Going

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Abstract: The Credentialing Board is a group of senior evaluators whose role is to consider the merits of each application for the Credentialed Evaluator designation and to provide input regarding the ongoing development of the program. This article recounts the four-year history of the Board, describes its processes, and analyzes its challenges. On the basis of a file review, a survey of Board members, in-depth interviews, and the authors’ own experiences, it is concluded that the Board has successfully tackled its responsibility but that there is still room for improvement.

Keywords: applications, CE decisions, Credentialing Board, professional designation, review process


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In May 2010 at the historic Empress Hotel in Victoria, British Columbia, the Credentialing Board (CB) of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) held its first meeting. As senior evaluators, colleagues, and new Board members, we filed into the conference room looking at each other with interest and trepidation. We had many questions: What was expected of us? How would the assessment process unfold? Would the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation be a success? What exactly were we getting ourselves into?

Thus began the four-year journey that has brought us to the preparation of this article. As original CB members, we have welcomed this opportunity to see where we have been as a Board and to consider what may lie ahead.

**METHODOLOGY**

Data reported in this article were obtained using a variety of methods.

- The Professional Designations Program (PDP) database was searched for information on the demographics of the CB, the history of Board membership, the workload, and the number of awards made.
- A survey of CB members was conducted to document their perceptions of challenges, successes, and tasks. Of the 32 past and present Board members, 21 (66%) completed the survey; 11 were in their second term, 6 in their first term, and 4 had left the Board.
- A file and document review about the CB since inception was conducted. The online member forum was searched for a variety of administrative topics.
- Individual telephone interviews were conducted with the 7 CB members who volunteered in the survey to provide further input.
- The former Application Administrator who had supported the program for three years was also interviewed.
- The memory and personal files of the four authors helped to ground our perspective.

**Limitations**

These sources provide a series of viewpoints on the CB as an object of observation and analysis. Because many are perceptual in nature, the authors tried to cross-validate observations and conclusions. As the program management database was not designed to provide some of the information that we sought, it proved to be a limiting factor. For example, we could not document the length of time required to process each application. Finally, as both researchers and informants, we attempted to distance ourselves from the object of our inquiry and yet felt
compelled to complete the very survey that we had designed because we wanted our voices to be heard as well.

OVERVIEW

Five topics are addressed in our article. We describe the Board’s role and its membership, the training process for both initial and new members, the application review process, and the outcomes of that process. Finally, Board member perspectives are explored.

BOARD ROLE AND MEMBERSHIP

The CB is one of the operational structures of the CES Professional Designation Program (PDP). It consists of a group of senior evaluators whose role is to consider the merits of each application for the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation and to recommend its acceptance or rejection. In addition, the Board provides input to Council, the governing body of CES, regarding the ongoing development of the CE program, and it supports the recruitment of new CB members. All nominees are ratified by a vote at Council. Members have a three-year term which is renewable twice for a possible total of nine years. Up to July 1, 2014, the responsibility for Board supervision rested with the Vice-President, Professional Designation Program (VP-PDP). Thereafter, the CES National Vice-President took on this role.

In accordance with the Credentialing Board Terms of Reference and Guidelines (CES, 2010c), the initial 24 Board members were recruited from the ranks of CES National Award winners and CES Fellows. As they needed to have the credential themselves before they could award it to others, they received the CE designation through a grandparenting process.

At the end of the first three-year term, five members resigned and one became the new VP-PDP. The retention rate was high, as 79% of the original board (18 members) continued into a second term. Eight new members were drawn from the pool of National Award winners and Fellows. As more candidates were required, particularly those with bilingual capabilities, Council requested that Board members nominate some colleagues with strong French language skills (CES, 2014). Four additional members were identified and subsequently ratified, making the current total 30 members.

Membership is evenly split between men and women, an interesting statistic when viewed in the context of the evaluation profession as a whole. In Canada, repeated surveys have shown that the membership of CES is upwards of 70% female.

Our survey results provided some information about the 21 survey respondents (66%):

- 52% are aged 60–69; 33% are 40–59; and 14% are 70 or older.
- Respondents have on average 28 years of evaluation experience (range 14–45 years).
• They have been members of CES for 24 years on average (range 12–33 years).
• 62% hold a doctoral degree; 38% have a Master’s degree.
• Their disciplines vary: 19% in psychology; 19% in education; 14% in economics; 24% in other social sciences; 5% in business administration; 5% in public administration; 5% in mathematics; and 10% in other fields.
• 76% are consultants (or were before they retired); 18% work for government; and 6% are in education.

To summarize, the typical CB member is an established evaluation practitioner with an advanced degree in the social sciences. He or she has more than a quarter-century of experience, primarily in the private sector.

BOARD MEMBER TRAINING

An online forum was established for Board communications and several documents were posted there, including the Terms of Reference and Guidelines (CES, 2010c), the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice (CES, 2010a), the Applicant Guide (CES, 2010b), the CES privacy policy, and sample applicant narratives. The members signed a declaration form stating that they would abide by these documents in their role as CB members.

A critical concern for the new Board members was review consistency, and so this became the focus of their training. A mock application was posted on the forum, and the members reviewed it using an online survey to record their award decisions. Then a teleconference training session was held to discuss the review. Perhaps it is no surprise that the call elicited vigorous debate among these experienced evaluators. Some members had different expectations of what constituted applicant experience; others wanted more substance in the applicant’s competency narratives; still others wanted clarification about various competencies themselves. The discussion was substantive enough to warrant a series of additional calls over the following month. Notes from each session were posted. A final cumulative set of meeting notes was compiled, which became an important permanent record and training document. After members began to complete their own reviews, they had further questions, and an additional call was held in the fall of 2010 to review another mock application.

The training was judged to be quite effective by two thirds of survey respondents, 70% felt clear about their role as a reviewer, and a similar proportion believed that they understood what evidence of education and experience was required for an award. Interview comments supported these findings on the training process, although one person noted that “experience was the best teacher.” Still it was observed that not all issues about the interpretation of evidence had been resolved. Some members wanted more training on “making the judgement call,” and it was suggested that a more formal calibration of reviewer perspectives was necessary.

After the initial training period, limited interaction occurred among the reviewers apart from the brief annual general meeting at the CES conference.
Sporadic discussions also appeared on the online forum, but these were often related to a member’s particular topic of interest. Generally the episodic and ad hoc nature of this type of communication worked for many of the members. A majority (75%) of survey respondents indicated that they were satisfied with Board communications. However, at least one interviewee found the transmissions to be “quite irritating.”

When several new members joined the Board in the fall of 2013, the Applications Administrator and the VP-PDP organized their training. The new members were paired with experienced ones for mentoring. They reviewed and discussed the same application but, as it was a training exercise, the new members were shadow reviewers and their decisions did not apply to the credentialing decision. Subsequently, the mentors remained available for consultation, particularly for the first two reviews conducted by the new members.

The Board members made several recommendations in their interviews about the mentoring process. Some emphasized the importance of more thorough training, suggesting a broader range of examples, more formalized mentor/mentee roles, more definition about what constitutes reasonable evidence, and broader discussions with the full Board.

**THE REVIEW PROCESS**

The online application process is managed by the part-time Application Administrator. She checks each application for completeness and obtains any missing information before forwarding the application to two members for independent review. They log into the CES PDP website and review the applicant’s reference letter(s), evidence of educational qualifications, and descriptions of how the applicant has used selected competencies.

The applicant must obtain a positive rating of 70% of the identified competencies in each of the five domains. A summary of the reviewer’s ratings with respect to educational, experience, and competency requirements is automatically generated at the end of the application. If the applicant has demonstrated relevant education, experience, and use of competencies, the reviewer recommends that the CE designation be awarded. On the other hand, if the reviewer feels that the applicant has not demonstrated an acceptable level of competency use, or if their education or experience are lacking in some way, further preparation by the candidate is required. If the recommendations of the two reviewers differ, the application is sent to a third reviewer and the majority recommendation then prevails.

A review of the PDP database revealed that the number of applications reviewed by individual Board members has varied considerably. Since the inception of the designation, the average number of reviews per member is 16; however, the range is between 0 and 67 reviews. Three members have individually performed over 40 reviews. More typically, active reviewers have conducted between 10 and 40 reviews, but six reviewers have not conducted any reviews. Some of the members who have left the CB cited lack of time, suggesting that they may not have
been aware of the extent of the commitment involved. Survey results indicated that reviewers spent an average of 2.4 hours per application.

After the initial round of applications had been reviewed, the CB decided to increase uptake and instituted the Fast Track, an additional application process that was available for one year. It allowed evaluators with substantial experience to submit a shorter application that focused on their curriculum vitae and a description of their competencies as demonstrated in one evaluation project. Fast Track applications took significantly less reviewer time, an average of 1.3 hours per review.

OTHER BOARD MEMBER ACTIVITIES

Board members also contribute to the work of the Board in a variety of other ways, demonstrating their strong commitment to the PDP. Nearly all of the 21 survey respondents (91%) took part in discussions on the discussion forum. Just over half (57%) attended the annual meeting at national conferences; 47% participated on a CB committee. A substantial proportion (42%) spoke publicly about the credential or gave conference presentations about the Board. Several (38%) also talked informally with potential applicants, and five members (24%) acted as mentors. Examples of other CB-related activities included involvement with the early PDP research and deliberations, liaison with the American Evaluation Association, debates regarding the CB at Canadian and international conferences and meetings, incorporating the CE criteria into teaching and workshops, and publicizing the PDP within Society chapters.

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

In her interview, the Application Administrator indicated that she saw the program as a success; however, she did identify a number of challenges experienced during her tenure, many of a technical nature. While the online system was designed specifically for the PDP, early problems emerged regarding lack of browser compatibility and password issues. Fast Track applicants had trouble uploading additional information as needed. For these and other related reasons, Council decided in 2013 to invest in a new online system for the PDP (CES, 2013). It should be operational early in 2015.

Other challenges related to delays in the review process. As some periods of the year are particularly busy for evaluators, there were times when it was difficult to find an available reviewer. Further, if a reviewer declared a conflict of interest once an applicant was assigned, a delay ensued while another reviewer was found. When French translation was required, there were further delays. Finally, if an applicant received an unfavourable decision, communications could occasionally become difficult and had to be passed on to the VP-PDP for resolution.

The Board members who were interviewed were generally positive about their experience. They acknowledged that their colleagues’ commitment, effort,
and engagement had been essential to making the whole process work, although some did worry about the unevenness of member participation. While open discussion among members was appreciated, some felt that decision-making processes should be more formalized. They also identified a need to conduct broader-based discussions about the overall credentialing system.

After the reorganization of National Council, when the temporary position of VP-PDP was removed, the responsibility for the PDP was transferred to the single remaining vice-presidential position. Some CB members felt that this resulted in a lack of clarity regarding Board leadership and worried about adequate representation for CB issues on Council.

**BOARD OUTCOMES**

By the end of March 2014, a total of 339 applications had been received (see Table 1: Applicant Success Rates). Over half (56%) of these were regular applications; the remaining applicants had used the Fast Track process. Of 190 regular applications, 62% were reviewed. The reason for this fairly low review rate is that candidates using the regular process have up to three years to prepare, revise, and submit their application. In contrast, almost all (144) of the 149 Fast Track applications did reach the review stage, reflecting the fact that the three-year grace period did not apply for this short-term measure.

Whether regular or Fast Track application, success rates were high: 77% of regular applications and 84% of Fast Track applications were successful upon first submission. A total of 23 regular applications (20%) were not successful upon first submission. Six of these were resubmitted with additional information, and two of them were successful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Regular application process</th>
<th>Fast Track application process</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications opened</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications reviewed</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications requiring a third reviewer</td>
<td>10 (9%)</td>
<td>17 (12%)</td>
<td>27 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications successful upon first submission</td>
<td>90 (77%)</td>
<td>121 (84%)</td>
<td>211 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications not successful upon first submission</td>
<td>23 (20%)</td>
<td>22 (15%)</td>
<td>45 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications resubmitted</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications successful upon resubmission</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Some totals do not agree because of missing values.*
The number of awards has varied considerably from quarter to quarter since the commencement of the CE program in 2010. During the first few months, only a few CEs were awarded, but then numbers fluctuated (Figure 1: Number of CEs Awarded per Quarter). When the Fast Track method was introduced in the fall of 2011, the award rate rose substantially, peaking at the end of 2012 just before the final deadline for Fast Track applications. Since then, the rate has dropped somewhat but continues at about 10 awards per quarter.

As of March 2014, only 27 of 261 applications required a third reviewer (9% of regular applications, 12% of Fast Track applications). The initial two reviewers have agreed 90% of the time, suggesting good reliability across reviewers.

This finding was corroborated by the administrator who observed that Board members were “very often on the same page.” However, some members did express concern in the survey about the consistency of decisions across reviewers. (Readers should be aware that respondents were not aware at the time of the 90% reviewer agreement figure that is presented above.) Only 60% of respondents thought that the Board had performed well in terms of reaching consistent conclusions.

In terms of the validity of the overall review process, that is, the extent to which the process leads to awarding of the designation to worthy candidates, 70% of the respondents expressed a positive opinion. Still, only half felt a growing

![Figure 1: Number of CEs Awarded per Quarter](https://example.com/figure1.png)
confidence that they were making the right decisions. It is possible that these perceptions stem from the limited feedback they have received with respect to reviewer agreement and the ultimate fate of the application.

**BOARD MEMBER PERSPECTIVES**

In the survey the members were asked to rate their satisfaction with their role on the Board. Of the 21 respondents, 17 (81%) were *Somewhat or Very Satisfied*, 2 members were neutral, and 2 were *Somewhat Dissatisfied*. The comments of respondents suggested that, for some, being involved in the initiation and development of the credentialing system was rewarding. Some commented that they were proud of contributing to the field of evaluation in Canada, supporting a high level of professional practice, and advancing the CE designation. They appreciated working with other senior evaluators, finding the interaction to be both stimulating and inspiring.

Several of the respondents were impressed by the outstanding achievements demonstrated by some applicants, although other applicants were seen as having a disappointing lack of expertise. As one interviewee said, doing the reviews “makes the gaps in the field clear to me but I have some admiration for some strengths too. Some individuals have really put the latest thinking into their practice.” Several suggested that the review process had exerted a positive impact on their own professional development, giving them a broader view of evaluation roles and functions and reminding them of the skills and competencies they needed themselves. As one member commented, “Going through those competencies and seeing how other people use them is an amazing experience.” Some also mentioned their enjoyment in mentoring other evaluators.

The few respondents who expressed some dissatisfaction cited lack of time and availability as the main issues. A few had some reservations about the quality of the designation, the standards employed, or the application process itself, which one member described as “a writing contest.”

The members were asked what could be done to increase their level of satisfaction with their role on the Board. Most suggestions related to the improvement of internal CB processes. In particular, board communications and feedback mechanisms were seen as critical for improvement. More frequent interaction among the reviewers was recommended, including regularly scheduled conference calls and an expanded annual meeting to discuss key issues. Communications could also be improved by providing a feedback system about assessment status, such as completed reviews, additional information requested or received, whether a third reviewer was required, and the final outcome of the review. Regularly updated overall statistics were also recommended. Some reviewers wanted a way to assess how their decision compared to others. The administrator suggested that automated deadline reminders could be sent to both applicants and reviewers.

The members suggested several ways to improve the application process. It was felt that more guidelines for candidates would enhance the quality of
applications. The administrator agreed that better communication to CES members about the credential and the expectations surrounding applications would encourage better, more complete applications. It would also reduce some unnecessary question-and-answer exchanges between applicants and the administrator. Some members wanted to provide more feedback to applicants and some wanted more interaction with them. Various comments suggested that more complete applicant records should be maintained; issues of quality control, reliability, and Board evaluation needed to be addressed; and time should be devoted to stocktaking and reflection. One reviewer commented that the distribution of reviewers needed to reflect the variety of evaluators across Canada, as there was a preponderance of members in private practice. It was also suggested that more resources were needed to support a full-time administrator.

Overall the credential was seen as an important way to gain respect for the role of evaluation in the broader community. Marketing the credential was considered essential to foster its acceptance, especially by those who commission evaluations. It was also recommended that better external links be created with educators and trainers, and with annual CES conference committees, to ensure that training in the required competencies was well addressed in university programs, conference workshops, and other training programs. The continuing education of those with a CE designation was identified as a topic needing further attention. As one interviewee commented, the designation “wasn’t to be the end of our journey in professionalizing evaluation.”

When members were asked where they thought the Board would be in five years, their responses were mixed. Some suggested that the whole credentialing process was quite immature and several administrative issues still needed to be resolved. Others identified a lack of support from employers of evaluation expertise, particularly in the federal government. A concern was expressed that in time a saturation point might be achieved and that credential growth might stagnate. However, some felt optimistic that recent discussions at the Board suggested that issues were being identified and addressed.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

We continue to be aware that the CB is the first of its kind in the evaluation world, and it is obvious that the story is still being written. Even after four years of operation, the Board is still adapting its role, clarifying operational policies and procedures, and questioning its approaches. There is a need for more communication, feedback loops, and record keeping about applicants, application status, and outcomes.

From the perspective of the Board members, the challenges have been well worth the effort. They tend to value their involvement in this important endeavor and see their experience as both rewarding and instructive. While work is unevenly distributed among them, it reflects their availability and may be the cost of continuing to engage the Society’s most senior members.
Our findings suggest that some members’ lack of confidence in the consistency of award decisions is not supported by the strength of data obtained on agreement among reviewers. However, as the trust placed in the CE reviewers by applicants, CES members, and evaluation users in general is paramount, it may be worthwhile to explore this issue in a more rigorous way.

It remains to be seen if the acquisition of this basic credential will act as a stimulus to recipients to continue their professional development and education to enhance their practice. Several strategic decisions about the credentialing program will be required in the future. It is hoped that the exploration of the CB provided here will help to stimulate further discussion and development.

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Karyn Hicks, CE, has worked in program evaluation, program design, and policy for the majority of her 25-year career with the Government of the Northwest Territories. She has been fortunate to be in both line departments and the central agency, where she has evaluated everything from nutrition to infrastructure to mass disaster simulations. For many years, Karyn has trained and mentored staff in evaluation while encouraging them to use innovative practices when working in diverse cultures. She was a member of the Canadian Evaluation Society’s National Council for many years and has served on the CES Credentialing Board since its inception. She is currently a member of the Red Cross national disaster evaluation team.
The CES Professional Designations Program: 
Views from Members

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Abstract: CES members were surveyed in April 2014 regarding professionalization issues and the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) program (a component of the CES Professional Designations Program). Analysis reported here is based on 654 completed questionnaires. Results suggest that members’ attitudes and perceptions about the program are generally positive. Credentialed Evaluators appear to attribute improvements in their practice to the credential, and the sense of belonging to a profession is increasing. Factors other than the credentialing program may have influenced the variables of interest. The study points to some crucial challenges facing the designations program for reaching its entire intended community.

Keywords: certification, competencies, credential, professional designation, qualifications

Résumé : Une enquête a été réalisée en avril 2014 auprès des membres de la SCÉ portant sur la professionnalisation et sur le programme d’Évaluateur accrédité (une composante du Programme des titres professionnels de la SCÉ). L’analyse présentée ici est basée sur les 654 questionnaires soumis. Les résultats suggèrent que les attitudes des membres envers le programme et leurs perceptions sont généralement positives. Les évaluateurs accrédités semblent attribuer à l’accréditation des améliorations dans leur pratique, et le sentiment d’appartenance à une profession est en croissance. Des facteurs autres que le programme d’accréditation peuvent avoir influé

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In 2010, after years of debate and preparation, the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) implemented a voluntary professional credential recognizing competencies and promoting continuous learning. To date, more than 275 evaluators out of CES’s roughly 1,700 individual members have become Credentialed Evaluators (CEs). The development of the credential was informed by research and analysis of perceived need for and benefits of increased professionalization of evaluators in Canada. The Canadian debate surrounding the implementation of the credentialing program identified many potential positive and negative outcomes of the credential. As a result of a process that is described in other articles in this special issue, CES implemented a designation that recognizes that an individual has education and experience necessary for practicing evaluation competently in Canada (see Halpern, Gauthier, & McDavid, 2015, for clarification of the credential status vis-à-vis other forms of professional recognition).

Four years after the inception of the CES Professional Designations Program (PDP) and as part of the input to its upcoming evaluation, this article reports on a study of CES members aiming to document the characteristics of those who have and have not applied for and obtained the CE, and to assess the extent to which positive and negative, intended and unintended outcomes of the credential are occurring. The study and its findings are cast in the larger body of research on “emerging professionalization projects” (Lawrence, 2004; Muzio, Hodgson, Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, & Hall, 2011;), where groups of professionals, often through professional associations (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002), develop “closure regimes” such as professional credentialing systems to define, occupy, and defend occupational spaces (Muzio et al., 2011).

**LOGIC MODEL FOR THE PDP**

On the basis of a literature review and input from an external panel, we developed an outcomes-focused logic model to guide the construction of the survey questionnaire. The complete model is presented in detail in Appendix A. As did the inception documents for the PDP (CES PDP, 2009b), the logic model’s intended long-term outcome for the PDP is “CES contributes to the professionalization of evaluation in Canada and brings clarity and definition for and within the Canadian evaluation practice,” clearly casting the initiative as a “professionalization project.” Following from the literature program documents, the logic model identifies expected and plausible outcomes for CEs, CES, the evaluation profession as a whole, and users or beneficiaries of evaluation use (CES, 2012b; Greenwood et al., 2002; Muzio et al., 2011). Because community-level impacts (i.e., for CES, the profession as a whole, and evaluation users, particularly the publication and
dissemination of the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice; CES, 2009) could have spillover effects on the outcomes of evaluators who do not acquire the credential, outcomes were also identified for this group. Both positive and negative outcomes identified in the literature were included in the model and study design.

**METHODOLOGY**

Each outcome in the logic model deemed to be measurable through this type of survey was assessed mainly using agree-disagree scales and, in a few instances, reusing items previously used (Gauthier, Borys, Kishchuk, & Roy, 2006; Gauthier, Roy, Borys, & Kishchuk, 2010). A pretest with five volunteer evaluators resulted in minor modifications and retention of the pretest data in the final data set. The English and French versions of the questionnaire are available at http://cjpe.ca/extra/pdpce_2014.pdf.

The population of interest was all 1,893 individual members of CES as of March 2014, based on the list provided by CES.

Data collection used a Web-based questionnaire, with invitations and two subsequent reminders in April 2014. In total, 764 questionnaires were initiated and 654 were completed, for a raw response rate of 35% (64% among CEs and 30% among non-CEs). On average, respondents took 17 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The likelihood of participation in the survey varied according to geographical location and CE status. **Ex post** weights were devised to compensate for both factors. A set of weights was calculated using an iterative marginal fitting algorithm (rim weighting) to ensure that CES chapter and CE status was appropriately represented in the results. Most data analysis was done using stubs-and-banners cross-tabs developed in StatXP. Percentage-based differences were tested using χ² tests.

Analysis of the characteristics of Credentialed Evaluators was descriptive. Comparisons were drawn between CEs and CES members who had not applied for the designation, including those who had initiated the application process with CEs. Multivariate models tested differences between CEs and non-CEs.³

Based on the achieved sample of 654 responses, assuming that it constituted a random sample of a population of 1,893 with a design effect of 1.88 (i.e., 1 plus the variance of the weighting variable), at a confidence level of 95%, the sampling error for a proportion of 50% is estimated at ± 4.3 percentage points. Confidence intervals are wider for subsamples.

All four authors of this article are Credentialed Evaluators, three are or were members of the Credentialing Board, and one was the manager of the credentialing program when this study was conducted. To counter a perceived risk of bias, a challenge group was formed comprising six seasoned Canadian evaluators: three had supported the credentialing program in the past and three had publicly criticized it in intent or implementation. The challenge group was asked to react to a draft of the logic model, the questionnaire, and a draft of this article. The authors...
thank members of the challenge group for the rigour, honesty, and usefulness of
their comments but remain responsible for any errors or omissions.

**Limitations**

The large number of concepts in the logic model required limiting the number of
questions about each, sometimes to single items. Such simple measurement may
not reflect the nuances of program outcomes. Because the logic model was de-
dsigned for the purposes of this article, it does not necessarily depict CES's expected
PDP outcomes. Unachieved outcomes as measured here should not necessarily be
interpreted as program failure.

Respondents may differ from nonrespondents in ways not captured by the anal-
ysis performed. For example, it is possible that nonrespondents hold different views
of the PDP from those of respondents. It is also possible that nonrespondents have a
relationship with evaluation as a profession that is different from that of respondents.

**FINDINGS**

**Reach**

Data on characteristics of the CE and non-CE groups are presented in Table 1.

CEs tend to be older and more experienced evaluators than non-CEs. For example, 69% of CEs have 11 or more cumulative years of professional experience.

### Table 1. Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In which sector are you employed (or were last employed if now retired)? (χ² = 134.5, df = 3, p &lt; 0.01)</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Respondents not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal/Regional/Provincial sector</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal sector</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-for-profit/Postsecondary/Other</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted n</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many cumulative years of professional experience do you have as an evaluator? (χ² = 175.0, df = 3, p &lt; 0.01)</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Respondents not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–5 years</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–10 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or more years</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted n</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Table 1. (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Respondents not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 years</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 39</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 49</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 59</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or more</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted n</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the highest degree you have completed? ($\chi^2 = 9.0$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.05$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Respondents not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted n</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your gender? ($\chi^2 = 2.3$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Respondents not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted n</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In which province/territory is your workplace/study place currently located? ($\chi^2 = 20.8$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.01$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/territory</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Respondents not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Canada</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa-Gatineau</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Canada</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted n</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

as evaluators while only 30% of non-CEs have this degree of experience. Similarly, 56% of CEs are 50 years old or older, while only 32% of non-CEs are in this age group. Not surprisingly, CEs have been members of the CES longer than non-CEs (e.g., 48% of CEs have been members for 11 or more years while only 9% of non-CEs have; $\chi^2(3, n = 573) = 302.2, p < 0.01$; statistical tests not reported in the relevant table are stated in the text).

While non-CEs appear to be fairly equally spread across different sectors of work, CEs are predominantly in the private sector (55%). Of those evaluators active in the private sector, 30% hold the CE designation. Municipal, regional, and provincial government employees have the lowest rate of program uptake (7%). Federal government employees also have a low take-up rate (9%).
CEs are slightly more likely to hold a graduate degree (93% have a Master’s degree or a doctorate compared to 85% of non-CEs; note that one of the CE eligibility requirements is the possession of a graduate degree or diploma).

The proportion of women among CEs is slightly lower than among non-CEs (67% versus 71%; not statistically significant). This may be a function of women tending to have fewer years of experience in evaluation ($\chi^2(3, n = 624) = 35.0, p < 0.01$; not shown in the table).

CEs were more likely to have done volunteer work for CES than non-CEs (67% versus 21%, $\chi^2(1, n = 605) = 227.0, p < 0.01$; not shown in the table).

Finally, in comparison to the regional distribution of CES members, there are proportionately more CEs in Atlantic Canada, the National Capital Region, and Western Canada, and fewer in Quebec and Ontario.

**Outcomes for the Canadian Evaluation Society**

Possible outcomes of the credentialing program on the CES itself that were measured in this study include satisfaction with the program process (data not reported here), demand for the designation, an infrastructure that supports the demand for the program, offering a desirable designation, divisiveness within membership, and the credibility of CES as a promoter of evaluation.

Regarding the demand for the designation, the survey data indicate that 57% of non-CE respondents stated interest in obtaining the designation (response of 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale). Added to the 255 individuals holding the designation as of June 2014, the overall interest level can be calculated to be 64% among all CES members (75% among those entering the profession, $\chi^2(3, n = 415) = 82.6, p < 0.01$). The same level of interest toward “certification” (63%) was measured among CES members in 2005 (Gauthier et al., 2006).

Results for other outcomes for CES are shown in Table 2. Two thirds of CES members (69%) consider that the CE is a desirable professional designation. CEs hold this view more strongly.

About one quarter (24%) of CES members indicated that the CE designation creates an unhealthy divide among evaluators. CEs are statistically less likely to share that view (10%).

Overall, 84% of CES members consider that the work of CES advances the evaluator profession. After controlling for respondent experience, sector, CES volunteering, and holding of another professional designation, CEs are more positive than non-CEs in this regard.

Respondents who had not applied for the credential were asked about reasons for not pursuing it. Three main types of reasons emerged, as Table 3 indicates.

The reason most frequently rated as important by those who had not applied for the designation was that they did not see enough benefit (72% responded 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point importance scale). More experienced evaluators tended to see less benefit in the designation: 88% of those with 6 to 10 years of experience and 78% of those with 11 or more versus 48% of those with up to two years and 64% of those with three to five years ($\chi^2(3, n = 173) = 48.8, p < 0.01$; not shown in the table).
Table 2. Outcomes for the Canadian Evaluation Society Other than Satisfaction with the Program Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Over the past 4 years . . . a</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$df = 1; p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
<th>p(t) for modelled difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>minimum $n$</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum $n$</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation is a desirable professional designation</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>$&lt; 0.01$</td>
<td>$&lt; 0.01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation creates an unhealthy divide among evaluators</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>$&lt; 0.01$</td>
<td>$&lt; 0.01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The work of the CES advances the evaluator profession</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>$&gt; 0.05$</td>
<td>$&lt; 0.01$CE &gt; non-CE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Percentage of respondents who selected 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.

Table 3. Reasons for Lack of Application to the Designation Among Those Not Interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is each of the following in your decision not to pursue the CES Credentialed Evaluator designation?</th>
<th>Percent important$^b$</th>
<th>$n$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t see enough benefit for me</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not required in my job</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not recognized in my job environment</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is too expensive</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The application process is too demanding</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no financial support from my employer</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have the time</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am too uncertain of the result to invest in this process</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The designation maintenance requirements are too demanding</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not a credible designation</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not well informed about the professional designation</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I already hold another professional designation</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My employer has indicated that it is not worthwhile</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t intend to make a career out of evaluation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not involved enough in evaluation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next most important reason for not applying was a lack of support in the workplace, manifested as not being a requirement (71%), not being recognized (60%), and no financial support from their employer (52%). Federal public servants were more likely to indicate that their employer feels the designation is not worthwhile (28% versus 12–17% in other sectors; \( \chi^2 (3, n = 108) = 9.5, p < 0.05; \) not shown in the table) or credible (45% versus 23–28% of other sectors; \( \chi^2 (3, n = 157) = 21.4, p < 0.01; \) not shown in the table).

Other reasons for non-application included the level of effort and/or expense involved: 54% indicated it is too expensive, 53% agreed the application process is too demanding, 49% did not have the time, and 40% stated the maintenance requirements are too demanding. Cost was viewed as less of an issue for those working in the private sector (42% versus for 50–65% in other sectors; \( \chi^2 (3, n = 135) = 12.2, p < 0.01; \) not shown in the table).

Uncertainty about the result of the application was a factor for 44% of those not having applied; this was particularly a concern for those working in the not-for-profit and education contexts (\( \chi^2 (3, n = 167) = 28.9, p < 0.01; \) not shown in the table).

While one third indicated that the designation is not credible (32%), very few felt that the CES was not a credible organization (8%). Finally, small proportions indicated that the reason they had not applied was less about the designation itself and more about their own situation—for example, not being involved in evaluation enough (18%), being close to retirement (17%), planning to leave evaluation soon (13%), or not seeing themselves as an evaluator (11%).

**Outcomes for Credentialed Evaluators**

Possible outcomes of the credentialing program on CEs include professional recognition, attention given to professional development, increased competency, professional status, and professional identification. Table 4 presents findings on these outcomes. As in the following tables, it allows comparison with non-CEs: the first column provides the proportion of all respondents who chose categories 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale; the second and third columns report the same proportions for non-CEs and CEs, respectively; and the fourth, fifth, and sixth report the significance level of the difference in the bivariate relationship and in the significance level of the difference in the bivariate relationship and in the
Table 4. Outcomes for Credentialed Evaluators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Over the past 4 years...^a</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$df = 1$; $p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
<th>p(t) for modelled difference</th>
<th>Self-assessed outcome of program</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>minimum n</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum n</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Immediate Outcomes**

- The CES CE is a good way to identify individuals qualified to conduct evaluation work: 62% 60% 72% 11.6 <0.01 <0.01 — —
- Others have recognized me as being competent in evaluation: 84% 84% 84% 0.0 >0.05 >0.05 61% 138
- Other evaluators have thought more highly of me as a professional evaluator: 62% 62% 63% 0.0 >0.05 >0.05 51% 126
- My employer and/or my evaluation clients have thought more highly of me as a professional evaluator: 69% 69% 64% 2.6 >0.05 >0.05 52% 141
- I participated in more professional development activities: 67% 69% 61% 5.8 <0.05 >0.05 48% 159
- I read more about evaluation: 75% 77% 67% 9.4 <0.01 >0.05 43% 159
- I participated more in CES annual conferences: 30% 29% 35% 4.3 <0.05 >0.05 18% 156
- I participated more in CES chapter activities: 39% 38% 40% 0.3 >0.05 >0.05 23% 157
- I participated more in evaluation conferences other than those of CES: 27% 26% 36% 10.5 <0.01 >0.05 19% 153
Table 4. (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intermediate Outcomes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I improved my professional skills</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expanded my knowledge about different approaches to evaluation</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expanded my knowledge about evaluation methods</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My competitiveness in the job or contract market has improved</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-term Outcomes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I defined myself more as a professional evaluator</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt more that I belong to a recognized profession</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I self-assessed my level of evaluation expertise</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ensured my practice aligns with CES evaluation competency expectations</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of respondents who selected 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.
multivariate model that takes confounding factors into account (see Methodology). The second last column indicates the proportion of CEs that attributed the outcome to the designation.  

Table 4 shows that CEs and non-CEs were very likely to have been recognized as being competent in evaluation in the previous four years (84%) and to have been thought of more highly as professional evaluators by other evaluators (62%) or by their employer/clients (69%). Table 4 also suggests that CEs and non-CEs both participated in more professional development in the previous four years (67%) and read more about evaluation (75%). To a lesser extent, CEs and non-CEs took part in more CES Annual Conferences (30%), CES chapter events (39%), and more non-CES conferences (27%). Survey respondents also indicated that the CE designation is a good way to identify individuals qualified to conduct evaluation work (62%). Substantial proportions of CEs and non-CEs indicated that, over the previous four years, they improved their professional skills (86%), expanded their knowledge about different approaches to evaluation (83%), expanded their knowledge about evaluation methods (83%), and improved their competitiveness in the job or contract market (61%).

Comparisons of CEs and non-CEs on these responses show that the two groups are statistically the same, especially once experience in evaluation, sector of work, and other concomitant variables are accounted for. This would suggest that the program has not led to improved immediate outcomes for Credentialed Evaluators. These data are somewhat at odds with CEs’ self-assessed views of the impact of the designation on them, as the last column of Table 4 shows: one half of CEs (between 43% and 61%) indicated that the program had contributed to their professional recognition and to their professional development activities, and about one fifth (between 18% and 23%) stated that the program had contributed to their conference attendance. About one half of CEs (between 45% and 48%) associated improvement of their professional competency over the previous four years with the credentialing program.

Outcomes classified as longer term were more likely to be experienced by CEs than by non-CEs. About one half of non-CEs defined themselves more as professional evaluators in the previous four years (54%), felt more that they belonged to a recognized profession (44%), self-assessed their level of evaluation expertise (57%), and ensured that their practice aligned with CES evaluation competency expectations (50%). In comparison, between 66% and 72% of CEs answered the same way; all of these differences were statistically significant. After controlling for differences in the composition of the two groups, two important differences persist: CEs were more likely to report a sense of belonging to a recognized profession and to align their practice to evaluation competencies. Between 47% and 63% of CEs self-assessed that the designation contributed to the four long-term outcomes for them.

Outcomes for Non-Credentialed Evaluators

To examine spillover effects from the changes to the practice environment on non-CEs, CE and non-CE respondents indicated the degree to which they have paid more attention over the last four years to each of the five competency domains (Table 5).
Table 5. Outcomes for Non-Credentialed Evaluators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Over the past 4 years. . .</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df = 1; $p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
<th>p(t) for modelled difference</th>
<th>Self-assessed outcome of program</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>minimum n</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum n</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spillover Outcomes**

- I paid more attention to fundamental norms and values underlying evaluation practice: 65% (All), 65% (Not), 61% (CE), $\chi^2 = 2.1$, $p > 0.05$; 40% (Self-assessed), n = 156
- I paid more attention to the technical aspects of evaluation, such as design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting: 77% (All), 81% (Not), 56% (CE), $\chi^2 = 76.1$, $p < 0.01$; 36% (Self-assessed), n = 157
- I paid more attention to the context of evaluations: 75% (All), 78% (Not), 60% (CE), $\chi^2 = 37.2$, $p < 0.01$; 35% (Self-assessed), n = 157
- I paid more attention to the process of managing an evaluation, such as budgeting, coordinating resources, and supervising: 55% (All), 56% (Not), 52% (CE), $\chi^2 = 1.1$, $p > 0.05$; 28% (Self-assessed), n = 156
- I paid more attention to my people skills, such as communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, collaboration, and diversity: 66% (All), 67% (Not), 57% (CE), $\chi^2 = 9.0$, $p < 0.01$; 33% (Self-assessed), n = 158
- The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation has reduced access to evaluation contracts and positions for those without the designation: 27% (All), 30% (Not), 16% (CE), $\chi^2 = 13.5$, $p < 0.01$; — (Self-assessed), n — (Continued)
### Table 5. (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Over the past 4 years...*</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$df = 1$; $p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
<th>p(t) for modelled difference</th>
<th>Self-assessed outcome of program</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the extent of your knowledge of the “CES Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice”?</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>119.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “CES Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice” are important to me personally</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The list of “CES Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice” is a good basis for establishing my training needs</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I refer to the “CES Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice” as my definition of what an evaluator should be able to do</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of respondents who selected 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.
The proportion of evaluators indicating they paid more attention to each of the competency domains over the last four years was higher than 50%, indicating increased attention regardless of credential status. The data indicate that non-CEs are more likely than CEs to have paid more attention over the last four years to the technical aspects of evaluation (81% versus 56%), and the context of evaluations (78% versus 60%). There were no differences in the degree to which non-CEs and CEs paid more attention to fundamental norms and values underlying evaluation practice, the process of managing an evaluation, or people skills.

CEs were asked the degree to which the designation contributed to them paying more attention to the competency domains. Results varied, showing that 28% stated it had an impact on the degree to which they paid attention to the process of managing an evaluation, and 40% indicating it influenced the degree to which they paid attention to fundamental norms and values.

Just over one quarter of respondents felt that the CE designation has reduced access to evaluation contracts and positions for those without the designation. There was no difference between CEs and non-CEs once differences in the characteristics of the two groups were accounted for.

A large proportion (87%) of CEs and one half of non-CEs (50%) indicated having at least a moderate extent of knowledge of the CES Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice (CES, 2009). Higher proportions of non-CEs than CEs indicated feeling that the competencies are important to them (75% vs. 55%) and that the competencies provide a good basis for establishing training needs (75% vs. 64%). Finally, just under two thirds (63%) of CEs indicated that they refer to the competencies as their definition of what an evaluator should be able to do, whereas fewer than half of non-CEs (45%) refer to the competencies in this way.

**Outcomes for the Profession**

The survey included several questions about a sense of belonging to a profession, views about evaluation as a profession, and the trajectories leading to choosing evaluation as a career that were used in past surveys of the same population (Gauthier et al., 2006, 2010), allowing for comparisons of three points in time (2005, 2010, and 2014). Results presented in Table 6 show changes over time but also that these were in play before the introduction of the PDP. More evaluators in 2014 (63%) than in 2005 (35%) agreed they actively pursued a career in evaluation. Fewer say that they became evaluators through circumstances rather than planning (decline from 71% in 2005 to 59% in 2014). Few respondents (between 8% and 11%, nonsignificant given the margin of error) said that evaluation is a field they entered for a short time to develop their résumés.

Trends in the feeling of belonging to the profession are not as clear but are generally on the rise. In 2014, more evaluators were likely to say that they do evaluation for a living (64%) and that they consider themselves as evaluators first (53%) than did so in 2005 (55% and 43%, respectively). In both cases, identification with evaluation was slightly higher in 2010 than 2014. In all surveys, few evaluators said that they want to leave the profession (5% or less), and most agreed
Table 6. Evolution of CES Member Views on the Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>minimum n</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum n</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I actively pursued/pursued a career as an evaluator</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I became an evaluator through circumstances rather than by career planning</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation is an area I have entered for a short time to develop a well-rounded résumé to help me advance in my career</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation is a profession</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I’m asked what I do for a living, I say that I am an evaluator or a program evaluator</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionally, I consider myself an evaluator first and foremost</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation is an area I want to leave as soon as possible</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of respondents who selected 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.

that evaluation is a profession (86% in 2014 compared to 82% in 2005, with a peak in 2010 at 88%).

Table 7 presents findings on the perceived impacts of the designation program on the evaluation profession.

About two thirds (68%) of respondents agreed that the designation contributes to the credibility of evaluation as a means of improving programs and policies, that the designation contributes to standardization of the practice, and that it will eventually improve the quality of evaluations. About the same proportion of respondents agreed that the designation contributes to an increased credibility of evaluators. A smaller majority of respondents (57%) agreed that the designation has enhanced the credibility of evaluation in Canada. A minority (41%) agreed that the designation will increase rigidity and that the designation is working against evaluation by focusing on policing and control (22%).

Outcomes for Evaluation Users and Society

Table 8 presents findings about views on the outcomes of the designation for evaluation users and society. More than two thirds of respondents (71%) agreed that the designation will likely contribute to stakeholders—including program managers, auditors, and governments—viewing evaluation as a professional practice. About 62% of respondents agreed that the designation is a good way to identify qualified individuals. About one half agreed that the designation contributes to protection against poor practices (53%), and that the designation will contribute to protect against unethical behaviour (49%).
Table 7. Outcomes for the Evaluation Profession

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Over the past 4 years...\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$df = 1$; (p &gt; \chi^2)</th>
<th>p(t) for modelled difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>minimum (n)</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum (n)</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intermediate Outcomes**

- The Credentialed Evaluator designation contributes to the increased credibility of evaluation as a means to improve programs and policies: 68% 67% 79% 14.2 <0.01 <0.01
- The Credentialed Evaluator designation contributes to an increased credibility of all evaluators: 67% 66% 80% 20.6 <0.01 <0.01
- The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation has enhanced the credibility of evaluation in Canada: 57% 54% 72% 26.9 <0.01 <0.01
- The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation process does not place enough barriers to underqualified individuals getting the designation: 29% 25% 43% 29.0 <0.01 <0.05
- The Credentialed Evaluator designation contributes to increasing standardization of evaluation practice: 68% 68% 70% 0.4 >0.05 <0.05 CE >non-CE
- Credentialing of evaluators will eventually improve the quality of evaluations being conducted in Canada: 67% 64% 80% 21.1 <0.01 <0.01
- The Credentialed Evaluator designation is likely to increase rigidity of evaluation practice: 41% 43% 31% 12.0 <0.01 <0.05
- The credentialing of evaluators is working against development of evaluation by focusing on policing and control rather than growth and learning: 22% 24% 11% 21.6 <0.01 <0.01

\(^a\) Percentage of respondents who selected 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.
### Table 8. Outcomes for Evaluation Users and Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Over the past 4 years . . .&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Not enrolled in the program</th>
<th>CE respondents</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$df = 1$; $p &gt; \chi^2$</th>
<th>p(t) for modelled difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>minimum $n$</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum $n$</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation is likely to contribute to stakeholders, program managers, auditors, governments, etc. viewing evaluation as a professional practice</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation is a good way to identify individuals qualified to conduct evaluation work</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation contributes to the protection of users of evaluation against poor practices</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>&lt;0.01CE &gt; non-ce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CES Credentialed Evaluator designation contributes to the protection against evaluators’ unethical behaviour</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>&lt;0.05 CE &gt; non-ce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Percentage of respondents who selected 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale.
DISCUSSION

This study aimed to document the early outcomes of the Canadian Evaluation Society’s Credentialed Evaluator Program, from the point of view of CES members who have and have not subscribed to this “professionalization project.” It is important to remember that this survey was conducted only four years after the inception of the CE; therefore, expectations regarding outcomes of the program should be limited. Of equal importance is that outcomes tested here were based on a logic model that examined outcomes beyond those identified by CES, so we refrain from making judgements about program success on the basis of our model.

Reach

The success of professionalization projects depends on their capacity to include a sufficient proportion of practitioners and influential opinion leaders. This study shows that the CES credential is currently reaching the most experienced evaluators, those for whom benefits of having the designation are most likely in terms of competitive edge (i.e., private sector evaluation consultants), and that there is substantial interest in the CE among less senior evaluators. Studies have shown that professional motivations for acquiring a designation may vary by career stage (Timperley & Osbaldeston, 1975), raising a question about how effectively the PDP is reaching mid- and early-career evaluators, especially since the level of interest in becoming credentialed appears to have been stable since 2005.

The data also clearly identify a threat to CES’s professionalization project: the lower uptake to date of the CE among federal government evaluators, arguably the single most influential organization in Canada’s evaluation community. One interpretation might be that the federal government has simply been slower to recognize and value the credential. However, research on corporate professionalization suggests a less benign interpretation: in some fields, large and influential employers of many professionals have been shown to pursue their own brands of professionalism, creating conflicts of legitimacy with professional associations’ professionalization projects (Muzio et al., 2011). Extrapolating from the low uptake and from survey results, one could conclude that federal evaluators constitute a self-sustaining subgroup of evaluators with its own evaluation culture and practices, professional development priorities, recognition and reward system, and self-identification almost separate from the rest of the Canadian evaluation community.

The relative lack of reach to other levels of government and the not-for-profit sectors also raises questions about its value in their practice contexts, where evaluation may be one of many professional roles played by an individual at a given time.

Further analysis of reach is offered in Appendix B.

Outcomes

A key conclusion of this study is that the progress in professionalization observed in the survey data is quite likely due to a convergence of factors, with effects that are difficult to disentangle from the introduction of the CES CE program—itself
the result of multiple influences. Potentially important factors include some that are linked to CES and its activities, and some that reflect trends in public sector management. Importantly, the findings suggest that attitudes toward and entry into the profession were becoming more positive before the credential was formally introduced in 2009. This may be attributable to an overall increasing consciousness of professionalization issues, to which debates and discussions at CES, the American Evaluation Association (AEA), and other organizations may have contributed; it may also have been possible to launch the PDP because attitudes toward evaluation being a profession had evolved positively.

We define “non-engaged CES members” as CES members who have neither initiated nor completed the CE application process. The study found few objective differences between CEs and non-engaged CES members in professionalization outcomes such as improvements in professional development participation, level of knowledge, or competitiveness. This suggests that either the CE is having little impact or that background influences on professionalized practice are affecting the entire field. However, to some extent CEs do attribute the perceived improvements in their status and practice to the acquisition of the credential. Some CEs thus believe in the credential’s positive effects, but only a longitudinal, objective assessment of skills and professional learning involvement would provide concrete evidence of the contribution of the CE.

The positive changes reported by non-CEs do suggest that the CES Competencies (CES, 2009) are making their way into professional consciousness, which may be a spillover effect of the CE or, again, a result of background factors. This would seem to indicate that the competencies are serving to some extent as a core framework for many evaluators, whether credentialed or not, for the establishment of professional development needs. Throughout this entire period, CES maintained and increased its professional development offerings in line with the Competencies; many other purveyors of evaluation training also increased activities. Professional development and conferences are key vehicles to convey values and socialize members in professionalization processes (Greenwood et al., 2002) and so, on its own, this enhanced training environment may have been responsible for increased identification with evaluation and desire to improve practice. In tandem with the introduction of the CES credential, several new university graduate programs in evaluation were implemented across Canada, and a higher profile and coordination of these programs was likely achieved through the work of the Consortium of Universities for Education in Evaluation (CUEE), with CES support.

Externally, the economic downturn in Canada during the 2008–2012 period stoked the “value for money” climate in public sector management and a parallel trend to endorsement of evidence-informed management (e.g., Rousseau, 2012). The introduction of the 2009 Treasury Board of Canada Policy on Evaluation (Treasury Board of Canada, 2009b) with its enhanced requirements for evaluation coverage and renewed insistence on periodic evaluations addressing all “core issues” (Treasury Board of Canada, 2009a) has ensured that federal evaluation
activity has been maintained despite financial constraints. This may have contributed to the relative self-sufficiency of the federal community.

Overall, although the results of this study suggest that some outcomes in line with those expected for the CE are occurring, the unique contribution of the program to these is extremely difficult to assess. This conclusion should not be surprising: dynamics as complex as the professionalization of an area of knowledge and practice are affected by multiple influences, not by any single factor.

In terms of outcomes beyond the level of individual respondents—that is, for CES, the profession, and end-users—a survey-based study such as this can only provide limited information. Results at all these levels were consistent with a potentially positive contribution. The perception of the designation is generally positive. The CE is seen as contributing to the credibility and value of CES as a professional association, which is consistent with research on the important role that professional associations can play in professionalization projects (Greenwood et al., 2002). The literature indicates that some professionalization projects have led to sustained and structured forms of engagement with clients and end-users such as client associations, to develop guidelines and best practices on how to procure, manage, and use their services (Muzio et al., 2011).

In conclusion, this study suggests that some outcomes expected for the CE program are in the process of being realized: attitudes and perceptions about the program are fundamentally positive, Credentialed Evaluators attribute some improvements in their practice to the credential, and the sense of belonging to a profession is increasing. However, factors other than the credentialing program may have influenced the observed outcomes. The study also points to some crucial challenges facing the designations program for reaching its entire intended community.

NOTES

1 The authors wish to thank the anonymous reviewers who offered constructive comments on an earlier version of this article.

2 In this study, we refer to the term “profession” using the predominantly French tradition which defines a profession as a group of individuals who practice a particular trade or occupation (Le Petit Robert).

3 These used multiple regression to predict dependent variables measured on 7-point scales. Predictors were years of experience in evaluation (using dummy variables for 3–5 years, 6–10 years, and 11 years or more, leaving the 0–2 years as the reference category), volunteer time given to CES (using dummy variables for 1–10 hours, 11–50 hours, and 51 hours or more, leaving no volunteering as the reference category), holding of another professional designation, sector of work (using dummy variables for nonfederal public service, federal public service, and the education and not-for-profit sectors, leaving the private sector as the reference category), and holding the CE designation. All predictor variables were entered into the model in a stepwise fashion except for the CE designation variable that was forced into the equation. Statistical significance of the CE status was determined based on the \( t \) value and its associated probability.
Out of all CEs responding to the questionnaire, whether or not they indicated that a change occurred for them in the previous four years.

This could also include those who apply and fail. The PDP program has been designed to exclude noncompetent applicants, but at the same time offers support in the form of formative guidance on areas needing development and a three-year period in which to reapply after an initial unsuccessful application. It is not possible to say at this point if there are any applicants who have failed to meet the requirements or completely withdrawn from the process.

http://evaluationeducation.ca/
http://evaluationcanada.ca/ethics

CES does not have demographic information for all of its members as it is not mandatory to provide this information to become a CES member or a Credentialed Evaluator.

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Appendix A

LOGIC MODEL AND LITERATURE REVIEW
On the basis of a literature review and input from an external panel, we developed an outcomes-focused logic model to guide the construction of the survey questionnaire. The complete model is presented in Figure 1. Not all components of this model were measured in the survey, as individual CES members whose perspectives are adopted would not have been the appropriate sources of information.

The literature on evaluation professionalization recognizes potential outcomes at three levels: the individual evaluator, the profession as a whole, and users or beneficiaries of evaluation use. The logic model defines expected outcomes for these three levels. In addition, it recognizes that the community-level impacts (i.e., for CES, the profession as a whole, and evaluation users) could have spillover effects to the outcomes of evaluators who do not acquire the credential. It is also important to emphasize that the literature on evaluation professionalization and forms of credentialing and accreditation foresee both positive and negative impacts. We built these into the study design process as well as the measures, to provide the most balanced view possible.

OUTCOMES FOR THE CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY
While our focus in this study is on the perspectives of individual evaluators, the implementation and uptake of the PDP are key determinants of how attractive the credential is to CES members and nonmembers. The following immediate outcomes, identified in the initial planning and implementation documents for the PDP, must be in place or visibly moving in that direction for the program to attract applicants:

- **Members are satisfied with PDP**: CES membership as a whole is supportive of the design and operation of the program (CES PDP, 2009b), as manifested particularly in the presence or absence of public complaints and dissension.

- **There is demand for the CE designation**: Uptake is sufficient for the PDP to be seen as of growing interest or relevance to practice (CES PDP, 2009b). Tactics designed to engage most senior members of professional fields appear to be characteristic of professionalization processes (Timperley & Osbaldeston, 1975).

- **Infrastructure supports the demand for the CE**: Another critical requirement is that the program infrastructure—including the technology, application tools, and procedures; functioning of the Credentialing Board; and recourse mechanisms—offer quality and timely service (CES PDP, 2009b).
**Figure 1. Professional Designations Program – Outcomes Logic Model**

Developed by Natalie Kishchuk, Benoît Gauthier, Shelley Borys, and Simon Roy. Outcomes in italics were not measured in the study.
Intermediate outcomes for the PDP, as identified in its planning documents, are

- **CE is a desirable designation:** According to the PDP Monitoring Plan, this refers to the level of uptake as well as the level of complaints from applicants (CES PDP, 2009a). It could also refer to perceptions of the CE in the broader community: the extent to which the credential is seen as having value or conferring status, allowing others to aspire to the standard held by the credentialed person (Harris & Barnhart, 2001). It can be noted that professionalization projects in some fields have failed to acquire a desirable status, with highly influential organizations and individuals remaining non-designated and suffering no apparent consequences (Muzio et al., 2011).

- **CES explores other designations:** A consortium was initially contracted by CES to develop the credential concept and recommended that three levels of credential be adopted, with an entry-level credential acknowledging basic competencies, and higher levels recognizing advanced competencies or excellence in practice (Halpern & Consortium, 2007). This was seen as a means to leverage increasing competency among practitioners who would aspire to the higher level credentials. This idea remains present in the program documentation (CES PDP, 2009a) but has not been actively pursued to date. Multiple credential levels defining a career ladder are typical features of mature professionalization projects, involving assessment through a broader array of methods including examinations, interviews, client references, and portfolio review (Muzio et al., 2011).

- **PDP is cost neutral:** CES adopted the PDP on the basis of a budget showing that it would be cost-neutral—that, once implemented and in steady state, its expenses would be covered by the application fees and an additional premium on the CES membership fee.

- **Divisiveness within membership:** Altschuld (1999a, 1999b) noted that, in the American Evaluation Association context, implementation of a credentialing program could lead to tensions and divisions among membership, citing a membership survey with mixed views. There are at least two potential sources of divisiveness for a voluntary credentialing program: creation of two “classes” of evaluators and a corresponding sense of inclusion and exclusion from the field and the community, and division within the governance of CES about the vision and direction of the field of evaluation and the CES overall. Differences of opinion about the PDP program have indeed been publicly expressed (CES, 2007; Cousins, Malik, & Maicher, 2007). Studies of professionalization projects in emerging fields—for example, executive search professionals—have attributed failure of those projects to competing interests leading to divisiveness with the field (Muzio et al., 2011).
In the long term, the credential is expected to result in the following outcomes:

- **External organizations support, promote, and make use of the designation:** These external organizations would include other key actors and opinion leaders in the evaluation community, as well as consumers of evaluation. In the former group, of particular interest to CES outcomes is the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada’s Centre for Excellence in Evaluation, which is highly influential among the large community of evaluators in the Canadian federal government, as well as other jurisdictions. Uptake of the credential by evaluators outside Canada (at the time of writing, some five CEs live outside Canada) may signal early support and use of the designation internationally. Internationalization is now recognized as a key feature of emergent professionalization projects (Muzio et al., 2011). In the second group, the outcome would be seen in the widespread integration of credentialed practice: for example, in the adoption by employers of the CE as a mandatory or preferred qualification for evaluation positions, or the adoption by major contractors such as the federal government of a mandatory requirement for contracted evaluators to hold the CE, or an additional weighting of the CE in proposal evaluation rating schemes. Inclusion of credential requirements in procurement processes is indeed an important professionalization tactic, defined as a market-based form of occupational closure (Muzio et al., 2011).

- **CES is a credible representative and promoter of evaluation:** Finally, the PDP program is expected to enhance the stature of CES nationally and internationally as a leading reference for best practice and a strong and effective advocate for evaluation. Professionalization is cited as allowing professional associations to take control of the profession and to determine its future (Greenwood et al., 2002; Harris & Barnhart, 2001).

**OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUAL CREDENTIALED EVALUATORS**

Expected immediate outcomes (possibly within the first three years) of having acquired the credential are expected to be

- **Recognition of the CE** as holding a level of skill and quality or competence (Altschuld, 1999b; CES PDP, 2009a; Harris & Barnhart, 2001; Worthen, 1999); that is, the mere fact of having obtained the credential allows the CE and others to be assured that the CE’s practices meet a sanctioned level of competency. The value of this recognition depends on the extent to which the CE is perceived to set a high standard and is hard to acquire, as opposed to acknowledging that practice meets industry average. This also depends on the extent to which the designation assessment tools are seen as validly capable of discriminating between competent and incompetent practitioners.
Increased attention to and involvement in professional development (Altschuld, 1999a; Harris & Barnhart, 2001; Worthen, 1999): This outcome is expected to occur as a result of the explicit requirement to engage in 40 hours of professional development every three years to maintain the credential. This could ensure that “old-time evaluators” keep in touch with the evolution of the evaluation function (Gussman, 2005). Involvement in professional development would also be influenced indirectly, by pointing to domains where professional evaluators are expected to be competent (Podem, 2014) and helping CEs self-identify their professional development needs. The credential could also induce more conference attendance and participation (Altschuld, 1999a).

Medium-term outcomes, after the first three years, are expected to be

- Increased competency: Some literature suggests that credentialing can lead to improved competencies among those who acquire it, in the form of better professional skills (Gussman, 2005; Harris & Barnhart, 2001) and expanded knowledge of evaluation approaches (Gussman, 2005). Increased competency would result most directly from the increased attention to and involvement in professional development. This outcome is also seen as a result of the identification and promotion of the Competencies, which act as a form of standard to guide and systematize practice (and could also be seen as reification of competencies and the commoditization of evaluation knowledge; Lawrence, 2004). However, if the intent of the PDP is mainly to recognize those who are already competent among established practitioners, there would be little reason to expect an increase due to the credential itself.

- Higher professional and competitive status: Some authors note an expectation that, to the extent that the credential is seen as credible and valued, those who hold it could see their status rise, both in terms of their reputation as professionals (Altschuld, 1999a; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010) and their enhanced career progress and capacity to compete, whether for positions of higher prestige, for contracts, or against unqualified competitors (Altschuld, 1999a, 1999b; Harris & Barnhart, 2001; Picciotto, 2011).

- However, acquiring and maintaining a credential may place additional costs of doing evaluation business on CEs (Altschuld, 1999a, 1999b).

Longer-term outcomes for Credentialed Evaluators could include

- Increased and/or sustained professional identification as an evaluator (Podem, 2014): This outcome is of interest in that professional identification among Canadian evaluators is relatively low but growing: surveys of CES members in 2005 (Gauthier et al., 2006) and 2010 (Gauthier et al., 2010) showed that 39% and 54% of respondents, in those years respectively, agreed with the statement: “I consider myself an evaluator first
and foremost.” Indeed, a key outcome for professionalization projects is the recentring of professional identity (Timperley & Osbaldeston, 1975) in a more firmly framed field understood by its members to be uniquely positioned to solve its clients’ problems (Lawrence, 2004).

OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUAL NON-CREDENTIALED EVALUATORS

As spillover effects from the changes to the practice environment are expected to result from the implementation of the PDP, non-Credentialed Evaluators (including those who have no interest in acquiring the credential and those who are interested but have not yet done so) could be affected by

− The publication and dissemination of the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice (CES, 2009) could be expected to contribute to the orientation of evaluators, particularly new ones, to competent practice (Altschuld, 1999a; Harris & Barnhart, 2001), as they seek to understand the requirements and standards of the field based on more than observation of their peers.

− Restricted access to the profession: A key potential negative outcome for non-Credentialed Evaluators identified in the literature is restricted access to the field (Altschuld, 1999a; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010). (Although in the professionalization literature, this tends to be seen as rather the main point: “ultimately, the objective of a professional project is to achieve degrees of regulation over a field of practice, both in terms of controlling the supply of expert labour and the behaviour of producers”; Muzio & Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 391.) This is a tricky issue for the voluntary CES designation, which aims to allow evaluators the choice not to participate but remain full members of CES and the evaluation community, with no restrictions on practice. These authors suggest that it may produce exclusion. Others have observed that voluntary professionalization projects may fail if key organizations and individuals choose to ignore them (Muzio et al., 2011). This may be most likely to occur in the population of evaluation practitioners whose professional identity and role is not limited to evaluation (Altschuld, 1999a), for example, the numerous professionals in the NGO and community sector whose role includes planning, organizational development, and management along with evaluation. It may also be an issue for practitioners in the growing field of monitoring and performance measurement, whose practice borders on and overlaps to some extent with evaluation. Although it is of interest to the overarching aims of the PDP program to ensure ongoing evaluation competency development in these sectors (which, alternatively, could be characterized as expanding the jurisdiction of evaluation into adjacent professions; Suddaby & Viale, 2011), the program may narrow the membership space.
Reduced interest in professionalizing: In a related potentially negative outcome, the formalization and restriction of access to the status of “evaluator” through the credential may dampen interest in the profession, especially in sectors where it was not strong to begin with (Jacob & Boisvert, 2010). This would be consistent with observations that professionalization projects can motivate “excluded actors to undermine rituals that support the status quo” (Lawrence 2004, p. 121).

In the intermediate term, non-Credentialed Evaluators would be expected to be affected by

- PDP competencies as a training and professional development framework: Over time, it is expected that the competencies will come to occupy a central, defining role in training and professional development in evaluation, so that all evaluators, whether credentialed or not, will be exposed to this framework. This is occurring through the grounding of training and professional development in the Competencies: for example, the CES requirement that professional development workshops at the annual CES Conference as well as some graduate certificate programs in program evaluation developed and promoted through the CUEE could be linked to the competencies. In addition, non-Credentialed Evaluators may look to the Competencies as a framework for their own development, quite outside the credential.

OUTCOMES FOR THE EVALUATION PROFESSION

There is one immediate expected outcome for the field of program evaluation in Canada of the PDP program:

- The field is clear on what it means to be an evaluator: Lack of consensus on the definition and boundaries of the field of evaluation was long recognized as a significant barrier to professionalization (Altschuld, 1999a; CES PDP, 2009a; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010; Worthen, 1999). It was also seen as a posing a threat to evaluation from other professional groups, notably audit and management consulting (Gussman, 2005). The development of the PDP program was founded on extensive consultation to validate and develop consensus on the competencies among Canadian practitioners (Cousins, Cullen, Malik, & Maicher, 2009). However, the extent to which this expected clarity has been internalized and maintained is unknown.

In the intermediate term, the PDP should produce for the Canadian profession as a whole

- Expectation that all evaluators have basic knowledge: From adoption of the Competencies as part of the requirements to access the credential, it
logically follows that all stakeholders in the field would then expect that all Credentialed Evaluators would have the basic knowledge embodied in the Competencies. This is cited in the literature as a key benefit of a credentialing system (Altschuld, 1999a; Podem, Goldman, & Jacob, 2014; Wilcox & King, 2014).

− Increased continuous learning: The PDP program proposal indicated that the designation would lead to an overall higher engagement in continuous learning and professional development across the field (CES PDP, 2009a).

− Increasing/reduced training offerings in evaluation: There are mixed views on the potential impact of the PDP for training offerings. On the one hand, the need to maintain the credential could be expected to lead to a burgeoning of training opportunities in line with the credential, to be offered by CES or other entities (Altschuld, 1999a, 1999b; Harris & Barnhart, 2001; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010). On the other hand, the circumscribing of what is considered valuable or appropriate evaluation knowledge and skills by defining core professional competencies may narrow and homogenize current training offerings (Jacob & Boisvert, 2010).

− Increased credibility of evaluation: The PDP proposal to CES stated that, in the intermediate term, the PDP would enhance the credibility of the profession, as it acquires a more rigorously defined public presence (CES PDP, 2009a). Indeed, some authors argue that the main purpose of certification systems (as opposed to licensure) is to protect the profession, as opposed to the public or practitioners (Schultze, 2008).

− Some unqualified individuals are credentialed: The risk of false positives, where the assessment and designation system is not adequate to always exclude unqualified individuals, is identified as a potential outcome by Altschuld (1999a) and Jacob & Boisvert (2010). This could undermine the value of the designation.

The long-term outcomes expected for the evaluation profession are numerous. They include

− Enhanced distinct identity of evaluation, with clear boundaries separating it from neighbouring fields such as audit and quality management (Gussman, 2005; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010) and on par with other fields and other professions that require credentialing for their practitioners (Altschuld, 1999a, 1999b). Credentialing systems are an important weapon in the “jurisdictional contests that occur among competing professional groups for the occupation and control of emerging and transforming fields” (Lawrence, 2004, p. 166); they can be seen as colonizing strategies that enhance legitimacy of a field through connections to institutions outside the field (Lawrence, 2004). A distinct professional identity also has the advantage of being portable across practice settings (Harris & Barnhart, 2001; Muzio et al., 2011).
Standardization and homogeneity in evaluation practice: For some authors (Podem et al., 2014), this is seen as a desirable outcome for the profession, insofar as it defines expectations for competent practice and quality process and product, reducing the likelihood that non-evaluation work is labelled “evaluation” and accepted as such by unknowing users. However, this is also seen as a negative outcome that could reduce experimentation, growth, and renewal in the profession (Jacob & Boisvert, 2010) or, as has been noted more generally, “surveillance and uniformity encourage the conformity and rigidity that encourage further surveillance and uniformity” (Lawrence, 2004, p. 121).

Higher quality evaluations: The overall increase in professional development, the cues provided to credentialed and non-credentialed practitioners about competencies along with the exclusion of practitioners lacking competencies from access to evaluation work are expected to result in a net increase in the quality of evaluation (Altschuld, 1999a; CES PDP, 2009a; Cousins et al., 2009; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010).

Increased use of evaluation: In a context where evaluation lacks credibility (Gussman, 2005, mentioned senior federal government managers as an example of such a context), the PDP can contribute to greater recourse to evaluation as a management decision-making tool and bring it closer to the broader policy picture. Evaluation may enjoy a gain of market share through better “brand recognition” (Harris & Barnhart, 2001).

The credential as standards influences practice: It is also plausible that the presence of the Competencies de facto sets a practice standard for evaluation and, in doing so, shapes practice. If the bar is set too low—for example, as an entry-level credential—the net effect could be to shape practice to a lower level of quality.

Field is narrowed: Several authors have indicated that an expected outcome of credentialing, indeed the flip side of increased standardization and clearer boundaries, is that over time the field will become more narrow and restrictive in paradigms, theories, and methods (Altschuld, 1999a; Cousins et al., 2009; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010; see also Lawrence, 2004).

OUTCOMES FOR EVALUATION USERS AND SOCIETY

Finally, the PDP logic model posits outcomes for users of evaluation and for society as a whole. We suggest that these are more likely to occur in the medium to longer term. Thus, intermediate outcomes are:

- Stakeholders view evaluation as a professional practice and understand its value: “Stakeholders” in this case refers to clients and users of evaluation as well as managers, decision-makers, and governments more generally (CES PDP, 2009a; Gussman, 2005; Worthen, 1999). It has been suggested
that an important condition for success of professionalization projects (using the example of accountants becoming all-round business advisors in multidisciplinary firms, a professional project that took two decades to achieve) is that persuasive communications connect professional interests to broader value systems (Suddaby & Viale, 2011), and convince external stakeholders that practitioners hold moral legitimacy to act for society’s good (Greenwood et al., 2002).

− Clients aware of and prefer the credential: This outcome, suggested indirectly by some authors (Podem et al., 2014) and noted by our Challenge Group (see Methods), renders explicit the premise that evaluation users’ behaviour will be influenced by this change in the evaluation “market” whether internally or externally. Note that this may depend on organizational policies and constraints: for example, including the credential as a mandatory requirement for evaluation positions in government will not be entirely the purview of the hiring manager. Note also that in the voluntary designation system, non-CEs may be as competent as CEs, without having chosen to have this recognized by the designation.

− Public is educated about good evaluation practice: A more informed consumer base would reduce the “likelihood that false claims of being an evaluator would go unnoticed” (Altschuld, 1999a; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010; Worthen, 1999). Public education is a particular focus of some other credentialing systems such as that of Aotearoa-New Zealand (Wehipeihana, Bailey, Davidson & McKegg, 2014). However, public education about evaluation or the credential has not been a priority for CES or the PDP.

− Increased costs for consumers: On the negative side, the costs of the credential and its maintenance may eventually be directly or indirectly passed on to evaluation users (Altschuld, 1999b; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010).

In the longer term, outcomes at this level could include

− Protection of evaluation users: This outcome would arise from the exclusion or nonpreference of noncompetent evaluators in hiring and contracting, as well as improved quality of evaluation (Altschuld, 1999a, 1999b; Harris & Barnhart, 2001; Jacob & Boisvert, 2010; Podem, 2014).

− Avoidance of unethical behaviour: The Reflective Practice domain of the Competencies includes adherence to professional standards including the CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct,7 as well as the Joint Standards for Evaluation (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011), which include ethics dimensions. Professionalization is generally accompanied by the codification of professional behaviour considered ethical practice (Jacob & Boisvert, 2010; Shultze, 2008). Reflective competencies are, however, among the most difficult to validly assess (Wilkinson, Wade, & Knock, 2009).
Needs of employers and purchasers for quality evaluation met: This outcome is a corollary of the increased overall quality level of evaluations produced in the profession, stemming from increased competency of CEs, increased professional development, and greater understanding of how quality in evaluation can be recognized (Cousins et al., 2009).

Society benefits from fair and accurate evaluations: This outcome would occur through the application of improved practice to produce evaluation findings that lead to program or policy improvements (Jacob & Boisvert, 2010; Worthen, 1999). However, the marginal contribution of the PDP to the overall value of evaluation in Canada is likely to be difficult to ascertain.

In the logic model, we have reproduced the ultimate aims of the PDP as indicated in the program documentation: “Professionalization of Evaluation in Canada,” and “Clarity and Definition For and Within Canadian Evaluation Practice.”

Appendix B

SEGMENTED ANALYSIS

This appendix summarizes key differences between significant segments of evaluators. Table 9 contains the results that focus on the sector of work and on the number of years of involvement in evaluation.

Evaluators active in the private sector are most likely to hold the CE designation (30%). One half of those in the private sector who do not hold the designation indicated an interest in obtaining it. Other than the designation not being a job requirement or not seeing enough benefits from the designation (the two reasons most commonly cited by all groups for not pursuing the designation), being too close to retirement to enter this professional process was cited more often by private sector non-CEs than by other non-CEs.

Municipal, regional, and provincial government employees have the lowest rate of program uptake (7%). While their level of interest in the designation is relatively high (59%), they indicated that the cost was a barrier as well as the time required to complete the application, and the fact that their tasks do not contain enough evaluation work to justify the effort. Members of this group are less likely to identify as evaluators, but they are more likely to foresee positive outcomes of the designation on evaluation in Canada.

Federal government employees have a low take-up rate (9%) and a lower level of interest in the designation (46%) than others. Although they are more likely than other sectoral groups to self-identify as evaluators, they are also the group least favourable toward the designation in terms of desirability and likely outcomes.
Table 9. Summary of Differences for Significant Segments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Sector of work</th>
<th>Years of experience in evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>Non-federal government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% holding the CE</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in obtaining the CE</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why not interested in obtaining the CE?</td>
<td>Too close to retirement</td>
<td>$, no time, not in evaluation enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I say that I am an evaluator</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CE designation is a good way to identify qualified individuals</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CE is a desirable professional designation</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CE has enhanced the credibility of evaluation in Canada</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credentialing will eventually improve the quality of evaluations</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CE designation is likely to increase rigidity of practice</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All differences depicted in this table are statistically significant to the 0.05 level at a minimum. Statistical tests are cell-complement differences of proportions and cell-complement t-tests depending on the nature of the data.
Respondents from the not-for-profit and education sectors display the highest level of interest in the designation (61%), even though their uptake to date is low (9%). Key reasons for not pursuing the CE in their case include being uncertain about the results of the application process and already holding another professional designation. Members of this group are less likely to self-identify as evaluators; they are more likely to support the ideas that the CE designation is a good identifier of qualified individuals and that the designation has enhanced the credibility of evaluation in Canada.

Three quarters of new evaluators (1 to 2 years on the job) are interested in obtaining the designation. Other than benefits perceived as questionable, the main barriers for them are a lack of information and the fact that evaluation may not be their career choice. While they are less likely to already identify as professional evaluators, they display the most positive attitudes toward the designation.

Evaluators with 3 to 5 years of experience show a solid level of interest in the program (64%), but assess the process as demanding and costly. They are somewhat less likely than other experience groups to consider themselves evaluators first and foremost, and more likely to see the designation possibly leading to increased rigidity in the practice of evaluation.

Take-up among members with 6 to 10 years of experience is 14% to date. One half (51%) of those not already CEs in this group are interested in acquiring the designation. Other than limited perceived benefits of the designation, this group indicated that the absence of financial support from their employer was a reason for lack of interest in the process. Members of this group tended to self-identify more than others as professional evaluators, but also were less likely to see the designation as desirable, credibility-enhancing, and exerting a positive influence on the quality of evaluations.

The most experienced group of CES members (11 years or more of professional experience) is also the one with the highest take-up rate (26%)—the fast-track application process is likely to be a factor. Among the non-CEs in this group, almost one half (46%) are interested in the designation. Those who are not interested see limited benefits for themselves in acquiring the designation. Members of this group are more likely than others to self-identify as professional evaluators, but they are somewhat more critical of the capacity of the designation to identify qualified individuals, of the ability of the designation to enhance the credibility of evaluation in Canada, and of the possible effect of the designation to increase the rigidity of evaluation practice.
From the Outside, Looking In with a Smile: A Summary and Discussion of CES’s Credentialed Evaluator Designation

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Abstract: Drawing upon information presented in this issue, the article discusses the CES’s Credentialed Evaluator designation using three frameworks: the Context, Inputs, Processes, and Products (CIPP) model to provide an overview of the program; developmental evaluation to examine key events and principles in the program’s evolution; and adaptive action to raise issues both for the CES as it revises the program and for others around the world as they consider the possible benefits and risks of establishing evaluator credentialing programs. The Credentialed Evaluator designation has provided proof of concept for a viable evaluator credentialing system run by a voluntary organization of professional evaluators (VOPE). Specific considerations in moving forward in settings beyond Canada include the following: (a) the exercise of caution when using evaluator competencies to structure a credentialing program, (b) the importance of a perceived need for or value of a credential, (c) skillful attention to milieu, (d) finding qualified and committed people to develop and manage the program, and (e) ensuring that all stakeholders, including those outside the profession, are involved.

Keywords: evaluator competencies, evaluator credentialing, evaluation professionalization

Résumé : En tirant des informations fournies dans ce numéro, cet article présente une discussion du titre d’Évaluateur accrédité de la SCÉ par le biais de trois cadres: le modèle Contexte, intrants, processus, et produits (CIPP) pour fournir un survol du programme; l’évaluation du développement du programme pour examiner les événements et principes clés de son évolution; et l’action adaptée pour soulever certaines problématiques, à la fois pour la SCÉ lors de sa révision du programme et pour les autres intervenants du monde entier qui évaluent les avantages et les risques de mettre sur pied un programme d’évaluateur accrédité. Le titre d’Évaluateur accrédité a démontré la faisabilité d’un système de titres professionnels pour les évaluateurs géré par une organisation volontaire d’évaluateurs professionnels (VOPE). En dehors du Canada, les éléments à prendre en considération pour aller de l’avant incluent: (a) faire preuve de prudence lors d’utilisation des compétences de l’évaluateur pour

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structurer un programme de titres professionnels, (b) accorder de l’importance à la perception du besoin et de la valeur d’un titre, (c) porter une attention adroite au milieu, (d) trouver des personnes compétentes et engagées pour développer et gérer le programme, et (e) assurer l’implication de tous les intervenants, même ceux qui n’œuvrent pas dans le domaine de l’évaluation.

Mots clés : compétences de l’évaluateur, accréditation de l’évaluateur, professionnalisation de l’évaluation

I teach program evaluation at the University of Minnesota. The topic of my doctoral colloquium during Winter Quarter, 1998—17 years ago—was the professionalization of evaluation. We collectively reviewed all the articles we could locate on the topic, reflecting on the progress made in the 30 or so years since the field’s launch during the 1960s. One late afternoon, following a particularly discouraging discussion of whether evaluators could ever agree on a common set of competencies—it seemed unlikely—three doctoral students (Gail Ghere and Jane Minnema in Evaluation Studies and Laurie Stevahn in Educational Psychology) stayed after class to pose a challenge: What if we developed a set of evaluator competencies? Each of them was familiar with fields that routinely used competencies: special education, early childhood education, and teacher education. If those fields could generate sets of competencies, then why not evaluation?

We took the challenge and began working together, always as volunteers, to create the competencies that started life as the Minnesota Evaluator Competencies, but were eventually labelled and published—rather boldly—as the Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators (ECPE; King, Stevahn, Ghere, & Minnema, 2001; Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005). As Love (2015) and Maicher and Frank (2015) document in this issue, CES developers used the ECPE as one of the framing documents in developing the competencies that are now part of the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) Designation. The four of us could never have imagined on that wintery afternoon or during the many long hours spent around my dining room table how our efforts would one day play a role in the ultimate development of the CES system. We just wanted to see if we could develop competencies. Over a decade had passed when Laurie Stevahn and I were asked in 2009 to discuss the ECPE and our process for developing them with members of the CES Professional Designations Core Committee (PDCC) during the American Evaluation Association conference. What had begun simply as an intellectual challenge ultimately became part of the professionalization of our field.

The purpose of this article is to provide a relative outsider’s review of CES’s CE Program and one person’s perspective on its long-term implications. It presents a view across the articles included in this issue and also moves beyond them to examine the status of credentialing in evaluation generally. Times have certainly changed since we four Minnesotans innocently compiled lists of competencies.
others had proposed and sought overarching categories into which evaluator competencies of all sorts would fit. I must be clear that I write as a critical friend; I have discussed the program’s ongoing development and presented on common daises with Canadian colleagues multiple times in the past decade. I sincerely celebrate the fact that the CES has institutionalized an evaluation credential and a functional process for its attainment, bringing to life a form of credentialing in a field that has struggled to address issues of professionalization. In an effort to be thorough, three approaches will frame my review: (a) Stufflebeam’s Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model (Stufflebeam, 1983) to provide an overview of the CE “intervention”; (b) Patton’s developmental evaluation (Patton, 1994, 2011) to highlight key decision points and principles in the evolution of the CE program; and (c) a simple adaptation of Eoyang’s adaptive action (Eoyang & Holladay, 2013) to focus attention to the field’s “system” more broadly.

USING THE CIPP MODEL TO DESCRIBE THE PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS PROJECT (PDP)

Since its development in the 1960s, the CIPP model has highlighted four distinct areas of evaluation focus (Stufflebeam, 1983, 2007). Detailing the context, inputs, process, and products of the CES Professional Designations Project is one way to summarize information on the project and its product, the Credentialed Evaluator Designation. The following sections will describe each of the four CIPP categories for the PDP.

But first it is important to identify exactly what the Professional Designations Core Committee created. As Gauthier, Kishchuk, Borys, and Roy (2015) describe it, “CES implemented a designation that recognizes that an individual has education and experience necessary for practicing evaluation competently in Canada” (Gauthier et al., 2015, p. 99).

Another article provides definitions that highlight the distinctions among credentialing, certification, and licensure (see Halpern, Gauthier, & McDavid, 2015). The CES designation is an innovative combination of two of these. Buchanan writes that the CE designation “credifies” evaluators, noting that the PDP’s CE model is

“somewhere between a credential and certification.” The PDP was knowingly introducing a novel approach, credify, a term that may be defined as

\[\text{Credify (v.t.) a process consisting of 2/3 credentialing and 1/3 certification to award a professional designation. (Buchanan, 2015, p. 48)}\]

The committee that ultimately developed the CES professional designation worked creatively in a space between formal definitions, shaping a “credifying” process and infrastructure to support it that adapted to the context in which it had to succeed.
CONTEXT OF THE PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS PROJECT

The first component of the CIPP model is context. What was the context in which the PDP emerged during the first decade of the 21st century? What happened in the field in prior years that led to the decision to move forward with planning in 2007 and implementation in 2010? During the 1990s professional evaluation circles in both Canada and the USA had begun to discuss professionalization, recognizing that after 30 years of developing practice, the timing seemed right to at least consider taking formal steps to move the field in this direction (see Love, 2015). As Love (1994, p. 29) put it, “Both the American Evaluation Association (AEA) and the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) see promoting evaluation as a profession to be a key element of their missions.” In the same issue of New Directions, Worthen (1994) stated that evaluation had clearly developed certain attributes of a profession: the need for evaluators coupled with stable career opportunities, a unique set of knowledge and skills, professional associations and targeted journals, preparation programs for training evaluators, and codified standards of practice. He also identified three attributes that the field lacked: accreditation of training programs, a way to exclude unqualified practitioners, and—of importance for the current discussion—certification or licensure for evaluators.

Although the topic was discussed repeatedly over the years, the AEA Board never moved forward with a formal professionalization effort. Picciotto (2011) suggests that “heated doctrinal disputes within the membership of the American Evaluation Association have blocked progress in the USA” (p. 165). By contrast, discussions in Canada that began in the 1990s and continued into the new century eventually led the CES National Council to act. In creating the Professional Designations Project, the Council sought “clarity and definition for and within the evaluation discipline/practice in Canada” seeking to address the “identity crisis . . . [that] involved a lack of clear demarcations and defined parameters for the evaluation function” (Buchanan, 2015, p. 38). Cast in the structure of realist evaluation,

the PDP sought to build a practical designation (what works) for the Canadian evaluation community (for whom) within the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation context of Canada (under what conditions) to begin the process of defining an evaluation identity (and why). (Buchanan, 2015, p. 49, emphasis in original)

Two features of the Canadian context—(a) the unequal distribution of evaluators across regions and (b) the fact that a significant number of Canadian evaluators generally (and CES members specifically) are either employed in the federal government or provide service to the government as contractors—elevated the issue of professional identity and the importance of its distinct definition. The negative potential of an outside group defining evaluator roles and requirements was another compelling reason to move ahead; at Laurie Stevahn’s and my 2009 meeting with the PDCC, we winced upon hearing a rumor that the Canadian
Treasury Board was considering hiring an outside firm to develop job descriptions and related competencies for evaluation contracts in the federal government. Better that the CES take on the task than to let someone outside the field do the job with possibly disastrous results.

The work of the PDCC was guided implicitly by the need to create a credential that would, on the one hand, be meaningful and reflect high-quality evaluation practice and, on the other, be acceptable to the CES membership. As the creators of the initial action plan note, “We were . . . aware that the Society, as with any professional association, would wish to accommodate as many members as possible” (Halpern, Gauthier, & McDavid, 2015, p. 31). Created from hindsight, Table 1 contrasts the undesirable and desirable attributes that a voluntary evaluator designation system might evidence. These attributes guided the Committee’s work over the years of the CE Program’s development.

Unavoidably, the PDP also operated as part of a broader context as the field of evaluation continued to grow during the first decade of the 21st century. Part of this growth included expanding discussion of professionalization around the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Undesirable Attributes</th>
<th>Desirable Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face validity</td>
<td>Internal to the evaluation community. Perception of inappropriate content or content that is not applicable in certain contexts</td>
<td>Face validity for internal audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Process perceived to be nitpicky or specific to a limited type of approaches</td>
<td>Process perceived to be “meaningful”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of requirements</td>
<td>Inflexible/unbending/unreasonable</td>
<td>Flexible/adaptable/reasonable—mandatory requirements that make sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of formal testing/assessment</td>
<td>Formal testing</td>
<td>No formal testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Perceived as expensive</td>
<td>Perceived as “reasonably” priced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived outcomes/benefits</td>
<td>No or negative perceived outcomes for completing the CE process</td>
<td>Positive perceived outcomes (e.g., professional development improved practice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual outcomes/benefits</td>
<td>CE and noncredentialed evaluators are treated equally</td>
<td>Credentialed evaluators receive unique benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
world as organizations, funders, and governments engaged in conversations similar to those in Canada. Gauthier, Borys, Kishchuk, and Roy write,

A key conclusion of this study is that the progress in professionalization . . . is quite likely due to a convergence of factors, with effects that are difficult to disentangle from the introduction of the CES CE program—itself the result of multiple influences. Potentially important factors include some that are linked to CES and its activities, and some that reflect trends in public sector management. (Gauthier et al., 2015, pp. 115–16)

Indeed, there was a growing interest internationally in competencies and credentialing; the CES was on the leading edge of this concern. As Picciotto (2011, p. 172) notes, “Except for Canada, progress towards designation or certification of evaluators has proceeded at a snail’s pace.”

**INPUTS TO THE CREDENTIALED EVALUATOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The second component of the CIPP model is inputs, the things needed to begin the project. In the case of the PDP, several inputs aligned that enabled the planning and ultimate implementation to occur. As Dumaine reflects, looking back, “the initial odds of successfully launching a designation program for Canadian evaluators were rather slim. But the program is now fully operational” (Dumaine, 2015, p. 135). Table 2 details the key inputs that facilitated the development process.

**Table 2. Inputs to the Professional Designations Project (2007–present)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input Category</th>
<th>Specific Inputs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance/leadership</td>
<td>• CES National Council&lt;br&gt;• Professional Development Core Committee (2007–2009)&lt;br&gt;• Interim (unpaid) VP-PDP to oversee the CE launch and implementation (2009–2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>• Development personnel (2007–present): roughly 14 willing and able volunteers plus a dozen or so others from across Canada&lt;br&gt;• Implementation personnel (2009–present): paid staff supported by volunteers&lt;br&gt;○ Part-time paid project coordinator (Application Administrator)&lt;br&gt;○ Web developer&lt;br&gt;○ Credentialing Board (2010–present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>• Two unsuccessful grant applications&lt;br&gt;• Limited funding and a reliance on volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual content</td>
<td>• Guidelines for Ethical Conduct reaffirmed&lt;br&gt;• The Program Evaluation Standards adopted&lt;br&gt;• Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice (CCEP) developed and validated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Governance/leadership. The CES National Council had both the authority and the commitment to bring the PDP to fruition. As other articles make clear, the Professional Development Core Committee, which functioned from 2007 to 2009, played an active and unrelenting role in developing the CE program. One of its members, Keiko Kuji-Shikatani, who served as an unpaid Interim Vice President for the PDP from 2009 to 2013, provided consistent and thoughtful leadership in overseeing the CE launch and implementation.

Personnel. Three groups of personnel took part in distinct activities:

1. Program development personnel (2007–present): Some 14 willing and able CES volunteers plus a dozen or so others, mostly women, actively created the Credentialed Evaluator Program. The fact that these volunteers were from many locations across Canada and communicated extensively with leaders of CES chapters was vitally important to the later approval of the outcome.

2. Implementation personnel (2009–present): When the program became operational, the PDP hired two part-time paid staff, who were aided by the continuing work of volunteers. The two jobs consisted of a part-time project coordinator (Application Administrator) and a web developer/administrator.

3. The Credentialing Board (2009–present): The Board is a set of 30 volunteers recruited from the pool of CES award winners and Fellows, all of whom were grandfathered as CEs. Barrington et al. (2015) provide extensive demographic detail about the group, writing that “the typical CB member is an established evaluation practitioner with an advanced degree in the social sciences. He or she has more than a quarter-century of experience, primarily in the private sector” (Barrington, Frank, Gauthier, & Hicks, 2015, p. 89).

Funding. The PDP relied primarily on in-kind CES volunteers’ contributions of time. Although PDCC members wrote two grant applications, they were not funded, which meant that the committee had to rely primarily on volunteers’ commitment to a cause about which many were passionate. Maicher and Frank document the effect of this lack of funding: “Context and environment determined much of what could be realized” (Maicher & Frank, 2015, p. 65). So, for example, the team working on validating the descriptors ultimately gave up on a complicated—and expensive—validation process and revised the methods to be feasible.

Conceptual content. Given the one-year development timeline, the PDCC turned to existing materials for the conceptual content of the new program. To create its three “pillars,” the planning group (a) reaffirmed the CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct, (b) formally adopted the Program Evaluation Standards (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011), and (c) created the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice (CCEP) by editing and adapting the Essential
Competencies for Program Evaluators (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005) and then developing descriptors.

THE PROCESS FOR BECOMING A CREDENTIALED EVALUATOR

The third component of the CIPP model is process. In determining the process for becoming a Credentialed Evaluator, the PDCC decided early on to use a portfolio-based approach in which applicants would self-detail their education and experience, and then provide evidence of their having demonstrated 70% of the competencies. The voluntary nature of the process “placed CES in a difficult and vulnerable position” (Dumaine, 2015, p. 157) because it was simply unknown whether CES members or others would choose to engage in the process, regardless of how flexible or reasonable it might seem to those who created it. Dumaine writes, “The first few brave souls who sought the designation of credentialed evaluator had to believe that it would, over time, pay off,” but there were surely no guarantees (Dumaine, 2015, p. 157).

PRODUCTS (OUTCOMES) OF THE PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS PROJECT

The fourth component of the CIPP model is products or outcomes. Helpfully, Gauthier et al. (2015) provide direct evidence of PDP outcomes to date based on a survey of the entire CES membership that had a response rate of roughly one third (64% for CEs and 30% for non-CEs). The survey asked respondents to reflect on five potential beneficiaries of the CE program: (a) the CES itself, (b) CEs, (c) non-credentialed evaluators, (d) the evaluation profession/discipline as a field, and (e) the broader evaluation users/society in general. With the exception of society—the broadest group of potential beneficiaries for which it is simply too soon to tell—the perceived outcomes were generally positive for its beneficiaries:

- The CES itself: “Two thirds of CES members (69%) consider that the CE is a desirable professional designation. CEs hold this view more strongly” (Gauthier et al., 2015, p. 103).
- Credentialed Evaluator Program participants: While short-term outcomes were similar for CEs and non-CEs alike, “Between 47% and 63% of CEs self-assessed that the designation contributed to the four long-term outcomes” (i.e., defined themselves more as professional evaluators in the previous four years, felt more that they belonged to a recognized profession, self-assessed their level of evaluation expertise, and ensured that their practice aligned with CES evaluation competency expectations) (Gauthier et al., 2015, p. 108).
- Noncredentialed evaluators: Even without actively participating in the CE Program, evaluators who have not become CEs may have experienced spill-over effects from the changes to the professional environment.

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in Canada. For example, “[t]he proportion of evaluators indicating they paid more attention to each of the competency domains over the last four years was higher than 50%, indicating increased attention regardless of credential status” (Gauthier et al., 2015, p. 111).

- The evaluation profession/discipline: The mere existence of the CES CE Program serves as proof that an evaluator credentialing system is possible. Data support its perceived value:

About two thirds (68%) of [survey] respondents agreed that the designation contributes to the credibility of evaluation as a means of improving programs and policies, that the designation contributes to standardization of the practice, and that it will eventually improve the quality of evaluations. (Gauthier et al., 2015, p. 112)

As Gauthier et al. (2015) make clear, it is extremely early in the program’s history to discuss outcomes. They also note that “[o]verall, although the results of this study suggest that some outcomes in line with those expected for the CE are occurring, the unique contribution of the program to these is extremely difficult to assess” (Gauthier et al., 2015, p. 117). That said, two members of the PDCC summarize their sense of the program’s outcome: “[P]erhaps the most critically important and energizing part of the work is not in the result (i.e., the CCEP or the CE), but rather in the cross-country conversation and debate on evaluator identity that the initiative prompted” (Buchanan & Kuji-Shikatani, 2014, p. 42).

This description of the PDP context, input, process, and product provides a summary of the Credentialed Evaluator Designation. The next section will detail the process through which the CE Program developed.

**APPLYING DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATIVE THINKING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CES’S PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS PROJECT**

The schedule that the PDCC eventually held itself to was beyond taxing; at times it must have seemed impossible. “Qualifiers such as challenging, difficult, chaotic, and nerve-racking would serve well to describe the process that led to the adoption of the program” (Dumaine, 2015, p. 159). Such settings can benefit from a developmental evaluation perspective (Patton, 1994, 2011), especially retrospectively to understand exactly how events unfolded by tracing decisions and actions. The articles in this special issue provide extensive detail that creates a documentary record both of developments over time and of the “principles” guiding the work. What decisions adapted the development process to the Canadian context so it could ultimately succeed?

Table 3 presents a summary of key decisions that impelled the PDP forward from 2006 to 2014. In hindsight, the successful culmination may appear inevitable, but this is merely strong testament to the PDCC’s political savvy, persistence, and willingness to shape the CE process in the interest of forward progress and
Summary and Discussion of CE Designation 143

Table 3. Overview of Professional Designations Project Development, 2006–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Professional Designations Project Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>RFP to develop Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>National Council decision to move forward with implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Report on PDP progress at annual conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Approval of PDP and standing ovation at annual conference; grandfathering put in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Credentialing Board instituted; designation application process launched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Fast-track process initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Over 100 CEs awarded by the time of the annual conference; continued discussions about process refinement by National Council and Credentialing Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Fast-track process ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>CES National VP takes over responsibility for the CE program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the ultimate achievement of its goal. Consider the following key events or decisions in its development.

1. The inciting event took place in 2006 when the National Council let an RFP to develop an Action Plan based on four points: (a) a formal literature review, (b) interviews with people in other organizations that had professional designations, (c) findings from a 2005 survey of Canadian evaluators, and (d) the writers’ extensive knowledge and experience. The RFP’s successful respondents went to work.

2. After carefully considering the proposed Action Plan that resulted, the National Council made the decision in October 2007 to move forward with the implementation of just one of its levels of professional designation (Level 2, Credentialed Evaluator), leaving Levels 1 (Member) and 3 (Certified Professional Evaluator) for possible later consideration. In choosing this limited scope, the “National Council opted for a more cautious and incremental process for professional designations” (Buchanan, 2015, p. 34)—“perhaps [a] gentler approach” (p. 49). There would be no formal certification, no accreditation of programs, and no “member” designation, at least at this time.

3. At the 2008 CES conference plenary, the PDCC gave a report on its positive progress and received the go-ahead to develop the professional designation process. This meant that “[e]very aspect of the CE designation process had to be operationalized by the next annual conference” (Kuji-Shikatani, Matthew, & Thompson, 2015, p. 71), creating a challenging—many would have said unrealistic—timeline for a group of
dedicated volunteers, each and every one of whom had other full-time jobs. They made multiple decisions about the content of the credential, including, for example, the following:
- The CE was not defined at a specific level (junior or expert).
- There were only two mandatory requirements—for a master’s-level education and two years of evaluation experience.
- The PDCC adopted a portfolio-based approach with flexible requirements that would allow individual applicants to explicate the ways in which their education and experience addressed various competencies.
- Applicants had to achieve 70% of the competencies, increased from the initially proposed 60%, which seemed minimal, but still far below 100%.
- The competency statements were enhanced by the addition of carefully detailed descriptors “to provide a base that could be built upon or revised as current knowledge and environments change” (Maicher & Frank, 2015, p. 55).

4. Exactly a year after the 2008 conference, those in attendance at the CES conference plenary in 2009 gave an enthusiastic standing ovation to members of the PDCC, and the National Council approved moving forward with implementation.

5. Highlighting the adaptations the PDCC made in response to the context of Canadian evaluation practice and the political situation within the CES helps in thinking about the successful development of the CE Program. These three changes addressed the need for having a sizeable number of credentialed evaluators in fairly short order to create a sense of significant progress.
- First, a “grandparenting scheme,” initiated at the 2009 annual conference and eventually made permanent, waives the education requirement for long-time CES members.
- Second, for two years (2011–2013), a shortened “fast-track” process that required just a CV and description of an exemplary evaluation allowed experienced CES members to earn their CE status. The Credentialing Board suggested the fast track after initial low rates of applicants.
- Third, the need to accommodate applicants who lacked a master’s-level education but had extensive evaluation experience led to a willingness to consider Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) as an education equivalent. Although contentious, the PLAR may be considered a nonissue as very few, if any, candidates have presented one.

6. In hindsight it is not surprising that the initial implementation of this first-ever credentialing system met some bumps along the route. Two critical challenges created additional work for the PDCC: (a) In May
2010 the Application Coordinator got a new job immediately before the site launch, which meant that the volunteer VP-PDP had to absorb those critical responsibilities; (b) when it became clear in 2011 that the computer system initially in place was inadequate to the task, the web developer identified and transitioned to new software as the program was running.

7. A critical step in the program’s development occurred in July 2014 when the CES National VP took over responsibility for the CE Program. The temporary position of VP-PDP was dissolved, and the CE Program was institutionalized in the structure of CES governance.

Developmental evaluation helps trace the decision points that led to the CE Program’s institutionalization. It can also highlight omissions that may affect the ongoing development process. Buchanan (2015, p. 50) faults the development team for failing to strategically engage representatives of the federal and provincial government systems in the CE program development. The fact that the CE status is not recognized in federal human resource systems could have long-term impact on the program. As a result, CES is carefully monitoring take-up of the CE program by evaluators in all levels of government (Gauthier et al., 2015).

In addition to detailing key events and decision points, developmental evaluation examines the principles to which a program is committed and documents actions that demonstrate evidence of their use. The PDCC articulated five principles or values that guided its work: inclusiveness, transparency, feasibility, utility, and partnering. Table 4 shows the support provided for each of these principles in the Committee’s work.

Table 4. PDP Principles and Evidence to Support Their Presence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Evidence of the Principle in Action</th>
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| Inclusiveness   | • Direct efforts to make the credential applicable to evaluators in a variety of settings  
|                 | • Multiple consultations with CES members (Buchanan, 2015)  
|                 | • Over 36 volunteers from across Canada and every chapter contributed to the PDP’s development  
|                 | • Repeated efforts to engage CES members in the development and validation process (e.g., 2008 member survey, consultations with CES chapters across Canada) |
| Transparency    | • Openness among PDPCC, National Council, and CES membership  
|                 | • Multiple forms of documentation and communication (e.g., flyer distributed at CES training courses, plenary sessions at 2007 and 2008 national conferences, letters sent to government contacts)  
|                 | • Results of all consultations archived  
|                 | • Lapel pins distributed to increase visibility |

(Continued)
Principle Evidence of the Principle in Action

Feasibility
- Financial feasibility
  - Reliance on volunteers to do the lion’s share of the development work
  - Work routinely adjusted to fit existing resources
  - Efficient use of online and web-based processes
  - The credentialing process that ultimately emerged resulted in marginal positive revenue (2010–2012)
  - Detailed documentation helped track issues over time (Kuji-Shikatani et al., 2015)
- Flexibility of the CE application process
  - Costs to individuals for the CE application set relatively low
  - CE applicants align their professional experiences and education to competencies in a brief narrative (Kuji-Shikatani et al., 2015)
  - Feedback on the completeness of the application
  - Candidates complete applications at their own pace; the application administrator monitors the time it takes applicants to complete materials

Utility
- Anecdotal evidence of positive regard for the designation (Buchanan, 2015)
- Perception of CEs that the designation is valuable (Gauthier et al., 2015)
- Credentialing Board provides suggestions for improvement as necessary
- Movement toward clearer identity for the evaluation community (Buchanan, 2015)

Partnering
- Development in 2008 of the Consortium of Universities for Evaluation Education (CUEE)
- Some collaboration with government sector

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THE CE DESIGNATION FRAMED THROUGH ADAPTIVE ACTION

Having described the Credentialed Evaluators Designation in detail and documented events and principles in its development, my remaining task is to place this program in a broader context and discuss future implications. At its most basic level, adaptive action (Eoyang & Holladay, 2013) asks three straightforward questions—What? So what? Now what?—that, when answered, can help individuals or organizations that face uncertainty. This framework is appropriate both for the Canadian Evaluation Society as it continues to shape its CE Program and more generally for other voluntary organizations for professional evaluators (VOPEs) and other interested parties around the world as they consider what, if anything, to do about credentialing. Indeed, considering these three questions in...
the context of professionalizing the field through credentialing may make sense for any organization concerned with the future of evaluation.2

FOR THE CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY

How might the CES apply adaptive action to the continuing development of the CE Program in its national context? Based on the content of this special issue of CJPE, the first two sections of this article have provided summary details that describe the current “What?” of the CES Credentialed Evaluators Program. To my mind, the key “So what?” answers for the CES will come from making sense of the information emerging from the initial implementation that will shape actions to sustain the program’s forward momentum and institutionalization. Is the program really at a “point of no return,” as Dumaine (2015) purports? Has there been any benefit in being an international leader by creating the “credifying” process? One clear pattern that emerges is the ongoing shaping of requirements to respond to the concerns of long-time CES members, coupled with the need to create a meaningful number of Credentialed Evaluators as quickly as possible. One potential concern, noted earlier, has been the slow uptake of the credential among evaluators working in Canadian governmental settings.

What information might help the CES National Council determine “Now what?” Several questions come to mind immediately, including the following:

- What incentives exist for evaluators to pay to become CEs? What agencies/funders might support people to do so? What, if any, are the disincentives?
- Who opposes the further development of the CE Program, and why? To what extent (if any) are people being excluded from professional practice because of the CE Program?
- Has the process created a critical mass of CEs sufficient to sustain further development of the designation? Has CES reached a tipping point within Canada (Gladwell, 2000), and, if so, what are its effects?
- What, if anything, distinguishes Credentialed Evaluators from other evaluators? Does the CE status actually foster continuing professional development? Has the program helped to successfully frame the identity of Canadian evaluators?
- What does the CE Program actually cost, and is it truly viable in its current form? How will future adaptations be created and implemented? What are its long-term effects?
- Is there sufficient, high-quality, and affordable training/education available across Canada or available elsewhere, either face-to-face or electronically, for evaluators interested in becoming credentialed?
- What would it take for the CES to move to a more restrictive credentialing system (e.g., to implement the two components of the initial action
plan that were not implemented)? What would be the potential value and/or risk in doing so?

While parts of the answers to these questions are included in other articles in this issue, detailed responses could prove extremely helpful in identifying what to do next.

FOR OTHER GROUPS INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING EVALUATOR CREDENTIALS

As noted, adaptive action begins with a careful description of “What,” in this case the Credentialed Evaluator Designation created in the Canadian context. Only the CES National Council and ultimately the Society’s members can determine next steps in that program’s development. Consideration of the CE Program’s implications for the field more generally, however, belongs to any evaluator concerned with the potential of evaluator credentialing—for better or worse. Broadening the context to an “increasingly interconnected global [evaluation] system” (Picciotto, 2011, p. 166) with its sizeable and growing number of VOPEs around the world raises wider concerns, and in my opinion the time appears right for their discussion: “On both sides of the Atlantic and in the zones of turmoil and transition of the developing world aspiration towards a recognized professional culture is sweeping the evaluation community” (Picciotto, 2011, p. 177). What can the CES case contribute to the conversation as other groups—whether VOPEs, governmental units, or additional funders—consider bringing the promise of evaluator credentialing to life?

Again, the many articles in this special issue provide helpful details of process, outcomes, and decision points that make up the Canadian “What?” A wider context, however, expands to the “What?” of other national credentialing efforts, including a Japanese Evaluation Society program that certifies educational evaluators and the development and use of competencies in numerous VOPEs internationally (see Podems & King, 2014; King & Stevahn, in press). Stepping back and looking at the CE Designation from this broader perspective again highlights the powerful effect of the Canadian context on the program’s evolution, including, for example, the lack of significant funding for its development, the geographic distribution of CES PDP volunteers, and the need to provide viable options for long-time CES members. In the context of other countries or evaluation societies, these issues may or may not affect the development process.

“So what?” What can we learn from the CES’s extraordinary effort that succeeded in initiating and then institutionalizing an evaluator credential? First, as noted above, the CES program provides proof of concept for a viable VOPE evaluator credentialing system. Together, the PDCC, the National Council, the Credentialing Board, the CES membership, and everyone who has applied to become a CES Certified Evaluator have shown that a VOPE can develop an evaluator credential in what appears to be a cost-effective and sustainable manner. King and Stevahn (in press) write, “The CES has documented the process and outcomes of
its CE program as a potential model for other professional associations.” In addition, as Dumaine notes, “With [its] three pillars, one can argue that the CES designation program creates a remarkably fertile ground to test and refine current and future evaluation models and theories” (Dumaine, 2015, p. 158). Both the PDP logic model and the related outcomes logic model provide grounding for continued R&D wherever people are willing and able.

Second, the development and implementation of the CES CE Program raises several useful issues for evaluation leaders to consider when thinking about credentialing programs in other places. The CES has provided a model for one form of professional designation that combines elements of the traditional “credential” and “certification.” On the one hand, thankfully, the field now has a solid example with detailed records and individuals willing to share experiences from which other VOPEs can benefit. On the other hand—as evidenced in this issue’s articles—the CE Program is decidedly grounded in its Canadian setting, which may or may not share similarities with other settings (the role of the government and other evaluation funders, the political structure of a country, the size and make-up of the VOPE membership, etc.). Let me note five issues that in my opinion demand special consideration.

The use of evaluator competencies to structure any credentialing program. Picciotto (2011, p. 172) notes that “[a]nyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the evaluation jargon can pretend to be an evaluator. The competencies debate remains inconclusive.” King and Stevahn (in press) detail several concerns with the use of any set of competencies, both practical concerns (e.g., the need to update the competencies regularly as theory and practice evolve) and conceptual concerns (e.g., the degree to which competencies should document and lead to high-quality practice as opposed to being an aspirational set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions; validity and the relation of the credential to actual good practice; and the potential importance of subject-specific content). The centrality of ethics and professional standards in evaluation practice is clear, as are the overarching categories of competencies across various sets (i.e., professional, technical, situational, management, and interpersonal); beyond that, specific competency details can vary.

The importance of a perceived need for/value of a credential. In the Canadian context, the initiators framed the development project as a needed search for evaluator identity and community building, with the hope and expectation that credentialed evaluators would seek professional development to build their skill sets over time. Speaking of the context with which I am most familiar, to date this need has not risen in the US with sufficient force to launch an AEA credential, although the Board is now discussing professionalization issues. Leaders of other VOPEs should conduct highly thoughtful and detailed situation analyses before moving forward, knowing that some may view this move toward professionalizing negatively (Picciotto, 2011).

Skillful attention to milieu. VOPE and other developers must be willing to shape the credential (whatever form it takes) to fit the constraints of the context—including among others the political, financial, and leadership constraints that will
unavoidably affect development. In another situation, the innovative professional designation (characterized by some as part credential and part certification) that evolved in Canada and created options viable in that setting may not prove viable elsewhere. Local adaptation and credibility are key; one size is unlikely to fit all.

Finding qualified and committed people to develop and manage the program. Organizations interested in creating evaluator credentials, whether VOPEs, government agencies, or other funders, will unavoidably face the challenge either of (a) raising funding to support development and/or (b) identifying volunteers to do the work. In the CES example, when fundraising through grant applications was unsuccessful, the program relied on a small number of steadfast career evaluators who volunteered and would not be deterred. The CE development involved 450 days of volunteer time from 34 volunteers representing $350,000 of in-kind service (Buchanan, 2015).

But finding additional volunteers and actively engaging the membership proved to be a challenge. In this issue, authors mention that there were no volunteers from three provinces (perhaps not surprising since the CES chapters in some provinces have few members), that only 99 of 1,500 members (approximately 5%) responded to the member-wide survey about the CE competencies in 2008, that consultations with CES chapters by the developers of competency descriptions reached only 17% of the membership, and that 17 of 40 experts with valid addresses (42%) responded to the validation process for competencies and descriptors. While the 2014 survey of CES members about the CE program had an acceptable 35% response rate overall, this also meant that over two thirds of the membership did not respond. Nevertheless, the “thunderous standing ovation of over 700 CES members” at the 2009 Ottawa conference clearly supported the CES commitment to move ahead (Kuji-Shikatani et al., 2015, p. 71), and the intrepid core volunteers did just that, persisting in the challenging, detail-oriented, and sometimes tedious work necessary to create the CE designation.

Other VOPEs, take note! If the development process is ultimately to succeed, there must be a group of thick-skinned, committed individuals—whether volunteers or compensated professionals—who are willing to listen, assess changing situations, roll with the inevitable punches that concerned participants will throw, and keep going, regardless. W. Edward Deming’s first principle for management is to “create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service, with the aim to become competitive and to stay in business, and to provide jobs” (Deming, 2014). This is potentially an appropriate principle for the work.

Conceiving the credentialing system holistically. The CES example makes clear that any evaluator credentialing program needs to take into account the entire gamut of stakeholders and services necessary to sustain the process over time. The PDP outcomes logic model (Gauthier et al., 2015) names five stakeholder groups (the CES, credentialed evaluators, noncredentialed evaluators, the evaluation profession/discipline, and evaluation users/society), moving from the VOPE to society in general, all of which have different perspectives and potential outcomes that require attention. In addition, the infrastructure to support the
credentialing process includes not only the mechanisms directly related to the credential, but also, for example, the necessary training and education to support people’s professional development. Attending to the system features of a new program may help facilitate its ultimate success.

The final step of adaptive action—“Now what?”—requires decision makers to choose a course of action from the many conceived during the second step (“So what?”). CES leadership will determine next steps for the Credential Evaluator Program. It falls to leaders in evaluation around the world to consider the potential value of a credentialing system for evaluators in their settings and whether or not to move ahead with its creation. In other areas of professional practice there are companies and professionals who are hired routinely to develop credentialing systems, and we surely have lessons to learn from their extensive experience. Picciotto strikes an appropriately cautionary note when he writes that “[p]remature moves towards designation or certification could do more harm than good” (2011, p. 179). The question, finally, may come down to whether the potential benefits outweigh the costs of creating and maintaining such a system.

This review article has described the CES’s Credentialed Evaluators Designation using the CIPP model and then detailed the steps and principles applied in its creation using Patton’s developmental evaluation. The final section used three framing questions to raise concerns for the field more broadly, knowing that the time is ripe for continued discussion. In the article by Barrington et al. (2015, p. 95), we learn that one CES Credentialing Board member commented, “[The designation] wasn’t to be the end of our journey in professionalizing evaluation,” and this is as true for CES members as it is for those of us who live elsewhere. But what a helpful beginning it is from which others in the field of evaluation will surely benefit.

NOTES

1 Recent developments in “principles-based” evaluation would likely label these single words “values” or “category labels” rather than formal statements of principles, which include more detail and are usually stated as sentences (personal communication with M. Q. Patton, March 14, 2014).

2 This discussion will focus solely on credentialing, but it is important to acknowledge other approaches to professionalization, including accreditation of training and educational programs and more formal certification and licensing.

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A Point of No Return Finally Reached: The Journey Ahead

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Abstract: By offering a collective approach to the guidance of evaluation practice in Canada, the CES designation program creates a new environment for program evaluators. Its identification of competencies related to program evaluation and its requirement for ongoing professional development should facilitate the successful application of evaluation theories and models. This, in turn, is bound to enhance the quality of program evaluation and its relevance as an effective management and decision-making tool.

Keywords: designation program, evaluation practice, evaluation quality, professional development

This special issue of the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation documents what may well be described as the most ambitious project ever undertaken by the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES). As some of the other articles suggest, the initial odds of successfully launching a designation program for Canadian evaluators were rather slim. But the program is now fully operational, allowing for a reflection on its expected impact on the future of evaluation practice in Canada. This article offers some insights, based on the experience that led to the adoption of the program.

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Résumé : Par le biais d’une approche collaborative visant à guider la pratique de l’évaluation de programme au Canada, le Programme des titres professionnels de la SCÉ transforme l’environnement dans lequel cette discipline se pratique. L’établissement d’une liste de compétences en évaluation de programme et l’exigence relative à la formation continue, qui sont à la base du programme, devraient faciliter l’application réussie de théories et de modèles d’évaluation, contribuant ainsi à rehausser la qualité de l’évaluation de programme et à consolider sa pertinence dans le processus décisionnel et de gestion.

Mots clés : programme des titres, pratique de l’évaluation, qualité de l’évaluation, perfectionnement professionnel
GUIDING THE EVALUATION PRACTICE

In a remarkable address as President of the American Evaluation Association, Professor William Shadish (1998) summed up the essence of evaluation theories or models by stating that “evaluation theory is who we are.” He remarked that evaluation theory “is what makes us different from other professions,” and he reminded us that “it is in our own self interest to be explicit about this message and to make evaluation theory the very heart of our identity. Every profession needs a unique knowledge base. For us, evaluation theory is that knowledge base.” This theory-oriented knowledge base ultimately defines how program evaluation is to be executed and the purposes it is expected to serve. As each evaluation assignment unfolds in a unique set of circumstances, a variety of models or theories of evaluation have emerged and continue to do so, thus strengthening the relevance and value of program evaluation in supporting sound public policy decision-making.

In light of these expectations for the continuing evolution of evaluation theory, how do we ensure that those practicing program evaluation possess the required knowledge and skills? This question has haunted and continues to haunt all countries that have embraced program evaluation as part of their management and accountability procedures and tools. Canada is no exception to this, as illustrated by the endless debates that have risen over time on the quality (or its lack) of evaluation reports being produced and published.

In the absence of regulatory frameworks, such as those applied to traditional fields such as medicine or law, it is a rather loose set of learning opportunities that has been made available to individuals wishing to become program evaluators in Canada. To this day, most of us possess no formal education in program evaluation. Rather, the focus has largely been placed on the acquisition of the skills required to carry out methodologies typically associated with social sciences. In other words, the ability to undertake quantitative and qualitative research has been seen as the required foundation to engage in program evaluation. As the literature on program evaluation theories or models illustrates, these skills are undeniably important but, in themselves, fall short of ensuring that program evaluators can successfully engage in assessing a program, policy, or initiative.

Under this scenario, it is the responsibility of each program evaluator to seek out learning opportunities that can provide a more comprehensive understanding of what program evaluation entails. The CES—and particularly all its regional chapters—have provided learning opportunities through workshops and other learning events. The CES’s annual national conferences, as well as this journal, have also provided opportunities to share and discuss best practices and innovative approaches to conducting program evaluation in Canada. Finally, other partners of CES, particularly the American Evaluation Association, have offered worthwhile learning opportunities.

All in all, however, the guidance offered to program evaluators in Canada has, for the longest time, remained largely unstructured, at best incremental, and undeniably incomplete. Far worse, access to learning opportunities has remained systematically uneven across Canada. The unequal distribution of program
evaluators across regions, combined with variation in policy environments at the provincial and territorial levels with respect to the use of program evaluation, have considerably limited the ability of regional chapters of CES to offer comprehensive learning opportunities. As the saying goes, if all program evaluators in Canada are equal, one can hardly deny that some are more equal than others.

In this type of environment, should one be surprised that the practice of program evaluation has not always met expectations in terms of quality and usefulness?

MOUVING TOWARD A COLLECTIVE JOURNEY

In launching its designation program, CES presented both program evaluators and the users of program evaluation with the opportunity to engage in a collective structuring of evaluation practice in Canada. To be clear, the goal of the designation program has never been to dictate how each evaluation assignment should be conducted. Rather, it is about strengthening the capacity of program evaluators to design evaluation strategies that can better meet the expectations of the ultimate users of program evaluation. Moreover, the guidance offered through the designation program is also expected to reach users of program evaluation and thus help them understand what this discipline can and cannot deliver.

From the scattered environment in which program evaluators were forced to navigate, the designation program shifted the ground significantly by offering a comprehensive framework for the practice of evaluation, as well as a process in which each program evaluator may engage to guide his or her practice and ongoing professional development. As documented in this special issue, the three pillars of the designation program (a code of ethics, standards, and a set of competencies) offer a comprehensive description of the range of skills and knowledge required for the sound practice of program evaluation. Of the three pillars, the set of competencies is by far the component that has required the most extensive developmental work and, not surprisingly, has raised the most intense debates among evaluators. Now that the dust has somewhat settled and we can look back at this list of competencies, we know it is bound to evolve and be improved over time. Regardless, by covering five dimensions of evaluation practice that go far beyond the mastering of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this list of competencies presents a remarkable portrait of what a program evaluator is expected to master to successfully carry out evaluations.

It is worth emphasizing that the determination of the required competencies to be covered by a designation program is probably the most difficult step that any professional organization offering such a program is required to tackle. In that regard, it is rather unfortunate that some program evaluators, in Canada and in other jurisdictions, take refuge behind the veil of perfection-seeking to oppose or sabotage attempts to create a comprehensive listing of these competencies. This thinking—that a community of evaluators is better off having no competency listing than having what is bound to be an imperfect one—is precisely what has led to
such variations in the quality of evaluations, something that can ultimately weaken the argument that program evaluation is a worthwhile tool to support good management and decision-making. In fact, how could we possibly echo the message of Professor Shadish that evaluation theory “is what makes us different from other professions” if we find ourselves unable to declare what competencies are required to engage in this so-called different profession called program evaluation? Any one of the existing program theories or models that are currently advanced requires an adequate code of ethics, standards, and competencies on the part of its practitioners if it has any hope of being successfully applied. With these three pillars, one can argue that the CES designation program creates a remarkably fertile ground to test and refine current and future evaluation models and theories.

THE IMPACT OF ISSUING THE DESIGNATION

Right from the get-go, the voluntary nature of its designation program placed CES in a difficult and vulnerable position. CES simply had no choice but to embrace the belief that “if you build it, they will come.” The first few brave souls who sought the designation of credential evaluator had to believe that it would, over time, pay off. The designation was providing no immediate advantage, was largely unknown by the users of program evaluation, and had yet to prove that it would provide greater guidance for the practice of evaluation. At best, the project represented a risky proposition for CES, as it required a phenomenal level of volunteer resources to initiate, without the certainty that it was in fact viable. This initiative could have quietly folded and been remembered as a brave attempt by CES to do what no other professional organization in the field of program evaluation had been able to achieve. But a different scenario has already unfolded. With over 250 credentialed evaluators on board and an increasing number of users of evaluation services seeking the leadership of credentialed evaluators to undertake their assignments, the program has already left a mark on the practice of evaluation in Canada, and there are good reasons to believe that this trend will continue to expand.

As noted by other contributors to the special issue, the impact of the designation program reaches beyond the group of practitioners. Since the launching of the program has coincided with the expansion of formal program evaluation studies in an increasing number of Canadian universities, curriculum planners for academic programs in evaluation have been able to take into account the three pillars of the CE designation. These pillars also provide plenty of material for academics to explore, challenge, and contribute future enhancements.

THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

For good reasons, much of the effort and attention given to the program have focused on the initial step, that is, the issuance of the designation. Having a credible framework to process applications from those seeking the designation had to
be the priority. However, it has long been my view that the actual benefits of the program will derive not so much from this initial step, but rather from its associated requirement for ongoing professional development.

Logically, this requirement has triggered a fundamental obligation for CES to ensure that proper professional development opportunities are offered and, just as importantly, are made available to evaluators and all regions of the country. This is no small task, considering both the distribution of evaluators across so many regions of Canada and differences in the regional or local policy environments in which these evaluators operate. At the time of this article, much has yet to be done to adequately meet this challenge. An increasing use of technology, particularly as it relates to webinars, combined with more traditional learning activities can be expected to widen the range of learning opportunities that Canadian evaluators will be able to access. But more will be required. This is where one hopes that CES, the Canadian Consortium of Universities for Evaluation Education (CCUEE), and the Canadian Evaluation Society Educational Fund (CESEF) will be in a position to strengthen their relationship. This triangle of partners offers our best hope of ensuring a lasting and profound impact of the designation program on the practice of evaluation in Canada. The CCUEE should not only promote new educational opportunities in program evaluation to be offered to students, but also target current practitioners by offering advanced learning opportunities. The Professional Development Workshop Series in Evaluation and Applied Research Methods offered annually by Claremont University’s Evaluation Center in California offers an excellent illustration of how universities can support practitioners and their ongoing learning. As for the CESEF, it is expected to play a critical role in expanding the availability of professional development opportunities to those facing financial barriers.

By triggering an expansion of learning opportunities, the requirement for ongoing professional development to maintain the credentialed evaluator designation will reveal its true value. For an individual to have been issued the designation of credentialed evaluator is one thing, but for this person to demonstrate that he or she has engaged in meaningful and ongoing professional development over a sustained number of years will stand as a far greater indication of his or her commitment to uphold the highest standards of practice. This is where we could see the practice of evaluation in Canada being transformed in ways that would have been simply unthinkable without the designation program.

ENSURING THE VIABILITY OF THE PROGRAM

Not surprisingly, the lasting viability and sustainability of the CES designation program requires ongoing efforts covering both the process leading to the issuance of the designation and the requirement for professional development. The ongoing promotion of the program among practitioners and users of evaluation services should be somewhat facilitated by the presence of a growing number of credentialed evaluators and the fact that the program has successfully completed its initial launching period.
It certainly has some ways to go before it can acquire the status of a mature program, but one could argue that it has now become a more familiar feature of evaluation practice in Canada for an increasing number of stakeholders.

A NOTE ON PROCESS

This article has intentionally focused on the future of the designation program. It may be worth adding a note on the actual process that led to the adoption of this program. Qualifiers such as challenging, difficult, chaotic, and nerve-racking would serve well to describe the process that led to the adoption of the program. The CES has courageously faced a barrage of initial criticism and opposition from its members, including myself. And, as is often the case with profound changes being pursued, luck—that vital and yet so unreliable companion—played its critical role. CES has indeed been extremely lucky that so many volunteers would emerge and offer countless hours of their time to something that otherwise could never have seen the light of day. In their capacity as core members of the Professional Designation Committee, Heather Buchanan, along with Keiko Kuji-Shikatani and Brigitte Maicher (all contributors to this special issue), have successfully steered a ship that was intentionally built large to be inclusive. They laid the foundation that allowed the CES National Council to unanimously adopt the program. Now that the program has reached its point of no return, others will come on board to write the next chapters of this remarkable journey that Canadian evaluators have, against many odds, made possible.

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