

NATIONAL FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CHAMPIONS PROJECT
Summary report
2016-2020



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COMMITMENT**

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e4c and its partners the Bissell Centre and the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW)



Family Services of Greater Vancouver



Momentum and its partners from Aspire, Calgary's Financial Empowerment Collaborative



SEED Winnipeg



Community Financial Counselling Services

community
Financial Counselling Services



Union des consommateurs and its partners the Associations coopératives d'économie familiale de l'Appalaches-Beauce-Etchemins, de l'Est de Montréal, de l'Île-Jésus, du Grand-Portage, du Nord de Montréal, Estrie, Lanaudière, Montérégie-est, Rive-Sud de Québec, du Sud-Ouest de Montréal

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1. Project overview

The **National Financial Empowerment Champions (NFEC) Project** supported leading non-profit community organizations and their local partners to develop, implement and scale proven financial empowerment (FE) interventions across Canada with the aim of improving the financial well-being of over one million Canadians.

The NFEC Project was funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program, with further resources raised from additional funding partners. This five-year initiative¹ was undertaken as a partnership between Prosper Canada and the following non-profit community organizations and their local partners:

- [e4c](#), (Edmonton, AB) in collaboration with [Bissell Centre](#) and the [Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women](#) (IAAW)
- [Family Services of Greater Vancouver](#) (FSGV), (Vancouver, BC)
- [Momentum](#) (Calgary, AB), in collaboration with [Aspire](#), Calgary's FE collaborative
- [SEED Winnipeg](#) and [Community Financial Counselling Services](#) (CFCS), (Winnipeg, MB)
- [Union des consommateurs](#) (UC), (Montréal, QC) in collaboration with 10 Association coopérative d'économie familiale or ACEFs²

2. Project background

Financial empowerment is an approach to poverty reduction that focuses on improving the financial security of individuals living on low incomes. It includes a range of interventions shown to enable people with low incomes to overcome barriers to financial inclusion and to acquire and apply financial knowledge, skills and behaviours that tangibly improve their financial outcomes and build their financial security over time.

3. Project objectives

- Select, train and support five NFECs to deliver five proven FE interventions to improve the financial outcomes of 175,000 Canadians living on low and modest incomes:
 - Financial literacy (FL) education
 - One-on-one financial coaching, counselling or problem-solving support (referred to hereafter as "financial coaching")
 - Support to open Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs) and access the Canada Learning Bond (CLB) and Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG)
 - Assistance to file income taxes and access income-boosting government benefits
 - Support to access basic banking services and set up direct deposit.
- Improve the financial well-being of an additional 825,000 Canadians (for a total project reach of 1 million individuals) by working with the five NFEC partners to integrate FE services into existing large private, public and/or non-profit service systems across Canada.

- Support NFEC partners to engage and train other public, private and community organizations to provide FE interventions that address evidence-based community needs.
- Work with NFEC partners to co-create and disseminate tools and resources for each target FE intervention and share delivery best practices for use by frontline practitioners, funders and policy makers.
- Develop and maintain a cross-sectoral FE community of practice including policy makers, funders, financial institutions, and FE practitioners to foster knowledge exchange and expand the reach and impact of FE interventions.
- In collaboration with NFEC partners, conduct an outcome evaluation to evaluate the changes participants experienced as a result of accessing FE programs and, where appropriate, build the capacity of NFEC partners to evaluate their own FE programming.
- Match the federal government's investment in this project at a ratio of one to two dollars for every dollar invested by the Government of Canada and evaluate the impact of this leveraged funding model, capturing and sharing key insights.








4. Project outputs

4.1 FE service delivery and capacity building reach

Over the period 2016-2020, NFEC partners and Prosper Canada achieved the results summarized in [Table 1](#) below. With a few exceptions, the project exceeded its reach targets by a wide margin. Reach shortfalls occurred with respect to the number of individuals supported to set up direct deposit, the number of RESPs opened, and the number of individuals reached by integrating FE interventions into large service systems.

With respect to direct deposit set ups and opening of RESPs, early monitoring of progress against project reach targets revealed that participant need for the other FE interventions offered was consistently greater. As a result, NFEC partners and Prosper Canada agreed with Employment and Social Development Canada (the primary project funder) that, while NFECs would continue to offer help setting up deposit set and opening RESPs, they would give greater priority to delivering other FE interventions to meet client needs.

The integration of FE interventions into large service systems was a relatively new area of work for both Prosper Canada and NFEC partners when this project began. Initial efforts to work with interested service systems quickly revealed that this was a much longer and more complex process than anticipated, due to several factors (see the Lessons learned section of this report for more details). As a result, we achieved just 59 per cent of Prosper Canada's overall target of reaching 1 million Canadians.

TABLE 1: NATIONAL FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CHAMPION PROJECT			
Cumulative impact (Oct 1, 2016 – Dec 31, 2020)			
	Intervention reach (# individuals)	Target	Achievement (% of target)
	418,954 received direct services ³	175,000	239%
	591,819 reached overall ⁴	1,000,000	59%
	203,879 participated in financial education	140,000	146%
	46,214 received financial coaching	5,000	924%
	6,957 RESPs opened	8,000	87%
	1,409 frontline staff/volunteers trained on RESPs, CLB and CESG	500	282%
	160,955 helped to file their taxes	13,100	1,229%
	17,546 applications for government benefits submitted	3,500	501%
	949 helped to open bank accounts	400	237%
	4,760 helped to set up direct deposit	5,000	95%
	6,500 frontline staff trained to deliver FL workshops	2,000	325%
	5,207 tax clinic volunteers mobilized	1,000	521%
	\$794,000,000 new tax and benefit income accessed	N/A	N/A

4.2 Leveraged funding to expand reach and impact

As part of its funding agreement with the Government of Canada, Prosper Canada committed to raising matching funding for this project at a ratio of **\$1.00-2.00** per federal government dollar invested. In fulfillment of this commitment, Prosper Canada raised **\$18,536,482** in matching funding (or **\$3.5** for every dollar invested by the Government of Canada) to expand

financial empowerment services and develop and share new program tools, resources, and training with interested community organizations.

5. Project outcomes

5.1 National Financial Empowerment community of practice

Through the NFEC project, Prosper Canada animated a national FE community of practice (CoP) comprising all NFECs and their local partners. The CoP enabled members to problem-solve and generate solutions to common issues, and share FE tools, resources, and promising practices. Regular CoP meetings were convened, initially in-person and virtually and later solely virtually after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. All project partners agreed that the strong partnerships developed and knowledge sharing that took place through the CoP were crucial to the NFEC Project's success and strengthened Canada's FE field.

In response to the pandemic, which began impacting FE service delivery in April 2020, Prosper Canada set up and animated an online communication platform (Basecamp) to enable CoP partners to share the challenges they were facing as they strove to continue serving Canadians with low incomes despite new physical distancing and other health and safety measures. Partners also used the platform to ask each other questions, share promising solutions and disseminate frontline tools and resources that were quickly being adapted to address the changing FE delivery context. As a complement to this virtual forum, Prosper Canada also hosted regular videoconferences, known as "meet-ups," to provide opportunities for partners to have open discussions, problem-solve and generate solutions. Feedback Prosper Canada received indicates the *Coping with COVID* CoP was a resounding success, with **120** stakeholders from across Canada participating.

5.2 New FE impact evidence

Proper Canada conducted outcome evaluations of a range of FE interventions delivered through this project by five NFEC partners and selected by them:

- *Financial coaching*: Community Financial Counselling Services, Family Services of Greater Vancouver and Union des consommateurs
- *Cohort-based matched saving program*: Momentum
- *Benefit navigation services*: SEED Winnipeg.

Evaluation frameworks, data collection tools and data sharing processes were developed in collaboration with participating NFEC partners (see [Appendix A NFEC Evaluation Framework](#)). Insights arising from the evaluations are summarized in [Appendix B NFEC Evaluation Insights](#).

These evaluations enhanced our understanding of how FE interventions are delivered and their impact on participants:

- Overall, the five NFECs that participated in the outcome evaluations have a strong understanding of their participant base and their FE programs are meeting the needs of their participants.
- Financial coaching participants demonstrated increases in financial knowledge, confidence, and sense of control after attending at least three sessions. Participants also noted lower stress levels and positive changes in their budgeting habits and other financial behaviours (ex. spending and use of credit).
- Some participants in Momentum’s matched savings program benefited from increased social support through the facilitation of peer-to-peer relationships and new connections.
- Most benefit navigation service participants sought support with tax filing, opening a bank account or accessing ID. These activities often involved connecting with multiple system players, including financial institutions, government agencies, and other social service agencies. Helping participants to navigate these service systems is a valuable component of benefit navigation services.

5.3 FE integration into large service systems

Through the NFEC project, we aimed to integrate FE services into large service systems, such as municipal employment and social assistance services, to sustain and expand service reach. This is based on clear [evidence](#) that integrating financial empowerment interventions into other services enhances participant financial outcomes, as well as program outcomes and success rates.⁵ Prosper Canada, in collaboration with NFEC partners and service systems partners engaged during this project, successfully integrated or initiated integration of a number of FE interventions into existing social service delivery.

Table 2 below includes highlights of our FE integration achievements.

TABLE 2: NFEC SERVICE SYSTEM INTEGRATION ACHIEVEMENTS	
City of Edmonton, Alberta	
<p>Prosper Canada worked with the City of Edmonton over three years to integrate FE supports in their subsidized municipal transit program (Ride Transit) and subsidized recreation and leisure program (Leisure Access Program). The resulting Financial Empowerment Program was launched in early 2021.</p> <p>In 2019, Prosper Canada supported Bissell Centre, a large multi-service non-profit community agency in Edmonton, Alberta, to train its frontline workers to integrate financial coaching across existing programs and services, including but not limited to Housing, Employment, and Family Services.</p>	

Family Resource Centres in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Starting in 2018, [SEED Winnipeg](#) and [CFCS](#) began working with **23** Family Resource Centres (FRCs) in Winnipeg to integrate FE services into their Centres through a flexible FE program delivery model that responded to the specific needs of the communities serviced, as well as the organizational capacity of each Centre. Between September 2018 and December 2020, **63** FRC staff and volunteers participated in Train the Trainer and Professional Development sessions offered by SEED Winnipeg and CFCS. At the time this report was written, SEED Winnipeg and CFCS' FE integration work with these FRCs was ongoing.

Chartered Professional Accountants Canada (CPA Canada)

In 2018, Prosper Canada partnered with [CPA Canada](#) to adapt their existing financial education program content and training to better meet the needs of Canadians with lower incomes. Prosper Canada trained **182** volunteer CPA financial educators to deliver the program and developed accompanying facilitation tools and resources. CPA Canada and Prosper Canada launched the new FL program, *CPA Canada Financial Literacy Education Program for Canadians Living on Low Incomes*, in the summer of 2019. The program is now being delivered by CPA volunteers across Canada.

Ontario primary health care system

In 2018-2019, Prosper Canada worked with [St. Michael's Health Centre](#) and the [Upstream Lab](#) to pilot the integration of benefit screening into seven primary care clinics in Toronto, enabled by Prosper Canada's online Benefits Screening Tool. Further efforts to evaluate the impact of benefit screening through a national clinical trial are ongoing in collaboration with the Upstream Lab team.

City of Toronto, Ontario

In 2016, the first City of Toronto Family Support Workers (FSWs) were trained to deliver financial education and financial coaching to eligible sole-support parents on social assistance. Based on their success, financial empowerment has become a permanent component of the Family Support Program since 2018.

In 2018, Prosper Canada began working with the [Toronto Public Library](#) to design, pilot and integrate FE supports into existing library services. While progress was slowed by the pandemic, the newly designed FE service is scheduled to begin pilot delivery in Fall 2021 with broad implementation in 2022.

Regional Municipality of Durham, Ontario

In 2020, Prosper Canada provided Financial Literacy Facilitator training to **164** staff from the Regional Municipality of Durham's Ontario Works (OW) Program and to **50** community workers as a foundational step toward integrating FE into the region's Ontario Works (social assistance) program.

The Regional Municipality of Durham also partnered with Prosper Canada and Intuit Canada to integrate [Virtual Self Tax-Filing](#) into its services. This is a new initiative, first piloted in the 2020-2021 tax season, that aims to support individuals living on low incomes [to file their own taxes](#) using a free

tax-filing software. Durham is interested in working with Prosper Canada to explore more in-depth integration of FE into their OW services.

5.4 Policy impact

Prosper Canada and NFEC partners worked with federal government departments to inform their understanding of the financial challenges of people with low incomes and to develop solutions. Through these efforts, important progress has been made in enhancing Canada's financial ecosystem to improve access to financial supports that make it easier for people living on low incomes to access the financial products, services, and advice they need to build their financial well-being. Specific changes that policy makers have indicated were informed by Prosper Canada and its NFEC partners include, but are not limited to:

- The inclusion of financial literacy in eligible activities under the Government of Canada's Newcomer Settlement Program
- Important new provisions in Canada's Financial Consumer Code to improve the accessibility and appropriateness of financial products and services for vulnerable Canadians
- The inclusion of Asset Resilience⁶ as a key performance indicator for [Canada's National Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)
- CRA approval of new virtual tax clinics to enable the safe delivery of vital tax filing assistance to 740,000+ Canadians with low incomes through the pandemic
- The adoption of an eco-system approach in [Canada's new Financial Literacy Strategy](#), aimed at eliminating barriers and catalyzing action, including expanding access to affordable quality financial help
- Incorporation of consumer protection issues raised by Prosper Canada stakeholders into FCAC's work with banks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These changes cannot be attributed solely to the efforts of Prosper Canada and its NFEC partners, but we are confident that our involvement contributed to catalyzing and/or successfully implementing the above changes.

5.5 Development of FE practitioner tools and resources

The development of Prosper Canada’s online [Learning Hub](#) (the “Hub”) was made possible, in part, by NFEC project funding. The Learning Hub offers a wide range of training, tools, resources, reports, and research for FE practitioners, policy makers, funders, and advocates working to advance the FE field.

Thanks to the generous sharing of FE knowledge, expertise, and content by NFEC partners, Prosper Canada was able to co-create a suite FE Toolkits containing bilingual FE learning tools and resources for frontline practitioners. Toolkits cover a wide gamut of FE interventions and goals: benefit navigation, financial coaching, asset building, budgeting and saving, and tax filing assistance and can be found in the [Toolkit Section](#) of the Learning Hub. Over the life of the project, the Learning Hub saw **21,773** toolkit downloads.

“In addition to using [the Toolkits] ... ourselves, we have also provided them to partners for their use. Toolkits were used in conjunction with workshops and provided to coaching participants when beneficial to their particular issues or concerns.”

— Murray Baker
Manager, Financial
Empowerment

5.6 FE Key Performance Indicators

With NFECs and Cathexis Consulting, a firm specializing in evaluation, Prosper Canada developed the [Indicators for Financial Empowerment: Learnings from the National Financial Empowerment Champions Project](#). This resource sets out a range of validated indicators that community organizations can use to measure the reach and outcomes of their FE programs. This work was an effort to define standard Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) NFEC partners could use to evaluate their FE work over the life of the project. It was subsequently adapted for broader use by any organization delivering FE programs and services. Available in French and English, this resource is a first step toward standard KPIs for Canada’s FE field.

5.7 Participant stories

Through this project, we collected many stories of the positive impact of FE on the lives of individual service users, many of whom reported less stress and a sense of relief after they accessed FE supports. Whether it was help opening an RESP for their children, to create a budget to better manage their finances, or assistance filing their taxes and accessing critical government income benefits, NFEC FE services made a meaningful difference in participants’ lives.

Over the life of the project, Prosper Canada shared the following participant stories on our website:

- [Family Services of Greater Vancouver's Money](#)

“It has changed my life. I can’t believe I’ve dropped my debt. I learned how to organize something so chaotic and unachievable. It’s just amazing! ...I feel really amazing about it, really empowered.”

— Participant
Money Matters Program
Momentum

[Navigator: Answering the call for help](#) (December 2020)

- [Developing positive money habits early on](#) (September 2019)
- [Multifaceted support from SEED Winnipeg helps with savings and uncovering Indigenous heritage](#) (May 2019)
- [Glenise shares how budgeting puts her goals within reach](#) (January 2018)
- [Budget counselling helps Onil plan for retirement](#) (June 2017)
- [Maria shares how money management workshop changed her life](#) (March 2017)

6. Lessons learned

6.1 Leveraged funding model

Prosper Canada and NFEC partners were successful in mobilizing new partnerships and resources to expand project reach and impact

One of the objectives of the NFEC project was to leverage the Government of Canada's investment to mobilize new partnerships and resources to expand FE reach and impact. Prosper Canada evaluated this aspect of the project and found that the federal funding signalled credibility and confidence in NFEC programs, and contributed to their stability, making it easier for NFECs to attract new funders. However, the need to raise funds to complement the government's investment also took up staff capacity that could have otherwise been used to deliver FE services. Almost all NFECs also noted having limited internal fundraising capacity. Finally, while NFECs emphasized that federal funding provided greater stability and sustainability for FE programs, it did not cover all of the costs associated with delivering these programs.

“The FEC funding has contributed positively to funders recognizing SEED and CFCS as [FE] sector leaders. In addition to leveraging additional funding, this has also enhanced our credibility.”

— Jenn Bogoch
Manager, Asset Building Programs
SEED Winnipeg

6.2 FE integration into large service systems

Direct stakeholder involvement and buy-in is critical to successful integration

Prosper Canada uses a human centred, service design approach to define needs, design tailored FE supports, pilot them, and then scale up integration with target service systems. Engaging all key stakeholders and involving them in co-designing and developing FE solutions takes time but fosters buy-in and promotes the change needed to move big systems.

It takes time and deep engagement to integrate FE interventions into large service systems

We anticipated being able to reach 850,000 Canadians living on low incomes in just five years by integrating FE interventions into existing social service systems. We fell short of this goal but, through our integration efforts, learned that it takes much longer than we had anticipated to build the relationships, get stakeholder buy-in and co-develop, pilot and roll-out integrated services. Taking the extra time to really engage the full range of stakeholders and involve them

throughout this journey pays off though in terms of deeper commitment and better designed services.

Financial literacy training is the first step in training successful financial coaches

Through our work with the City of Toronto we learned that financial literacy training needs to precede financial coaching training if future financial coaches are to have the financial knowledge and skills they need to feel confident in facilitating money conversations with program participants. As a result, financial literacy training has been incorporated into subsequent municipal FE integration engagements.

6.3 Delivery of FE interventions

Meeting participants “where they are at” is critical

The flexibility NFECs offered in terms of tailoring FE supports to meet participants’ individual needs was greatly appreciated and valued by participants and contributed to the successes participants realized in their individual FE journeys. NFECs’ dedication to meeting participants “where they were at” was key to building trust and effectively supporting individuals to meet their goals.

Tension between standardizing and customizing FE programs

FE training, tools and resources cannot always be rolled out to different organizations in the same way because local contexts vary and diverse groups have different needs. Consequently, while NFECs all delivered the same suite of FE interventions, they often used different approaches and/or tools to deliver the same intervention. Nonetheless, if we are to scale services more broadly and ensure their quality, there is a need to define the essential components of each service and the minimum requirements to deliver services effectively. Continued efforts to resolve the tension between standardization to ensure consistency and quality in the delivery FE supports and the need to allow for effective tailoring to local contexts and needs remains an ongoing focus for Prosper Canada and NFEC partners.

The demand for FE services far exceeds current delivery capacity

The demand for FE services continues to outstrip the capacity of NFECs and their partners to meet demand and effective resourcing of these FE programs is necessary for their success. While great strides have been made through the NFEC project to scale FE delivery and expand local FE capacity, this work is far from complete and there is still a lot of unmet need for FE supports in Canada.

Better resourcing of FE organizations would improve FE delivery

Our NFEC evaluations involved discussions with frontline staff, managers, project leads, and executive staff regarding the resources needed to effectively deliver FE interventions. Common themes that arose included the time involved in training staff to deliver FE interventions and the staff resources needed for outreach and follow-up with participants. More resources to

increase staff capacity would contribute to improved delivery and greater reach of FE interventions.

Supporting participants to access benefits takes time

Most participants in SEED Winnipeg's [Access to Benefits Program](#) sought help with income tax filing and crucial financial supports like opening a bank account and getting an ID. These activities can take several tries before participants complete them; for this reason, repeated activities should be factored into program design and resource allocation.

Participants realized numerous positive outcomes from FE interventions

Participants in Momentum's [Savings Circles Program](#) achieved positive social, as well as financial, outcomes, reporting increased social connection as well as more savings and improved budgeting skills.

Evaluation of the financial coaching programs delivered by CFCS, UC and FSGV, provided a clearer perspective on participants' motivations for participating in these programs, as well as their outcomes. Many participants indicated they came for help meeting a specific financial goal. Participants also overwhelmingly indicated that gaining an external perspective on their finances, establishing a budget, and reducing their debt were the most significant outcomes they achieved through financial coaching.

Financially and socially complex lives of participants can pose evaluation challenges

Every NFEC involved in the outcome evaluation explained that participants in their programs lead financially and socially complex lives, whether due to high levels of indebtedness, insecure housing, addiction, or other social barriers.

These factors created several challenges for the evaluation. Firstly, NFECs had difficulty collecting post-assessment data on participant outcomes as many participants did not return after their first session (because their issue was addressed in one session or due to other commitments, lack of transport, fear/shame, etc.). Outreach to these participants was difficult as many did not have reliable means of communication.

Secondly, the complexity of participants' lives was difficult to capture in the evaluation tools used (with the exception of focus groups). NFECs noted that the quantitative measures of financial well-being did not accurately capture the achievements and results participants gained through the FE intervention. For example, while participants may still have indicated experiencing financial stress and lower financial confidence, these measures did not reveal their newfound budgeting skills or positive changes in their spending habits.

7. Conclusion

The National Financial Empowerment Champions Project was foundational in helping to establish Canada's now growing financial empowerment field and successfully demonstrated that the Government of Canada's investment:

- Had a measurable positive impact on the financial health of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Canadians

- Helped connect Canadians living on low incomes to an additional \$794M in new tax and benefit income
- Significantly expanded the capacity of community organizations across Canada to identify clients in need of financial help and to provide or connect them to that help
- Catalyzed the investment of a further \$3.50 into financial empowerment services for every federal dollar invested, including significant Ontario government investment
- Demonstrated growing municipal and provincial government interest in integrating financial empowerment interventions into their own services to enhance their impact and address unmet needs
- Enabled the growth of a vibrant and engaged community of practice that has enhanced collaboration across Canada and enabled rapid innovation of financial help solutions in the face of income and debt emergencies triggered by the ongoing pandemic.

With accompanying Government of Ontario investment in a further nine FEC sites, a community of practice has developed across Canada that is committed to ongoing delivery and sustainable scaling of financial empowerment services even after initial pilot funding has ended. However, the challenges of continuing to scale this work should not be underestimated.

FECs across Canada and Prosper Canada have been able to use federal investment to attract significantly more investment for service innovation and enhancements, building on the strong regional FE capacity and leadership established by the NFEC project and accompanying Ontario government investment. Without this sustained core investment, it will be difficult to sustain the regional infrastructure and expertise needed to attract other funders. Private sector funders are eager to invest in innovation and service improvements but see ongoing service system funding as the role of governments – not businesses.

Base regional capacity is also needed to support the successful integration of financial help into other municipal and provincial services – most of which will rely on having a capable established community partner to refer residents to and from which to contract services.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 put many FECs to the test – a test they met with passion, determination and commitment. The FECs continued to stand by the most vulnerable members of their communities who were often the hardest hit economically and medically by the pandemic, and the most isolated by physical distancing, often lacking the skills and/or resources to connect virtually and access critically needed information and help.

FECs and Prosper Canada have worked steadily since March 2020 to develop, test, map and promote new virtual and hybrid service delivery models to overcome these barriers and to use new virtual service delivery models to expand services to rural, remote and Indigenous communities. As a result, more people will receive the help they need to:

- Tax file and successfully access/retain critical income benefits
- Manage urgent debt and financial problems
- Rebuild their financial health and resilience against future shocks.

The community of practice, together with the [Learning Hub](#), also continue to offer a wide range of shared learning, training and innovation opportunities and program resources for organizations interested in beginning or expanding their FE work.

However, sustained funding to support this work remains a challenge. NFEC funding ended in December 2020, putting pressure on FECs to access alternate sources of funding – many of which were already struggling to address escalating needs driven by the pandemic.

The May 2021 federal Call for Proposals for Financial Empowerment for Low-Income Canadians was a welcome sign that the federal government recognizes the urgent need for financial help services and is standing behind these services. This was more recently reinforced by the [National Financial Literacy Strategy](#), released July 20, 2021, which identifies access to affordable quality financial help for all Canadians as a critical component of their strategy to build financial resilience in an increasingly digital world.

The question remains, however, as to the longer range plan for ensuring all Canadians with low incomes have access to the financial products, services, and advice they need to build their financial well-being. Prosper Canada and FECs look forward to working with government, business, and community partners to answer this question together.

In the interim, we invite readers of this report to explore the [Toolkits](#) developed through this project and the key performance indicators from [Indicators for Financial Empowerment: Learnings from the National Financial Empowerment Champions Project](#). We hope FE practitioners will use and share these resources and continue to work together to advocate for dedicated funding to sustain this work and to expand the development and reach of FE programs in Canada, helping Canadians to build their financial stability, security, and resilience for the future.

8. Appendices A and B

Evaluating the National Financial Empowerment Champions (FEC) project involved conducting outcome evaluations for five FE programs delivered by five non-profit organizations. Throughout the evaluation, we collaborated with the participating organizations to develop an evaluation framework, data collection tools and data sharing processes to accurately capture changes participants experienced as a result of the programs, as well as building partners' capacities to evaluate their own programming. Appendices A and B that accompany this report are outlined in brief below and provide context on the design and purpose of the evaluation and major insights on the program delivery and client outcomes of the NFEC project.

[Appendix A – Evaluation Framework](#)

The evaluation framework was designed and approved in collaboration with FEC partners in 2018. It lays out the overall objectives of the evaluation, guiding evaluation questions, methodological approach, and data analysis plans.

[Appendix B – NFEC Evaluation Insights](#)

In 2020, our evaluation team conducted five evaluation insights presentations to FEC partners in order to share the findings and results of the outcome evaluations on their programs. This deck compiles these analyses and insights across all FEC partners and programs, providing an overarching view on the results of the evaluation as a whole.

9. Notes

¹ The NFEC project formally began in January 2016. Prosper Canada recruited and onboarded the National Financial Empowerment Champions between January and October 2016. NFEC partners began delivering expanded FE services and reporting output and outcome data in October 2016.

² Participating ACEFs included: ACEF Appalaches-Beauce-Etchemins, ACEF de l'Est de Montréal, ACEF de Laval, ACEF du Grand-Portage, ACEF du Nord de Montréal, ACEF Estrie, ACEF Lanaudière, ACEF Montérégie-est, ACEF Rive-Sud de Québec, and ACEF du Sud-Ouest de Montréal.

³ Includes the total number of Canadians living on low incomes reached through FE interventions delivered by NFECs, their partners, and other Prosper Canada partners.

⁴ Includes the total number of Canadians living on low incomes reached through FE interventions delivered by NFECs, their partners and other Prosper Canada partners, as well as individuals reached through efforts to integrate FE services into existing social service systems (ex. employment services).

⁵ Prosper Canada. Prosperity Gateways. Cities for financial empowerment. Building the Case [Internet]. Prosper Canada, 2019 [cited July 20, 2021]. Available from:

https://prospercanada.org/prospercanada/media/images/banners/Prosperity-Gateways-Evidence_4.pdf

⁶ Asset resilience is defined in Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy as "*The ability of Canadians to cover unexpected expenses, or reduced income, by drawing from assets (for example, a bank account) to prevent falling into poverty for a period of three months. (Savings of approximately \$10,400 for the three months, based on low income in 2012.)*" Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html>