Planning, Research and Evaluation
Department of Education, Culture and Employment

Northern Distance Learning:
Program Evaluation Plan

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Government of Gouvernement des
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Northern Distance Learning: Program Evaluation Plan

I. Description of the Program

1.1 Program Background

In the 1990's, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) started offering a Senior Secondary program in those small communities pursuing a grade extension approach, thus allowing NWT students to have access to high school (Grade 10-12) in their home communities where it was not previously available. Since that time, NWT schools in small communities[1] have struggled to honour the commitment to an equitable level of education across the territory. Due to small number of students, it has proven challenging and sometimes impossible for small schools to offer a full range of academic level courses that allow students to transition to postsecondary education; this is a typical challenge in rural and remote schools across the country and not an issue specific to NWT.

As a result, high school students in these communities either did not have an opportunity to take academic courses or were taking them in a split classroom that combined general (dash 2) and academic (dash 1) courses. Despite the efforts taken to offer academic courses through blended curriculum, students in small schools often did not demonstrate high levels of success in the academic courses for a variety of reasons. This limited postsecondary options for these students because completion of academic courses is a common entry requirement in many colleges and universities. For example, University of Alberta[2] requires English Language Arts 30-1 to be completed for entry into any of its bachelors programs.

To provide access to academic courses to students in small communities, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) has introduced several distance learning and alternative approaches, including the home boarding program and offering courses through Alberta's Distance Learning Centre (ADLC). However, success rates with these approaches were generally low with credit acquisitions rates approaching 30% - an outcome that, among other reasons, can be attributed to the self-directed nature of these approaches.

1.2 Program Goal

Northern Distance Learning (NDL)[3] emerged in 2010 as an alternative to traditional brick and mortar classes and existing distance learning programs. Its primary goal is to provide equitable

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[1] *Small community* is one in which five or less members of the NWTTA reside and is isolated from other communities by more than a 30 km all weather road. Small community populations range from 70 to 285 (https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/ressources-pour-les-enseignants-la-recherche-dun-emploi-aux-tno/community-information).
[2] University of Alberta. Admission Requirements. https://www.ualberta.ca/admissions/undergraduate/admission/admission-requirements.
[3] See NDL Program Logic Model in Appendix A for an overview of the program.

access to academic programming to students in small community schools[4]. In the context of NDL, equitable access implies the opportunity to take academic courses necessary for admission into postsecondary in a dedicated (non-split) classroom in their home communities. The program's secondary goal is to make sure that NDL students achieve a level of success that would allow them to enroll and succeed in postsecondary programs.

Initially developed and piloted by the Beaufort-Delta District Education Council (BDDEC) in 2010, NDL is delivered by the teachers from Inuvik's East Three Secondary School via videoconference; in-classroom monitors supervise and assist remote students. Between 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, NDL has expanded to seven schools and demonstrated an average credit acquisition rate of 71%, which is significantly higher than the 30% achieved through other approaches.

The program attributes its success to its hybrid learning approach which is sensitive to the realities of the local communities. Namely, NDL combines live instruction (synchronous learning), technology, and online resources to create conditions where students who pursue academic courses can learn with what appears to be an optimal amount of supervision and support. This was generally not available through split dash 2 and dash 1 courses, where teachers were unable to give full attention to the students taking challenging academic courses; neither was this possible in other distance learning approaches (including ADLC), where a great deal of self-discipline and autonomy were expected of students right from the start.

1.3 Funding Approach

NDL funding approach is based on the principle of cost-sharing, which means that the total program costs are shared by participating schools and the ECE. More specifically, ECE provides NDL funding to Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council (BDDEC) and to participating education bodies through contribution agreements; the funds are then allocated to participating schools by their respective Divisional Education Councils (DECs) or District Education Authorities (DEAs). In addition to that, individual schools (excluding Inuvik DEA) contribute a sum that includes a 30% of their Senior Secondary Materials and Distance Learning (SSMDL)[5] funds and a flat rate contribution based on the number of students enrolled in NDL. The flat rate contributions are as follows:

      1-4 NDL students = $20,000
      5-9 NDL students = $30,000
      10+ NDL students = $40,000

1.4 Courses and Enrollment Capacity

NDL is scheduled on a rotating 3-4 year plan to allow for multiple entry points for students in each high school grade. This means that course offerings differ from year to year to allow students to

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[4] Small community schools should be differentiated from "*small schools*" as defined by the *School Funding Framework* (i.e., schools with less than 10 senior secondary full-time equivalent enrollments). In this case, small community schools are schools located in small NWT communities; some of these schools will fall under the definition of a "small school", while others will not.

[5] SSMDL is a category in the School Funding Framework that provides funding for trades programs operations and management, libraries, and distance learning.

take a variety of courses needed to graduate. In 2017-2018 school year, eight (8) academic courses from all four main subject areas of Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and English Language Arts were offered. NDL aims to begin offering all 19 high school courses on a rotating basis in 2020-2021. NDL provides enough academic courses that a school could program all academic courses needed to satisfy high school graduation requirements within NDL. Based on a 20 to 1 student teacher ratio, NDL has a 160 seat capacity per semester (320 yearly); as of 2017-2018, videoconferencing capacity allows a maximum of 7 schools to join a course at a time (in addition to the host school). Schools with one networked NDL classroom can access any 4 of 8 NDL courses offered each day, while schools with two classrooms can access all 8 courses in one day.

1.5 Staffing

The courses are taught by six teachers from East Three Secondary School (Inuvik District Educational Authority, BDDEC), who collectively occupy 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching positions. The students are supervised by monitors who receive a food stipend and funds for clothing, rent, utilities, and phone/cable and Internet. There is one monitor per classroom (i.e., "endpoint" in technical terms); in schools with two simultaneous NDL classrooms (two endpoints), one monitor supervises both. At this time, it is unknown if this level of support for two endpoints dilutes a monitor's benefit to students. For 2018-2019 school year, administrative staff includes one full-time coordinator located at ECE, one part-time coordinator located in BDDEC, and one part-time IT coordinator who is based in BDDEC as well. An NDL working group (WG) composed of the following members contributes to teacher training, course development, and program oversight, including monitoring and evaluation:

- Distance Learning and Literacy with Information and Communications Technology (LwICT) Coordinator (ECE);
- NDL Coordinator (BDDEC);
- Teaching and Learning Coordinators (ECE); and
- Director of Teaching and Learning (ECE)
- Adult and Post-Secondary Education Coordinator (ECE).

A Steering Committee (SC) comprised of the following members oversees territorial implementation of the Northern Distance Learning program:

- Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services (ECE);
- Assistant Deputy Minister, Education and Culture (ECE);
- Superintendent, Beaufort-Delta District Education Authority (BDDEC);
- Director, Teaching and Learning (ECE);
- Director, Planning, Research and Evaluation (ECE);
- Director, Finance and Capital Planning (ECE);
- Manager of Application and Data Maintenance (ECE);
- Distance Learning and LwICT Coordinator (ECE);
- NDL Coordinator (BDDEC); and
- Math & Science Coordinators (ECE).

1.6 Technical Requirements

NDL courses require a separate learning space of no less than 18m^2 that can accommodate 5-8 students and a monitor, videoconferencing equipment, document cameras, network with sufficient speed to ensure high quality video transmission, and a learning management system (Moodle) to house electronic course materials and provide a virtual learning space. In addition to that, students require regular course materials (e.g., textbooks, lab kits) and laptops to complete coursework. While the laptops are is funded through NDL, purchasing course materials (e.g., lab equipment and supplies) is the responsibility individual schools.

1.7 Eligibility Criteria

To ensure that students enrolled in NDL courses achieve the highest levels of success, the following eligibility criteria were established to enter the program:

- Continuously enrolled in high school and below 21 years old as of Sept. 1;
- Minimum previous year's prerequisite course average of 65%;
- 90% attendance in the previous year;
- Demonstrated personal commitment through taking the NDL orientation and showing willingness to form diverse, online, inter-community cohorts and collaborate through various technologies (students demonstrate this by signing a form); and
- Personal endorsements in form of recommendation from school administration and a fully informed parent (endorsements are supported by appropriate signatures).

All eligible students who wish to take NDL courses in the following year are expected to register by March 30 of the current year.

To remain in the program, students must maintain a 90% average attendance (or less than 10% excused and unexcused absences). After three unexcused absences, a documented intervention meeting will take place. After three (3) ineffective interventions by October 15 or March 15, the student will be removed from the class list and will be considered to have failed[6] the class (unless the student has a course average of 65% and above or can otherwise demonstrate realistic potential to complete the course). In the interest of the student not falling further behind, a student can appeal his or her removal from the class list within 24 hours of being informed of the removal by submitting an appeal form to the classroom monitor. The appeal form requires students to address attendance and achievement issues.

NDL students are recommended to maintain a minimum course mark average of 65% as this achievement level is most likely to be associated with academic success in other NDL courses and in postsecondary programs. Students who fail any three (3) NDL courses since entering the program or who do not achieve a 65% mark in their NDL courses may no longer be eligible to register for the

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[6] These students should be regarded as involuntary dropouts and distinguished from those who have completed the course but did not acquire credit (due to a low course mark). Involuntary and voluntary dropouts will both be included into the dropout rate calculations; whereas students who failed due to low mark will be included into credit acquisition rate calculations, together with those who passed the course.

NDL courses. Students who demonstrate a course average between 51-64% are encouraged to pursue non-academic courses instead. In cases where students feel that they are benefiting from NDL courses despite lower than recommended course average, an appeal process is in place.

1.8 Expected Outcomes

NDL students are expected to achieve a variety of short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes as a result of their participation in the program (see Program Logic Model in Appendix A). Short-term outcomes would be expected to occur within one semester and continue to accumulate until the student exits the program, medium-term outcomes build on short-term outcomes and are expected to occur at G12 level, and long-term outcomes are expected to occur within 2-3 years after NDL students graduate from high school. Naturally, it is reasonable to expect that students who take more NDL credits are more likely to achieve some short-, medium- and long-term outcomes than students who take few NDL credits. Every year, NDL establishes targets and monitors expected and unexpected program outcomes through a Program Monitoring Plan.

1. Planned short-term outcomes

In the short-term, NDL strives to increase student enrollment in academic courses in small communities, compared to pre-NDL enrollment levels in the same schools (accounting for changes in the total number of students).

It is anticipated that the majority of NDL students will acquire course credit[7] and a certain proportion will have a course mark of 65% or above (targets for these outcomes vary from year to year and are specified in the Program Monitoring Plan).

2. Planned medium–term outcomes
The majority of students completing departmental exams on their NDL courses are expected to pass the exam with the differences between an exam and a teacher awarded mark of no more than 15 percentage points[8].

3. Planned long-term outcomes
Majority of NDL graduates are expected to directly[9] enroll in postsecondary programs of their choice and remain in the program for at least two years.

1.9 Assumptions and External Factors

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[7] For evaluation purposes, credit acquisition rate would exclude students who dropped out of the program or who were excluded due to low attendance. These students would be considered non-participants who did not receive an intervention and hence should not be expected to achieve a desired outcome (i.e., credit acquisition).

[8] In 2017, Alberta's school-awarded marks were, on average, 10 percentage points higher than the diploma exam marks, with 84% of the schools having a discrepancy of -3.6 - 15 percentage points (http://www.eightleaves.com/diploma-exam-marks-vs-school-marks-alberta-high-schools). ECE has established that the highest acceptable level of discrepancy between the two marks would be equal to 15 percentage points.

[9] Direct enrollment refers to a situation where a high school graduate is not required to upgrade the courses for which they have received credit through NDL.

In order for NDL to achieve its intended outcomes, the following assumptions on which the program design is based should hold true for students in communities where the program is offered:

- Small community schools have adequate space necessary for NDL classrooms.
- Small community school calendars match the NDL calendar (Inuvik DEA calendar).
- Teachers in East Three Secondary School are qualified to teach academic courses via NDL learning approach.
- Students in small communities are motivated to take academic courses.
- 90% attendance is optimal and necessary for students to achieve success in NDL courses.
- 65% course mark average in NDL courses is necessary for success in postgraduate programs; students who are unable to achieve this course mark average should be advised to pursue non-academic courses instead.
- Successful students demonstrate less than 15% discrepancy between their diploma exams and school marks.
- Students in small communities want to pursue postsecondary education and have the supports needed to apply for admission.
- Students in small communities have access to the financial resources necessary to pursue postsecondary education.

The following external factors that are outside of the program's control can also impact success of the program:

- Factors affecting the quality of the network and other technical equipment (e.g., weather, service interruptions).
- Availability of volunteer monitors and housing for them in the communities.
- Availability of teachers who are willing and able to teach NDL courses part-time.
- Physical and mental health of the students, as well as their family and community circumstances.
- Ability and willingness of parents and guardians to provide appropriate, supportive learning environments.
- Other programs and initiatives that may impact small community schools and student success in academic courses and their postsecondary outcomes.

Awareness of the underlying assumptions and the external factors that affect program success is crucial in the interpretation of findings of the proposed evaluation. That is, in cases where intended outcomes are not being achieved, it would be necessary to examine whether the underlying assumptions hold true for a given group of students and whether external factors have influenced the program delivery and outcomes. Furthermore, any attribution of the observed outcomes to the program's effect should be done with consideration of the external factors that may have positively or negatively impacted said outcomes.

II. Evaluation Rationale, Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The Financial Management Board (FMB)[10] has directed the ECE to conduct a *summative evaluation[11]* of the NDL program by March 31, 2024. Through this evaluation, ECE will ensure it is accountable to the Members of the Legislative Assembly and to the residents of the Northwest Territories for its commitments and the use of resources.

As the evaluation was initiated to ensure accountability, its explicit **purpose** is to render a summary judgment on the program's success in meeting its objectives within the allotted resources. This judgment will be explained in a decision paper that is due to the FMB by March 31, 2025.

More specifically, the evaluation aims to achieve the following **objectives:**

1. To determine whether NDL is efficient in the use of its resources compared to programs with similar processes and goals.
2. To determine whether NDL is effective in achieving its goals.
3. To provide recommendation that would inform decisions about continuation, discontinuation, or modification of the NDL.

The **scope** of the evaluation will include all small community schools in the NWT that participated or were expected to participate in the NDL from 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 (4 school years). The evaluation will assess the *process[12]* of program delivery, as well as its *outcomes[13]*; it will not assess the program's theory (i.e., the assumptions on which the program's design is based). The evaluation will assess the program's *impact* [14] in cases where pre- and post- or other reliable NDL data is available.

The proposed evaluation does not investigate the issue of duplicate funding which, according to the FMB's concern, could occur at the school level when students take an NDL class and a traditional class at the same time. With respect to reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of the NDL program, ECE is looking into the amount and quality of service students receive from a dollar of funding used in the NDL program. As a result, only funding particularly assigned to the NDL program is accounted for in the evaluation. Funding duplication assigned to a student that is taken

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[10] Committee of the Executive Council (the senior decision-making body within the Government) established by the *Financial Administration Act.*

[11] *Summative* evaluations address issues of accountability of already established programs aim to obtain information on various aspects of program's performance that can be used in major decision-making (Rossi, P., Lipsey, M., and Freeman, H., *Evaluation: A systematic approach*. Sage publications, 2003)

[12] *Process assessment* compares the way program is implemented in practice to the way it is supposed to be implemented in theory (Rossi et al., 2004).

[13] *Outcome assessment* serves to understand whether the program participants (i.e., students) are achieving the intended immediate (short-term) and distal (medium- and long-term) changes in the level of their skills, knowledge, and behaviors. Immediate changes are more likely to be directly affected by the program, whereas distal changes could be affected by external factors that are outside of the program's control (Rossi et al., 2004).

[14] *Impact assessment* determines the degree of change in participants' state that is directly attributable to the program at hand (Rossi et al., 2004).

from other sources (e.g., allocations through the general school funding formula) does not impact NDL's effectiveness and efficiency and, thus, is out of scope of this evaluation.

III. Evaluation Questions

To reach its objectives, the evaluation plans to answer four questions in accordance with pre-established evaluation criteria outlined below. A detailed description of the evaluation questions, sub-questions and their corresponding indicators and evaluation criteria can be found in the Evaluation Matrix (see Appendix B). The proposed evaluation plan was designed with input from the NDL Working Group and Steering Committee and should be expected to be reviewed and revised to reflect the realities of the program in the beginning of the actual evaluation process (in 2022-2023).

The following questions and sub-questions will be answered:

Evaluation Question 1: Was NDL implemented as intended?

Within this question a process assessment will be conducted to see if planned activities were carried out in accordance with the output performance targets identified in the yearly Program Monitoring Plans. Potential reasons for discrepancies with the plan will also be identified and reflected upon.

The following sub-questions will be answered:

1a. Does the program deliver the intended number and quality of courses in the intended number of schools to the intended group of students?
This sub-question will determine if the number and quality of courses offered and the number of participating schools[15] is in line with the NDL implementation plan and performance targets. It will also assess if the students registered in NDL courses meet established eligibility criteria thereby constituting the "intended group" of students.

1b. What are the program utilization rates overall and in each community?
This sub-question will determine enrollment, dropout and attendance rates among NDL students.

1c. Are the students satisfied with the courses?
This sub-question will help understand student perceived quality of NDL courses.

1d. What are the promising practices, challenges and unmet needs that may have affected program implementation process and effectiveness over the years?
This sub-question will help understand what factors may have positively or negatively impacted program implementation and, as a result, its effectiveness.

In this assessment, the evaluation will rely on output performance indicators identified in the program's yearly Performance Monitoring Plans. The following **evaluation criteria** will be used:

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[15] A school that doesn't participate in NDL in a given year because there are no high school students will be considered a "participating school" under this question, as long as it has participated in at least one full NDL year before.

The program will be evaluated as *implemented fully as intended* if at least 80% of its performance targets were met from year to year.

The program will be evaluated as *implemented partially as intended* if 60-79% of its performance targets were met from year to year

The program will be evaluated as *not implemented as intended* if less than 60% of its performance targets were met from year to year.

Evaluation Question 2: Do all small community schools have equitable access to NDL?

Within this question, an assessment of equity of access to NDL courses among small community schools will take place (both participating and non-participating schools will be assessed). If inequity of access will be identified, potential causes will be identified and recommendations on how to improve this aspect of the program will be provided.

The following sub-questions will be answered:

2a. Do the school contribution requirements impact the financial situation of participating schools differently? Do the school contribution requirements pose a barrier to NDL access for non-participating small community schools?
This sub-question will determine if principals and superintendents perceive the existing approach to individual contributions as reasonable (i.e., not unduly burdensome) and if the existing funding approach is perceived as a barrier to participation by non-participating school principals and superintendents. From a financial perspective, this question will determine if schools with similar number of NDL students[16] co-share a similar amount of NDL costs and if the required amount of contributions constitutes a similar proportion of their total yearly expenditures.

2b. Is the yearly cost of NDL per enrolled NDL student similar for participating schools?
This sub-question will determine if the cost per enrolled NDL student is similar (within 10% variance) for participating schools with similar number of enrolled students.

The following **evaluation criteria** will be used to determine whether schools have equitable access to NDL:

1) The approach to individual contributions is not perceived burdensome by principals/superintendents of participating schools.

2) Non-participating school principals and superintendents do not see the existing school contribution requirements as a barrier to NDL access.

3) Schools with similar student counts co-share a similar proportion of the total NDL costs per school.

4) The proportion of the total school expenditure that individual contributions (flat rate + SSMDL) make is similar across all schools.

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[16] The following categories will be used to group schools with 'similar number of enrolled students': 1) schools with 1-4 NDL students, 2) schools with 5-9 NDL students, and 3) schools with 10 and more NDL students.

5) The cost of NDL per enrolled NDL student in schools with similar student counts is similar (10% variance).

The program will be evaluated as providing *equitable access* if at least four of the above criteria are met.

Evaluation Question 3: To what degree was NDL effective in achieving its planned outcomes?

Within this question assessment of short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes will be conducted to see if the program's performance was in line with the targets identified in the yearly Program Monitoring Plans. Potential reasons for discrepancies with the plan will also be identified and reflected upon. An assessment of the program's impact on accessibility of academic courses in small communities and the most significant impact assessment will also be conducted.

The following sub-questions will be answered:

3a. Did the students achieve the intended short-, medium- and long-term outcomes of the program? Did the outcomes differ depending on students' home community, gender, ethnicity, and grade level?
This sub-question will determine if the program effectively achieved its planned outcomes and if there was variance in the level of outcomes achieved by different student groups.

3b. What impact did the program have on the accessibility of academic courses to students in small communities?
This sub-question will determine if NDL had an impact on the accessibility of academic courses in small community schools in the NWT.

3c. What was the most significant impact of NDL on students in small community schools?
This sub-question will help understand the most significant planned impact of NDL from the perspective of school administrators, teachers, and students.

In the outcome assessment (sub-question 3a) the evaluation will rely on outcome performance indicators identified in the program's yearly Performance Monitoring Plans[17].

The following **evaluation criteria** will be used to determine the degree of program efficiency:

The program will be evaluated as *highly effective* if at least 80% of its performance targets were met from year to year and if the program has made an impact on the accessibility of academic courses in small communities.

The program will be evaluated as *moderately effective* if 50-79% of its performance targets were met year over year and if the program has made an impact on the accessibility of academic courses in small communities.

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[17] Note, that for some students (particularly those new to NDL), medium- and long-term outcome data will not be available due to the staggered entry of schools into the program and the program's relatively young age at the time of the evaluation.

The program will be evaluated as *low in effectiveness* if less than 50% of its performance targets were met from year to year and if it did not have an impact on the accessibility of academic courses in small communities.

Evaluation Question 4: How does the achievement of NDL students compare with that of non-NDL students enrolled in traditional academic courses in other NWT communities?

This question will provide a comparative perspective on the achievement levels of NDL and non-NDL students enrolled in traditional academic courses in the NWT; such perspective is important because, ultimately, the two groups should be expected to perform at similar levels. The following achievement indicators will be compared: credit acquisition rates, average course marks, diploma exam marks and the discrepancy between the latter two.

There are no evaluation criteria associated with this question as it is meant to inform the decision makers on the overall progress of the NDL program comparing to the traditional approach.

Evaluation Question 5: To what degree was NDL efficient in achieving its objectives within the allotted amount of resources?

This question will focus on the relationship between the program's inputs, outputs and outcomes to assess whether the resources used have been put to optimal use, and whether the same or similar results could have been achieved with fewer resources[18]. Potential causes of any identified inefficiencies will be identified along with recommended solutions.

The following sub-questions will be answered:

5a. How do the actual program costs per unit of output and outcome compare with its budgeted costs per unit of output and outcome?
This sub-question will determine if the resources have been utilized efficiently (i.e., planned amount of expenses was associated with the planned level of outputs and outcomes).

5b. How do the cost-performance ratios[19] for NDL program compare to the cost-performance ratios of home-boarding and Alberta's Distance Learning Centre (alternatively, to that of traditional academic courses offered in the same schools prior to NDL)?
This sub-question will compare the efficiency of NDL to that of Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC)[20] and home boarding program (or to that of traditional academic courses offered in the same schools prior to NDL)[21] and determine if similar results (course offerings, credit acquisition rates, enrollment rates) can be achieved with fewer resources.

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[18] International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). *ISSAI 3100: Guidelines on Central Concepts for Performance Auditing* (2016). http://www.issai.org/en_us/site-issai/issai-framework/4-auditing-guidelines.htm
[19] In calculations of cost-performance ratios, the difference between the cost of living in the North and in Alberta will be accounted for.
[20] Only the students from small NWT communities participating in ADLC will be considered for analysis.
[21] Traditional academic courses offered in the same schools prior to NDL will be used as a comparison group only in case data for the other two programs will not be available.

The following **evaluation criteria** will be used to make a summative judgment regarding the program's efficiency:

1) Actual program costs generally align with or are below budgeted costs.

2) NDL cost-performance ratios are similar to or lower than that of ADLC and home boarding programs (or, alternatively, that of traditional academic courses offered in the same schools prior to NDL).

The program will be considered *efficient* if all of the above criteria are met.

The program will be considered *moderately efficient* if one of the above criteria is met.

The program will be considered to have *low efficiency* if none of the above criteria are met.

Evaluation Question 6: Are there unexpected outcomes associated with the NDL program?

Within this question, an assessment of unexpected outcomes and impacts will be conducted to allow ECE to make changes to the program in order to reduce negative outcomes and amplify positive outcomes and impacts. Potential causes of any identified unexpected outcomes and impacts will be identified along with a recommended course of action with regard to each.

Within this question, the following sub-questions will be answered:

> **6a. Where there any positive unanticipated outcomes or impacts associated with the NDL?**
>
> **6b. Where there any negative unanticipated outcomes or impacts associated with the NDL?**

There are no evaluation criteria associated with this question as it is intended to provide qualitative data that would inform analysis and interpretation of data collected under other evaluation questions.

IV. Evaluation Methodology

4.1 Principles Underlying the Evaluation

The evaluation will adhere to *Program Evaluation Standards*[22] developed by Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) and adopted by the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) in 2012. The Program Evaluation Standards include the following five groups:

1. *Utility standards* are intended to increase the extent to which program stakeholders find evaluation processes and products valuable in meeting their needs.

2. *Feasibility standards* are intended to increase evaluation effectiveness and efficiency.

3. *Propriety standards* support what is proper, fair, legal, right and just in evaluations.

4. *Accuracy standards* are intended to increase the dependability and truthfulness of evaluation representations, propositions, and findings, especially those that support interpretations and judgments about quality.

5. *Evaluation accountability* standards encourage adequate documentation of evaluations and a meta-evaluative perspective focused on improvement and accountability for evaluation processes and products.

The proposed evaluation will be overseen by a Credentialed Evaluator and will adhere to the CES's *Guidelines for Ethical Practice*[23]: competence, integrity and accountability.

The evaluation will protect the privacy or program participants by ensuring that all data collection and reporting activities are in compliance with the NWT's *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AITIPP)*[24].

4.2 Data Collection Methods

The evaluation will use qualitative and quantitative data obtained from three data collection methods: program records review, interviews, and focus groups – each of these methods is described below. Depending on the quality of program records, it may be necessary to introduce other data collection methods (e.g., student survey) or to expand the list of interview and focus group questions suggested below.

4.2.1 Program records review

Program records review will gather data from administrative, financial, and student records data on indicators identified in the Evaluation Matrix (evaluation questions 1, 2, and 3; see Appendix B). Primary sources of data for this method will include but may not be limited to the following:

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[22] Canadian Evaluation Society. Program Evaluation Standards (2014). https://evaluationcanada.ca/program-evaluation-standards

[23] Canadian Evaluation Society. Ethics (2014). https://evaluationcanada.ca/ethics

[24] Government of the Northwest Territories. *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.* https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/files/legislation/access-to-information-and-protection-of-privacy/access-to-information-and-protection-of-privacy.a.pdf

- NDL Handbook
- FMB Approved Funding Requests and Submitted Information Items
- NDL School Contribution Agreements and associated annual financial reports
- NDL Budgets for 2018-2019 – 2022-2023 school years
- NDL Program Monitoring Plans for 2018-2019 – 2022-2023 school years
- NDL Annual Reports for 2018-2019 – 2022-2023 school years
- NDL Program Monitoring Sheets for 2018-2019 – 2022-2023 school years
- Students records data stored at PowerSchool and/or CMAS (case management systems)
- Data stored in Moodle (course management system) for 2018-2019 – 2022-2023 school years
- Raw results of annual student satisfaction surveys (if information provided through other records is incomplete)

4.2.2 Interviews

Interviews with NDL teachers, principals and superintendents of participating and non-participating NDL small community schools will be conducted. Due to the small size of the these groups of participants, the risk of deductive disclosure is high for all interviewees in this evaluation. This means that individuals closely involved with the program will most likely be able to link the evaluation findings to participants whose identity will thereby be disclosed. This is a common challenge in qualitative research and research with small populations, in general[25]. In the proposed evaluation, challenged will be addressed through a two-step informed consent process. In the first step, which will occur prior to the interviews, participants will be informed of the potential uses of the data collected and potential risks to confidentiality that dissemination of findings may bring. In the second step, which will occur after the interviews are completed, the participants will be asked to reflect on the information they have provided in light of potential disclosure risks and will have an opportunity to withdraw or confirm their consent (or to redact parts of the information that they have provided in the course of the interview).

NDL Teacher Interviews. Semi-structured interviews with past and present NDL teachers will be conducted to obtain information needed to answer evaluation questions regarding the program's impact and unexpected outcomes (evaluation questions 2 and 4; see Appendix B) and to obtain another perspective on the information received through program records. The questions that will be asked may include the following:

1. As an NDL teacher, were (are) you familiar with the goals and performance targets set out for the NDL each year?
   Potential probes: What are the NDL performance targets this year? How do you find out about the goals and targets? Do you think it would be useful to know the goals and targets for each year?
2. Did (do) you feel that NDL was (is) successfully achieving its targets each year?

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[25] Kaiser, K. Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research* 19, no 11, 2009. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2805454/pdf/nihms162528.pdf

Potential probes: Why/why not?

3. Throughout your time as an NDL teacher, what was the most significant impact of NDL courses on students that you have observed?

   Potential probes: Why do you feel this is most significant for students? What implications will this impact have on the students' future?

4. Did you notice if NDL had any impact on the participating schools?

5. Did you notice if NDL had any impact on small communities in general?

6. As you know, the main purpose of NDL was to provide access to academic courses to students in small communities and to make sure these students achieve a level of success that would allow them to continue to postsecondary. Did you notice any other positive or negative effects of NDL that may not have been planned or expected?

   Potential probes: Where there any unplanned/unexpected effects on schools as a whole, yourself or your colleagues, or community as a whole? Why do you think this happened? What could be done to encourage/discourage this effect?

In addition to these questions, the following information on each teacher will be recorded: years of teaching NDL courses and name of their school. This information would help link the data obtained from interviews to the data obtained from other methods. Also teachers with less experience in NDL may not be able to notice impacts and outcomes that teachers with more experience may notice, hence the information received from teachers with different amount of experience will have different weight in the triangulation process.

The interviews will be conducted via teleconference calls, as this would be a customary method of communication for NDL teachers. In-person and phone interviews will be arranged for teachers with a preference for either of these formats. The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Qualitative data analysis will take place to summarize teacher-reported most significant impacts and unintended outcomes. Due to the nature of the evaluation questions at hand and the small size of the target group, all responses (not only common themes) will be considered in the data analysis and triangulation process (although most commonly observed effects will be noted). Direct quotations will not be used to avoid compromising confidentiality of the participants.

Principal and Superintendent Interviews. Unstructured interviews with superintendents and principals of participating and non-participating small community schools will be conducted to understand perceived barriers to participation and to assess whether the existing school contribution requirements are perceived a barrier. The interviews will be conducted over the phone and written notes will be taken.

The superintendents and principals of non-participating schools will be asked to explain why the school does not participate in the NDL and how it uses its designated SSMDL funds. They will *not* be specifically asked about the role of individual contribution requirements so as not to impact their answers. The superintendents and principals of non-participating schools will also be asked if they think there are students in their schools who may potentially benefit from NDL.

The superintendents and principals of participating schools *will* be specifically asked if they ever perceived contribution requirements as one of the barriers and if this perception changed over time.

Context-appropriate follow-up questions will be asked to clarify answers. Responses will be summarized into a list of perceived barriers to NDL access.

4.2.3 Focus Groups

Student Focus Groups. Focus groups will be conducted with present G10-12 students that have taken at least one of the NDL classes (regardless of its outcome). Information obtained through the focus groups will provide information necessary to answer evaluation questions regarding the program's impact and unexpected outcomes (evaluation questions 2 and 4; see Appendix B).

Focus group is an appropriate and more preferable method to individual interviews in this case for the following reasons[26,27]:

1. It will enhance data quality because students will be able to cross-check their own and each other's answers in the conversation;
2. It will create a more comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere than an individual interview, where the hierarchical and age differences between an interviewer and the interviewees might be a barrier to establishing rapport; and
3. It is an efficient method of data collection that will allow identifying shared experiences thereby increasing reliability and representativeness of the findings.

Focus groups with each of the following student groups will take place: 1) students who have failed their NDL courses and did not continue to register in more (2 focus groups), 2) students who have taken and passed or are on track to pass 1-2 NDL courses (2 focus groups), 3) students who have taken and passed or are on track to pass 3 or more NDL courses (3 focus groups). Relatively homogeneous composition of focus groups will allow participants to share their experiences in a non-threatening environment and facilitate a productive discussion that would illuminate different aspects of the program[24]. The number of planned focus group is different for each group of participants because students who have taken more NDL courses are more likely to experience the program's impact. Additional focus groups will be scheduled if the saturation point is not reached after the minimum number of sessions (i.e., if new information keeps coming in during the last focus group, it would be reasonable to expect that a saturation point hasn't been reached and data collection can continue).

Each group will include 6-10 students preferably from the same school to allow for easier scheduling; each focus group will last approximately one hour. The focus groups will be conducted via teleconference, with the students and moderators being in different locations. Computer-mediated focus groups were found to be as effective as face-to-face focus group; moreover, one

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[26] Patton, M.Q. "Qualitative research and evaluation methods." *Book Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* - 3rd Ed. Sage publications, 2002.

[27] Krueger, R.A; Casey M.A. *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Sage publications, 2014.

study reported that participants appeared to be less anxious about being judged by the moderators, which allowed them to share sensitive information more freely[24].

At least two evaluators will serve as moderators: one will be taking notes and the other will be guiding the focus group[24]. The following questions may be included in the moderator's guide:

1. How did being able to take NDL courses affect your high school experience and academic achievements?
2. Of all impacts mentioned what would you say was the most significant and why?
3. What skills did you develop through NDL courses?
4. Did NDL affect you or your learning in any unexpected ways (positive or negative)?
5. Were there any challenges that prevented you from making the most out of NDL?
6. Where there anything that helped you make the most of NDL?
7. Did NDL have any impact on your school as a whole?
8. Did NDL have any impact on your community as a whole?

In addition to notes, the focus groups will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The analysis will aim to reduce the amount of qualitative data through thematic coding that will categorize the data into the following major themes: positive expected impacts on self/school/community, positive unexpected impacts, negative expected impacts self/school/community, and negative unexpected impacts self/school/community. More specific codes will be created in the process of data analysis.

Parent Focus Groups. Focus groups will also be conducted with the parents/caregivers of past or present NDL students; this method will be appropriate for this group for the reasons described above. In this case, however, in-person focus groups would be more suitable because, unlike the NDL students, their parents/caregivers may not be used to computer-mediated communication.

Each focus group will include 6-10 NDL parents/caregivers from one community (one parent/caregiver per student). At least 3 focus groups will be conducted in 3 different small communities. Depending on the availability of parents/caregivers to participate, the number of focus groups per community may increase to at least two; in this case, parents/caregivers will be grouped in the following way: a) parents/caregivers of students who wanted to enroll in NDL but were not eligible and of students who dropped out or failed an NDL course; b) parents/caregivers of NDL students who completed at least one NDL course. Each focus group is expected to last approximately one hour.

One evaluator will serve as a moderator. The following questions may be included in the moderator's guide:

1. How valuable is it for your children to be able to take academic courses while staying in their home community? Can you compare this with your own experiences in high school?
2. How did being able to take NDL courses affect your children's high school experience and academic achievements?
3. Of all impacts mentioned what would you say was the most significant and why?
4. What skills did you notice your children develop through NDL courses?

5. Did NDL affect your children or families in any unexpected ways (positive or negative)?
6. Were there any challenges that prevented your children from making the most out of NDL?
7. Where there anything that helped your children make the most of NDL?
8. Did NDL have any impact on your school as a whole?
9. Did NDL have any impact on your community as a whole?

The focus groups will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The analysis will follow the same logic as that of the student focus group data described above.

V. Evaluation Schedule

The evaluation process is scheduled to take 19 months (September 1, 2023 to March 31, 2025). Because the Annual NDL Report for the 2022/23 school year is due November 30, 2023, data collection can begin after this date. Two evaluation products are scheduled for submission to the FMB; the present evaluation plan (submitted in October 2018), and a summative evaluation report (submitted by March 31, 2025).

October 2018: Evaluation Plan submitted to the FMB.

September 1, 2023: Terms of Reference for the evaluation finalized.

October 1, 2023: The Evaluation Plan reviewed and updated, as necessary.

January 1, 2024: Data collection tools finalized.

June 1, 2024: Data collection completed.

October 1, 2024: Draft Evaluation Report completed.

December 1, 2024: Final Evaluation Report completed.

March 31, 2025: Evaluation Report and a decision paper submitted to the FMB.

VI. Evaluation Budget

The evaluation will be conducted by the Research and Evaluation Unit of the Planning, Research and Evaluation (PRE) division in collaboration with the Finance and Capital Planning (FCP) division and may incur additional costs associated with contracted services (e.g., transcription, focus group facilitation in communities). There will be internal travel costs associated with the data collection process for parent focus groups and in cases where NDL teachers request a face-to-face interview. The costs would equal to a 2-day trip from Yellowknife to Inuvik for one person (approximately $1,500); and three trips to the other small communities (approximately $2,500 each). The total travel expense projected is $9,000.

VII. Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

Anticipated limitations that may impact reliability and validity of the evaluation findings as well as their mitigation strategies are summarized in the table below. Other limitations may arise in the course of the evaluation; these will be discussed in the final evaluation report.

	Limitation	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
1.	Strong reliance on the quality of program records and the anticipated changes to student records systems (CMAS, PowerSchool), which serve as a major data sources for most of the evaluation questions.	Data quality may be adversely affected by the poor quality of program monitoring activities and by potential ability of the program to impact and manipulate program records. This poses a risk to the reliability of evaluation findings. This risk will be exacerbated if the anticipated changes to student records systems will not be implemented.	The evaluators will cross-check data obtained from program monitoring sheets and annual reports with data from automated student records systems (PowerSchool, CMAS), where potential for errors and data manipulation is smaller. PRE's Research and Evaluation Unit will collaborate with the ECE's data systems management staff to ensure that the appropriate system changes are implemented on time. The evaluators will also engage with NDL teachers, students, and parents/ caregivers and utilize information obtained through this method in the triangulation process to inform conclusions and recommendations.
2.	To assess its efficiency, NDL is compared to alternative programs that substantially differ in their implementation approach and context (e.g., ALDC headquarters are located in AB with different salaries and costs of living for program staff).	The validity of evaluation findings may be impacted in that NDL may be evaluated as inefficient/or more efficient comparing to alternative approaches if all factors, including different program costs and student enrollment and achievement rates are not taken into consideration.	To ensure comparisons between programs are reasonable, the evaluation will rely on comparison of cost-performance ratios, as opposed to directly comparing costs and success rates of the programs. In addition, in calculations of cost-performance ratios, the difference between the cost of living in the North and in Alberta will be accounted for. For ADLC costs and performance data, only those of participating NWT students from small communities will be used (as opposed to other NWT or Alberta's students).
3.	Potential difficulties obtaining students records and/or financial data for ADLC and home	Currently, home boarding program formally functions in two education bodies (Dehcho DEC and BDDEC), the number of students	If there are problems with data quantity or quality, the evaluation of program's efficiency will not only rely on these two groups for comparison, but also look into

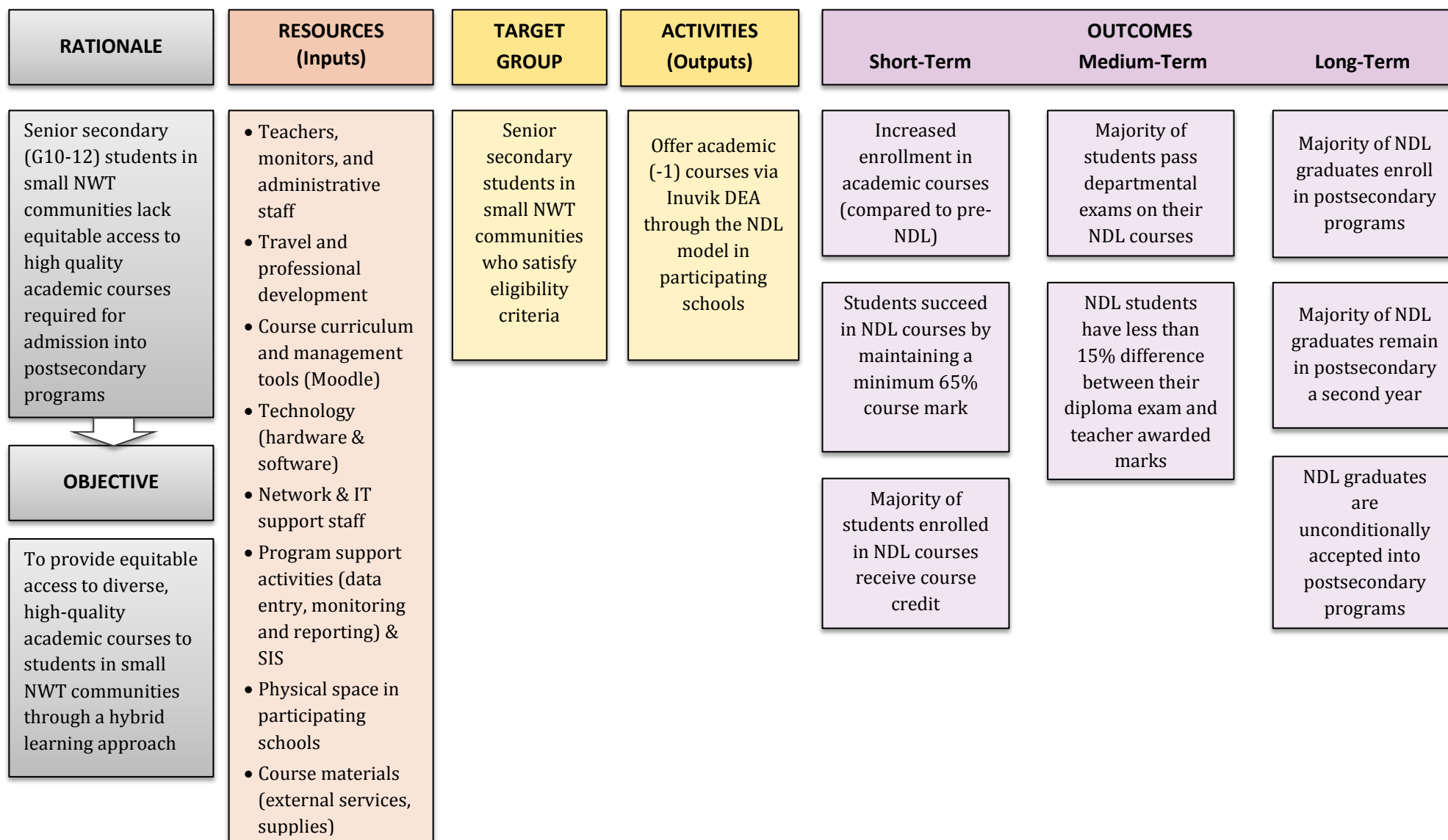|	Limitation	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
	boarding programs.	participating in the program may be small and the financial data may be unavailable. For ADLC, there is a risk that not many students from small NWT communities take the courses. This means comparison groups may be relatively small and the data on relevant indicators may be missing.	student achievement data and cost of offering academic courses at the same schools through traditional approach (prior to NDL).
4.	Small size of the program makes it difficult for the evaluators to guarantee confidentiality of teachers, principals, and superintendents interviewed for the evaluation.	The limitation does not directly impact validity or reliability of the evaluation, but poses a threat to the ability of evaluators to recruit participants and collect enough data.	A two-step informed consent procedure will be applied to ensure that participants are well aware of the potential risks. The evaluators will also refrain from using direct quotations in the final report.
5.	Inability to causally attribute many of the outcomes to the impact of NDL program due to non-experimental evaluation design, and the fact that NDL is only *one* of the programs that influences student academic and postsecondary outcomes.	Although NDL can be associated with positive/negative outcomes, it may not be possible to establish that the program caused these observable effects and to make definitive conclusions with regard to the program's effectiveness.	Impact assessment will be conducted for outcomes where data is available; the qualitative input from students, teachers, and parents/caregivers and the triangulation of data will also help evaluators establish the extent to which NDL contributed to the identified observed outcomes.
6.	Dependence on voluntary participation of students, teachers, and parents/caregivers in interviews and focus groups.	Low participation rates in interviews and focus groups may adversely affect reliability and representativeness of the data obtained through these methods. Unrepresentative and unreliable data cannot be used to make summative conclusions about the program's effectiveness.	To create favourable conditions for student, parent/caregiver, and teacher participation, evaluators will: a) organize several focus groups/interviews at different times of the day and week, b) collaborate with NDL staff to conduct focus groups during or right after class, and c) collaborate with NDL staff to develop a list of potential incentives that could help motivate students, parents/ caregivers, and teachers[28] to participate, d) offer several

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[28] Any incentives should be within the limits of relevant collective agreements.

Limitation	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
		options for the format of teacher interviews (over the phone, via video conference call, and face-to-face).
7. Evaluation conducted internally by the ECE.	Internal evaluations may be more prone to the impact of bias than external evaluators because all parties involved in the process are bound by professional and, sometimes, personal relationships. This may impact the integrity of the evaluation or create barriers for collaboration in the evaluation process.	A Steering Committee for the evaluation will include individuals that represent interests of different stakeholder groups. Evaluation findings and recommendations will be provided to the program staff for feedback and review; however, suggested changes will be evaluated in light of all available information and implemented only when a) they are supported by the available data, and b) improve the utility and accuracy of the findings and recommendations. To ensure that the integrity of findings is not compromised, the evaluators will follow ethical guidelines established by the CES.

Appendix A: NDL Program Logic Model

RATIONALE	RESOURCES (Inputs)	TARGET GROUP	ACTIVITIES (Outputs)	OUTCOMES		
				Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Senior secondary (G10-12) students in small NWT communities lack equitable access to high quality academic courses required for admission into postsecondary programs	• Teachers, monitors, and administrative staff • Travel and professional development • Course curriculum and management tools (Moodle) • Technology (hardware & software) • Network & IT support staff • Program support activities (data entry, monitoring and reporting) & SIS • Physical space in participating schools • Course materials (external services, supplies)	Senior secondary students in small NWT communities who satisfy eligibility criteria	Offer academic (-1) courses via Inuvik DEA through the NDL model in participating schools	Increased enrollment in academic courses (compared to pre-NDL) Students succeed in NDL courses by maintaining a minimum 65% course mark Majority of students enrolled in NDL courses receive course credit	Majority of students pass departmental exams on their NDL courses NDL students have less than 15% difference between their diploma exam and teacher awarded marks	Majority of NDL graduates enroll in postsecondary programs Majority of NDL graduates remain in postsecondary a second year NDL graduates are unconditionally accepted into postsecondary programs

OBJECTIVE

To provide equitable access to diverse, high-quality academic courses to students in small NWT communities through a hybrid learning approach

Appendix B: NDL Program Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Question	Evaluated Variable	Evaluation Indicators	Evaluation Criteria	Data Collection Method
1. Was NDL implemented as intended?	**1a.** Does the program deliver the intended number and quality of courses in the intended number of schools to the intended group of students?	Service Delivery (outputs)	• Number and type of NDL courses offered • Number of schools participating in the NDL • Proportion of enrolled students that meet eligibility criteria • Proportion of courses assessed as meeting white and yellow standards specified in the NDL Course Development Rubric	• The degree to which the program meets yearly targets established for these indicators in the NDL Performance Monitoring Plan.	Program records review (Annual Program Monitoring Sheets, NDL Annual Reports for 2018/19 - 2021/22 school years)
	1b. What are the program utilization rates overall and in each community?	Service Utilization (Outputs)	• Enrollment rates (yearly as well as in comparison to the total student population) • Demographic characteristics of NDL students (community, grade level , ethnicity, gender) • Proportion of NDL courses in a total course load of a student • Attrition (dropout and exclusions due to poor attendance) • Attendance rates	• The degree to which the program meets yearly targets established for these indicators in the NDL Performance Monitoring Plan.	Program records review (Annual Program Monitoring Sheets, NDL Annual Reports, and CMAS/PowerSchool records for 2018/19 - 2021/22 school years)

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Question	Evaluated Variable	Evaluation Indicators	Evaluation Criteria	Data Collection Method
	1c. Are the students satisfied with the courses?	Service Delivery (Outputs)	• Student satisfaction rates with NDL courses	• The degree to which the program meets yearly targets established for this indicator in the NDL Performance Monitoring Plan.	• Program records review (NDL Student Satisfaction Survey results from 2018/19 to 2021/22)
	1d. What are the promising practices, challenges and unmet needs that may have affected program implementation process and effectiveness over the years?	Service Delivery (Outputs)	• Degree of alignment between calendars of participating schools • School reported promising practices, required support, and challenges with NDL program implementation	• Not applicable as the data is intended to support program development and aid in the interpretation of findings.	• Program records review (Appendix F of the Clearance Forms for 2018/19 – 2021/22)
2. Do all small community schools have equitable access to NDL?	**2a.** Do the school contribution requirements impact the financial situation of participating schools differently? Do the school contribution requirements pose a barrier to NDL access for non-participating small community schools? **2b.** Is the yearly cost[29] of NDL per enrolled	Program Access	• Principal/superintendent perceived impact of school contribution requirements on the school's financial situation • Principal/superintendent perceived impact of school contribution requirements on NDL access (non-participating schools only). • NDL contribution (flat rate and SSMDL) by school as a proportion of the total NDL expenditure per same school per year (excluding	• The approach to individual contributions is not perceived burdensome by principals/superintendents of participating schools. • Non-participating school principals and superintendents do not see the existing school contribution requirements as a barrier to NDL access. • Schools with similar NDL student counts[30] co-share a	• Program records review (NDL Budgets, Annual Reports, Contribution Agreements for 2018/19 – 2021-22) • Superintendent and Principal Interviews

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[29] The cost to school is equal to the sum of individual flat rate contribution and an SSMDL contribution.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Question	Evaluated Variable	Evaluation Indicators	Evaluation Criteria	Data Collection Method
	NDL student similar for participating schools?		Inuvik) • NDL contribution (flat rate and SSMDL) by school as a proportion of the total school expenditure per year • Yearly cost of NDL to participating schools per enrolled student [cost per student = NDL contribution by school (flat rate + SSMDL)/number of enrolled NDL students]	similar proportion of the total NDL costs per school • The proportion of the total expenditure that individual contributions (flat rate + SSMDL) make is similar across all schools • The cost of NDL per enrolled NDL student in schools with similar NDL student counts is similar (10% variance)	
3. To what degree was NDL effective in achieving its planned outcomes?	**3a.** Did the students achieve the intended short-, medium- and long-term outcomes of the program? Did the outcomes differ depending on students' home community, gender, ethnicity, and grade level?	Program Effectiveness (Outcomes)	• Proportion of students with a final mark of 65% and above by course, by community, gender, ethnicity, and overall • Average yearly credit acquisition rates among NDL students by course, by community, gender, ethnicity, and overall	• The degree to which the program meets yearly targets established for these indicators in the NDL Performance Monitoring Plan.	• Program records review (Annual Program Monitoring Sheets, NDL Annual Reports, and CMAS records for 2018/19 - 2021/22 school years) • NDL Focus Groups (Students and Parents/ Caregivers)

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[30] The following categories will be used to group schools with 'similar NDL student counts': 1) schools with 1-4 NDL students, 2) schools with 5-9 NDL students, and 3) schools with 10 and more NDL students.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Question	Evaluated Variable	Evaluation Indicators	Evaluation Criteria	Data Collection Method
	3b. What impact did the program have on the accessibility of academic courses to students in small communities?	Program Impact	• Number of students enrolled in academic courses in each participating school in the four years pre- and post- NDL (pre-NDL data should date back to 2012/13 and earlier for some of the schools who have participated in the NDL pilot in 2014/15-2017/18)	• The degree to which the program has achieved an increase in the number of students enrolled in academic course across communities.	• Program records review (Annual Program Monitoring Sheets, NDL Annual Reports, and CMAS records for 2018/19 - 2021/22 school years)
	3c. What was the most significant impact of NDL on students in small community schools?	Program Impact	• School reported impact of NDL on students • Teacher reported impact of NDL on students • Student reported impact of NDL	• Not applicable, as the data is intended to support program development and aid in the interpretation of findings.	• Program records review (Appendix F of the Financial Reports for 2018/19 – 2021/22) • NDL Teacher Interviews • NDL Focus Groups (Students and Parents/ Caregivers)
4. How does the achievement of NDL students compare with that of non-NDL students enrolled in traditional academic courses in other NWT communities?		Program Outcomes	• Credit acquisition rates among NDL and non-NDL students by course, by gender, and by ethnicity • Average course marks, diploma exam marks and the discrepancy between the two by course	Not applicable, as this question is meant to inform the decision makers on the overall progress of the NDL program comparing to the traditional approach.	• NDL program records and NWT student records (CMAS)
5. To what degree was	**5a.** How do the actual program costs[31] per	Program	• Budgeted and actual costs per seat and per successful seat[32], per	• Actual program costs generally align with or are	• Program records review (NDL Budgets, Annual

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[31] Here and in 4b, cost refers to the overall program cost and includes each NDL budget line item: staffing, professional development travel, network, hardware and software, etc.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Question	Evaluated Variable	Evaluation Indicators	Evaluation Criteria	Data Collection Method
NDL efficient in achieving its objectives within the allotted amount of resources?	unit of output and outcome compare with its budgeted costs per unit of output and outcome?	Efficiency	course and per successful student per course each year	below budgeted costs.	Reports, Contribution Agreements for 2018/19 – 2021-22)
	5b. How do the cost-performance ratios[33] for NDL program compare to the cost-performance ratios of home-boarding and Alberta's Distance Learning Centre (or, alternatively, to that of traditional academic courses offered in the same schools prior to NDL)?	Program Efficiency	• A) Annual cost per occupied seat (enrolled)/cost per seat (total available), B) Annual cost per successful seat (acquired credit)/cost per occupied seat, C) Annual cost per successful seat (acquired credit)/cost per seat (total available), and/or D) Annual cost per successful student per course/cost per course for NDL, ADLC, and home-boarding program (alternatively, for traditional academic courses offered in the same schools prior to NDL)	• NDL cost-performance ratios are similar to or lower than that of ADLC and home boarding programs (or, alternatively, that of traditional academic courses offered in the same schools prior to NDL)	• NDL program records review (Budgets, Annual Reports, Contribution Agreements for 2018/19 – 2021-22) • ADLC and home-boarding program records review (or review of student achievement and financial records on traditional academic courses offered in the same schools prior to NDL)
6. Are there unexpected outcomes associated with the NDL	**6a.** Where there any positive unanticipated outcomes or impacts associated with the NDL?	Program Outcomes & Impacts	• Administration, teacher, student, and parent/caregiver reported positive unanticipated program outcomes and impacts	Not applicable as the data is intended to support program development.	• Program records review (Appendix F of the Financial Reports for 2018/19 – 2021/22)

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[32] Successful seat/successful student refer to a student who achieved credit in an NDL course.

[33] In calculations of cost-performance ratios, the difference between the cost of living in the North and in Alberta will be accounted for. For ADLC costs and performance data, only those of participating NWT students from small communities will be used (as opposed to other NWT or Alberta's students).

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Question	Evaluated Variable	Evaluation Indicators	Evaluation Criteria	Data Collection Method
program?	**6b.** Where there any negative unanticipated outcomes or impacts associated with the NDL?		• Administration, teacher, student, and parent/caregiver reported negative unanticipated program outcomes and impacts		• NDL Teacher Interviews • NDL Focus Groups (Students and Parents/ Caregivers)