Summary of IRCC Learning and Co-planning Workshop with the *Réseaux en immigration francophone* June 12 and 13, 2018

Background

IRCC organized a meeting on June 12 and 13, 2018, with the *Réseaux en immigration francophone* (RIF). The objectives were the following:

➢ Communicate IRCC's vision for supporting the Francophone Integration Pathway.

➢ Present the new measures associated with the *Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future* and the consolidation of the Francophone Integration Pathway (e.g. Welcoming Francophone Communities, adapted language training, support for the Francophone settlement sector); and begin joint planning.

➢ Identify the priorities regarding support for the RIF in preparation for the 2019 national call for proposals for the Settlement Program.

➢ Offer learning opportunities for RIF coordinators (e.g. updates on settlement priorities such as language training; call for proposals 101; understanding administrative data from the Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE) system).

The coordinators and an additional representative from each of the thirteen RIF were present at the meeting, along with two representatives of the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne* (FCFA) du Canada, and a representative of the *Comité atlantique sur l'immigration francophone* (CAIF). The IRCC participants included representatives from the Integration Policy Branch, the Refugee Affairs Branch, the Settlement Network at National Headquarters and the regions, the Official Languages Secretariat, and the Communications Branch.

This summary provides an overview of these two days of meetings with the RIF. It is subdivided into two parts, with the first segment presenting highlights from the different theme-based discussions, and with the second segment summarizing the learning workshops.

It should be noted that the summary exclusively comprises suggestions made by the stakeholders during the meeting, and in no way represents the Department's position.

Part 1 – Co-planning Activities

1   IRCC's Vision for Supporting the Francophone Integration Pathway

IRCC opened the meeting by reiterating the importance of having a consistent Francophone Integration Pathway where services and support for French-speaking newcomers are offered in an integrated manner by institutions and communities "for and by Francophones."

Thus, to consolidate the Francophone Integration Pathway, IRCC will complete several innovative initiatives over the next five years, such as the Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative, improved core services (enhanced language training offer and access for French-speaking newcomers), and capacity building in the Francophone Settlement Sector.

IRCC then presented its vision for supporting the Francophone Integration Pathway, stating as follows:

> *"French-speaking newcomers have an opportunity to settle and become integrated in French and to make a positive contribution to Canadian society and to the vitality of Francophone communities. This is supported by a Francophone Integration Pathway, which begins before they arrive in Canada and continues until they obtain citizenship*."

Participants were asked to comment on the proposed vision. Most of their comments were proposals for changes to the terminology used in the vision statement, such as replacing the expression "newcomers" by "immigrants."

In the end, the following statement was proposed:

> *"Immigrants recognize the advantages of settling, succeeding and growing in French and of contributing to Canadian society and to the vitality of Francophone communities. This is supported by a Francophone Integration Pathway, which begins before they arrive in Canada and is completed when they obtain citizenship."*

In regards to the last suggestion, it was noted that the use of the term "immigrant" was avoided in the past because it sometimes had a pejorative connotation, so the term "newcomer" was used, since it had the advantage of being better defined. It would therefore be more logical to retain this term in the vision statement.

It was also noted that the vision should go beyond "obtain citizenship" and aim for "retention."

IRCC stated its intention to take the various comments into account when revising the Francophone Integration Pathway vision and then present it to the RIF once again.

2   Targeted Approach for Consolidating Francophone Settlement Services

After a brief presentation that specified the objectives of a targeted approach (including effectively meeting the needs of French-speaking immigrants, concentrating efforts where the needs are the greatest and maximizing impacts resulting from the investment), participants were asked a series of questions aimed at better defining/targeting the approach. It was also pointed out that the targeted

approach resulted from consultations by IRCC with the RIF in November–December 2017, during which several stakeholders mentioned the need to have consolidated settlement services.

The purpose of the first series of questions was to identify criteria or elements to take into consideration for the selection of designated regions. The summary of discussions regarding each question is presented below.

Drawbacks of a targeted approach

The participants identified the following drawbacks:

- Disadvantages in regions where distances are significant. Moreover, rural communities are often forgotten, so the approach must take this factor into account.

- Disadvantages for service providers who are not funded by IRCC versus those funded by IRCC.

- An approach based on demographic weight would be to the disadvantage of fragile communities.

Criteria that should be taken into consideration when targeting the regions

The participants underscored the necessity of taking certain factors into consideration in determining the criteria to be used to target regions, including the following:

- The designated area must be adapted by province/territory.

- Factors such as employment opportunities, market changes, etc. must be taken into consideration.

- There should be identified as centres rather than regions.

- The fact that clients in outlying areas are often temporary should be taken into consideration.

- Data regarding secondary migration, such as the data pertaining to the place where they settle should be used, and the possibility of using tax return or public health insurance card information should be explored.

- Criteria such as the distance between targeted communities and their size should be considered in order to take rural or outlying communities into consideration.

- The community vitality indicators developed by Canadian Heritage should be used.

The purpose of the second series of questions was to find ways to improve/consolidate Francophone Settlement Services and develop a Francophone Integration Pathway, which entails concerted efforts.

Settlement Service Gaps in Respective RIF Regions

The participants identified gaps that currently exist in their regions:

- The community's strategic plan must be revised to better define who does what. This will ensure that the Settlement Program funding is aligned with the already defined mandate of the RIF.

- Non-availability of services (lack of reception services, for example), or services are dispersed.

- Ethnocultural groups are not always included in the sector group activities that are implemented on a local level, particularly in Alberta.

While identifying service gaps, participants also mentioned methods that would help identify them, such as periodic need analysis in the RIF regions, and consultation to determine how to fill the gaps.

It was also noted that feedback from newcomers would help identify other gaps in the services received by newcomers.

As possible solutions, they mentioned regional planning, or the development of customized pathways as a way to fill needs/gaps.

Engagement of RIF Members: Challenges/Difficulties

Participants were called upon to contribute ideas that would get their members more engaged. They proposed the following:

- Have a travel budget to do outreach activities with service providers who are members of the RIF but who do not always know what the RIF's mandate or role is.

- Encourage annual or occasional collaboration and regular committee meetings.

- Facilitate dialogue among the various community stakeholders and the immigrants.

- Have more funding for the development of an integrated approach to Francophone immigration by setting specific targets with respect to engagement objectives; additional resources would be necessary to reach the said targets.

- Consider having qualitative assessments of the services provided to immigrants in addition to quantitative assessments.

- Improve communication with service providers and immigrants regarding the RIF's mandate, so as to ensure a better understanding of what they do. For example, in Alberta the RIF has planned to tour the province to inform its members.

3   Implementation of the Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative

Welcoming Francophone Communities are a component of the Francophone Integration Pathway. They have a leverage effect on the settlement services currently available. It is an initiative to support community and partner approaches, focused on community funding, the objectives of which include forging ties, increasing the community's acceptance of newcomers and filling in gaps in the pathway, among others, in response to the community's choices/decisions through an advisory board.

The initiative was inspired by Employment and Social Development Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, which is a community-based, client-centred approach that is implemented collectively (establishment of an advisory board; based on partnerships) and that fosters effectiveness and strategic approaches (resource sharing, sustained communication with stakeholders) to allow for a certain flexibility in the choice of projects.

IRCC proposes the development of Welcoming Francophone Communities with support from the RIF, based on the following four key elements:

      i.   Identifying welcoming communities (approximately 14 communities)

     ii.   Using a dedicated envelope and flexible funding for the welcoming communities

   iii.   Establishing an advisory board for each welcoming community

   iv.   Developing a community plan that is specific to the welcoming community

The RIF were invited to share their opinions regarding the initiative and to propose the criteria for identification of welcoming communities. They were also asked to state their views regarding the establishment of an advisory board.

3.1   Identifying Welcoming Francophone Communities

To help in identifying welcoming communities, the participants suggested the following:

- Target communities with significant workforce needs.
- Take into account the community's commitment, including the volunteers' commitment to support newcomers and their integration, the community's willingness to welcome newcomers, and the municipality's openness to immigration; in other words, look for fertile locations.
- Ensure that best practices can be copied to develop welcoming communities elsewhere (those that are less welcoming).
- Send an expression of interest to the communities and then see which ones are interested in being a pilot/testing ground.
- Rely on communities that are already working on the problem to continue in the same vein.
- Choose welcoming communities that are not too large, such as emerging communities, to have the opportunity to implement innovative and creative approaches.
- Choose welcoming communities that have proven working relationships with RIF's coordinators.

Proposed criteria:

The participants proposed a certain number of criteria to take into consideration when identifying welcoming communities:

- Labour market integration opportunities for successful integration
- The receptiveness of the region's welcoming community in contributing to the integration of newcomers
- Communities where it is possible to live in French as much as possible
- Relative size of regions
- Commitment level and spirit of cooperation with local players
- Population aging – transitional community
- Geographic distance

3.2   Using a Dedicated Envelope and Flexible Funding for the Welcoming Francophone Communities

A potential annual budget of $4 million was established for the Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative, to implement approximately 14 communities. IRCC presented various funding allocation scenarios to the participants as below:

- A single organization receives all the funding, then redistributes it to the implementation partners.
- All partners request funding separately.
- A hybrid model taking both aforementioned scenarios into account.

The participants were invited to share their opinion on the capacity of Francophone players to implement the projects and use the funding adequately. They were also asked to identify potential advantages and drawbacks.

According to most participants, by equipping the RIF with the proper tools, they would be in the best position to act as funding mechanisms. One of the advantages mentioned was that this funding would be included in the RIF' budgets and the projects implemented in their action plans.

It was, however, underscored that clear decision-making rules and mechanisms would have to be defined to ensure transparency in the use of the dedicated funding.

As for the implementation of the projects, participants indicated the need to have the right tools and the time to move forward.

One drawback mentioned was that the funding allocation model that is selected should not put the RIF in a difficult position; the model chosen should support the spirit of collaboration that currently exists.

3.3   Establishing an Advisory Board: the Role of the RIF in the Process

Comments expressed by the participants made it clear that it would be best to build on what already exists, and therefore the RIF would be in the best position to create the advisory board. Moreover, the participants drew attention to the fact that establishment of the said advisory boards should be monitored to ensure that they do not duplicate the work done by the RIF.

Among the arguments given, it was underscored that the RIF is already a consultation mechanism and could just be given a little more support. In addition, the network already has knowledge of the situation in the field and partners. For example, through the RIF's governance, there are local and regional committees that bring together partners from different regions and communities.

It was suggested that the advisory board be made up of active RIF members and other players involved in immigration. Other members could include municipalities, government representatives, employers and the private sector.

3.4   Developing a Community Plan that is Specific to the Welcoming Francophone Community

For this key element in the implementation of the Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative, participants were asked to suggest ways of ensuring complementarity between the welcoming communities' plans and those of the RIF.

All participants were in agreement that the RIF already had plans developed with community members, to which a "welcoming community" element could be added for the targeted region, or one could "align key points in the community action plans with those of the RIF."

4   Support for the Francophone Settlement Sector

This workshop covered two components of the Francophone settlement sector, namely Francophone direct service providers and Francophone Immigration Networks, which bring together the front-line stakeholders that are direct service providers.

4.1   Francophone Direct Service Providers

The objective of the session was to identify concrete measures and solutions for building the capacity of Francophone service providers.

Discussions revolved around four themes/questions.

i)   *Service of Equal Quality*

The participants suggested several opportunities that would improve the quality of Francophone services, such as:

- Training settlement workers. Currently, training only exists in English.

- Raise awareness of staff serving Francophone clientele like they do for LGBTQ.

- Develop standard services at the national level that would be offered by Francophone service providers, such as:

  o   Resettlement services for refugees that are not offered in French.
  o   Settlement worker capability-building training is offered in English only.

- Create an inventory of Francophone direct services expertise at the national level (organizations or national structure).

- Meet human resource needs in certain regions.

- Create partnerships with Anglophone organizations to share best practices, for example by organizing workshops with service providers from each province/territory.

ii) *Representation*

In order to *improve Francophone representation in the Settlement Sector,* the participants proposed the following, among other things:

- Create a space for direct service providers who don't have a voice at the national level. According to them, the creation of a network or an organization representing direct services at the national level is essential. For example, it would be good to have the equivalent of the FCFA to represent Francophone direct service providers.

iii) *Coordination for Francophone Integration Pathway Implementation*

The participants were invited to share their opinion on whether their preferred approach for the implementation of the Francophone Integration Pathway would be national or regional.

The participants seem to prefer a national approach by proposing to:

- Centralize direct services to optimize newcomers' paths.

- Create a network of direct settlement services at the national level (national coordination, training of service providers).

- Ensure that funding of direct services is sufficient and adequate.

iv) Sharing Best Practices and Networking

Several suggestions were mentioned by the participants, including:

- Develop a compilation of best practices identified at the regional level and shared at the national level: for example, it was suggested that IRCC compile a list of success stories, taken from the Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE) system, and then share these success stories via webinar with service providers.

- Each year, make a list of all practices carried out on a portal through which members could have access to various tools.

- Set up a call centre-type remote service provider system that would be available to answer any questions, needs or issues a service provider may have.

- Create itinerant services that would reach out to the communities; there would, however, be a need for resources to develop these services.

- Create a national forum where each province/ territory could get ideas, access videos and activities, etc.

- Encourage periodic collaboration between RIF's and Local Immigration Partnerships' (LIP) coordinators.

- Develop a news bulletin that would disseminate best practices.

- Have a centralized database of clients served and a reference database, which would provide better knowledge of the clientele served and a better understanding the context.

4.2 Support for the Francophone Settlement Sector - Francophone Immigration Networks

The purpose of the workshop's second part was to identify the priorities for helping to build the capacity of RIF's coordinators. Participants were asked to discuss the following two questions:

- *In light of the new initiatives, how do you see the role of the RIF in the near future?*

- *How could you be better equipped to carry out your mandate?*

i) Role of the RIF in the Near Future

The ultimate goal of the RIF is to become the reference for direct service providers and the community, it is to be leaders in Francophone immigration within the provinces/ territories. In other words, they see themselves as an essential mechanism in the implementation of the immigrant's pathway. Among the roles in which they see themselves, participants indicated the following:

- Encourage promotion and recruitment of immigrants.

- Engage communities on key immigration issues.

- Provide an advisory role within the Welcoming Francophone Communities framework. In addition to being a facilitator, prepare communities to help them adopt behaviour that is likely to attract Francophone immigrants.

- Provide strategic direction concerning immigration at the provincial level.

- Promote the communities internationally.

- Act as liaison with municipalities and provinces and territories.

- Be a preferred channel for dissemination of information from IRCC.

To fully accomplish their roles, the following suggestions were made:

- Create a network of diversity ambassadors. They will be trained and able to relay messages regarding immigration. This would bring about a change in mentality.

- Give the RIF the opportunity to facilitate meetings (currently, the existing contribution agreements state that the RIF may not facilitate an activity they organize).

ii) Suggestions for Better Equipping the RIF so they Can Fulfil their Mandate

The participants made suggestions at different levels:

Resources
- Strengthen the RIF's human resource capacity to help them deliver their mandate.

- Ensure alignment of pay scales and help reduce staff turnover.

- Have a person in charge of communications and public relations in each RIF.

- Have full-time coordinators, to achieve comparable results.

- Make tools available to the RIF to facilitate collaboration and engagement.

- Give the RIF the capability of funding small, local and one-time projects that meet the communities' needs.

Training
- Provide training for coordinators regarding data requests and the interpretation of data.

Operations
- Simplify the logic model.

- Clarify the types of activities that the RIF can carry out; it would simplify the annual reports and calls for proposals (CFPs).

- Create regional collaboration mechanisms (e.g. like that of the Comité Atlantique sur l'immigration francophone), with a link to provincial and territorial governments.

- Improve RIF's coordination/governance.

- Develop (by IRCC) terms of reference that would serve as a framework for the RIF (e.g. clarify the relationship between the RIF's trustee and coordinator).

- Create a toolbox to ensure members' engagement.

Promotion of activities
- Give the RIF more visibility on the IRCC website, for example, by giving clients access to the entire list of services provided by the RIF via the site.

- Promote the RIF among Anglophone colleagues who are responsible for LIPs.

- Make videos about the Francophone Integration Pathway.

- Set up, for example, an FCFA/RIF/IRCC Communications Committee to develop messages, etc.

Part 2 – Learning Activities

The two-day workshop in Ottawa were also an opportunity for RIF coordinators to learn a little more about IRCC themes and activities such as the settlement priorities, language training and refugees, the basics of a call for proposals, and to better understand the iCARE system's administrative data.

The following section provides a brief summary of these presentations.

1. Call for Proposals 101: IRCC's Operational Advice

Presented by Catherine Pitre, Senior Policy and Program Advisor, Settlement Network Branch

Summary

Open calls for proposals (CFPs) are an IRCC mechanism for allocating grant and contribution funding related to the Settlement Program. They are open to all eligible organizations and have a normal cycle of three years.

Two other mechanisms are targeted CFPs and expression-of-interest letters; they are more flexible than open CFPs and can be launched several times a year. These mechanisms are used to meet a specific need, particularly when innovative projects are being tested out.

The stages of a CFP are: (1) submission of the proposal; (2) evaluation by IRCC; (3) invitation to negotiate; and, when the negotiations are successful, (4) signing the contribution agreement.

The contribution agreement is an agreement between IRCC and a recipient that provides settlement or resettlement assistance services.

With regard to developing proposals, activities must adhere to the terms and conditions of the IRCC Settlement Program. An organization can submit more than one proposal. The proposal must demonstrate the link with the strategic plan and the needs of the community. Also, IRCC encourages partnerships and joint proposals.

Here are some tips for preparing a good proposal:
- Submit the proposal early
- Respect deadlines
- Pay attention to system messages
- Ensure that the signatories are available
- Read and use Frequently Asked Questions
- Gather the required information in advance
- Check that your organization is eligible

Questions/comments from participants

Some questions were raised by participants. For example, they wanted to know if IRCC had developed an information document about the different types of funding. There is not one at this time.

One participant wanted to know if there was a standard period between the launch of a CFP and the deadline for submitting the proposal. IRCC's response was that there was no standard period.

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2. **Language Training for Newcomers who Settle in Francophone Minority Communities**
Presented by Annie Carroll, Policy Analyst, Language Policy, IRCC

Summary

The language training program is offered through Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and the French version *Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada* (CLIC), and it includes the following:
- o Language skills assessment and referrals to language courses
- o Language courses (literacy to advanced level) as well as job-related training and training in the workplace

The courses are designed to meet the clients' needs:
- o Full-time and part-time, evening and weekend classes
- o In person, mixed formats, and online
- o Support services (e.g. transportation assistance, child care services for newcomers)

Approximately 110,000 clients across Canada (outside Quebec), of which only 3% are French-speaking. More than two thirds are women. More than 90% are taking classroom courses.

More than half of the language training clients are at the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 4 or less
- o Progression is particularly slower for refugees and older adults
- o Various cognitive factors (such as stress, anxiety, and memory loss) can have an impact on learning

Francophone immigrants who settle in a Francophone Minority Community (FMC) require training in both official languages in order to achieve their integration (both economic and social).

Learning or improving language proficiency is an essential component of the Francophone integration pathway.

Questions/comments from participants

One participant wanted to know how an immigrant is identified as French-speaking by the language training program. It was mentioned that this is determined based on the respondent's self-declared language.

One participant pointed out the lack of competent people in the regions to provide language training.

The importance of fostering workplace training was emphasized, as illustrated by an ESDC training program where 95% of the participants were immigrants who were all subsequently placed in a job.

Attention was drawn to the fact that, in FMCs, there is a smaller number of French learners compared to English learners due to the small number of Francophones in the community in general.

One participant noted that newcomers are unlikely to turn to online courses. Since they are unfamiliar with new information technologies, they prefer classroom courses for a variety of reasons.

Moreover, there is a lack of awareness about the availability of online courses, hence the need to promote these courses.

3. Resettlement of Refugees in Francophone Minority Communities
Presented by Elizabeth Orton, Assistant Director, Refugee Affairs Branch, IRCC

Summary

Canada has a long-standing commitment to the protection of refugees: It is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1969 and the Protocol of 1967.

The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* was adopted in 2002. The Act prioritizes protection rather than human capital.

Canada's refugee protection system has two components:
- o Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program (applying outside of Canada)
- o In-Canada Asylum Program (applying within Canada)

Three categories of resettlement:
1) Government-assisted refugees – recommended by UNHCR or another organization
2) Privately sponsored refugees – recommended by private sponsors in Canada
3) Visa office-referred refugees (blended program) - private sponsors and the government jointly provide support for one year (six months each)

Resettlement:
- o Privately sponsored refugees resettle where their sponsors live.
- o For government-assisted refugees, IRCC considers a number of factors in determining their place of residence, including family or friends in Canada, medical needs or other resettlement needs, and the Department's local targets for a uniform distribution.

Discussion questions

At the end of the presentation, participants were invited to discuss in a group the following five questions:
1. *What does it mean to you "to foster the vitality and development of Francophone minority communities"?*
2. *What mechanism(s) should IRCC use to regularly consult Francophone minority communities on resettlement and refugee integration issues?*
3. *Would private sponsorship of refugees in your community generate interest? If so, how could we promote the program in the best possible way and whom should we target it to?*
4. *If IRCC were to fund another RAP Francophone service provider, where should it be and why?*
5. *Does IRCC's current approach to refugee resettlement and integration have an impact on the vitality and development of your community? Explain.*

The outcome of the discussions is summarized as follows:

- FMCs are eager to engage in refugee resettlement.

- Enhancing the vitality of FMCs is not just about increasing the number of Francophone refugees. It is also about investing in human capital (for example, children of refugees who learn French may go into careers in which they can serve the francophone community in the future); increasing the capacity of francophone service providers; building the diversity of FMCs; and building the spirit of openness and inclusion in FMCs.

- There is an interest in adding Francophone organizations to the network of organizations providing Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) services to Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs). The preferred option for participants was to see a RAP Francophone service provider in each province/territory, the second proposed option was to have shared service agreements with existing RAP service providers.

- There is interest in private sponsorship, but there is a need to promote and raise awareness among FMCs.

- All government-assisted refugees, like all newcomers, should be informed about the possibility of integration in French in Canada.

- It was suggested that initiatives be created to increase the number of French-speaking refugees resettled in FMCs.

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4. **Introduction to Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE) System Data**

Presented by Anne Couillard, Assistant Director, Performance Measurement, IRCC

Summary

iCARE is a data collection system used by service providers funded by IRCC to record information on the direct services provided to clients under the Department's settlement and resettlement programs. The data is used for performance measurement, contribution agreement monitoring, research and evaluation, strategic decisions, future funding plans, and more.

iCARE is the main source of data for 36 indicators of the Settlement Program.

The logic model for the IRCC Settlement Program was briefly presented to participants.

Reference was also made to the Government of Canada Open Data Portal, a public site that contains statistical data on immigration and the IRCC Settlement Program.

Questions/comments from participants

With regard to the iCare system, participants noted the importance of having training for respondents (service providers) to ensure that surveys are completed properly so the resulting data is improved.

One participant drew attention to the fact that respondents no longer have access to information once it has been submitted via the iCARE system; they suggested that IRCC address the issue, so that, for example, respondents could compare their data from one year to the next.

With regard to the Government of Canada Open Data Portal, one participant noted the lack of Francophone immigrant information on this Portal.

5. Link the Evaluation with a Strategic Plan for Local Immigration Partnerships

Presented by Kathryn Doiron, Senior Policy Analyst, Settlement and Integration Policy Branch, IRCC

<u>Summary</u>

This presentation sought to provide an update on Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs).

The findings from the Settlement Program's evaluation in 2017 show that, overall, LIPs are working well and are successful at achieving key outcomes.

LIPs, in particular, are successfully meeting the needs for service coordination, information sharing, research on community needs, and community strategic planning with respect to immigrant integration.

However, the evaluation highlighted areas for improvement, namely, performance measurement and implementation of action plans, due to lack of funding and the difficulties in accessing funds.

Work is underway to develop a strategic plan that will address the issues highlighted by the evaluation.