

Results at a Glance

Evaluation of the Diversified Accommodations Program



Objective and Scope

Consistent with the requirements of the *Treasury Board Policy on Results* (2016) and associated directive, this evaluation examines the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of Parks Canada's Diversified Accommodations Program (the Program). The evaluation was guided by the following questions:

Relevance

- To what extent did the Program align with Parks Canada's priorities?
- How did the Program respond to the needs of Canadians?

Effectiveness

- To what extent did the Program meet its intended objectives?
- What kind of supports did field units receive in implementing the program?

Efficiency

- To what extent was the program efficiently delivered?

Key Findings

Relevance

Document reviews, interviews, and site visits confirmed the Program's relevance to Parks Canada, aligning with priorities like attracting new audiences, accessibility, and sustainability. These three priorities were reflected in the Program Guidelines (2011) through the principles that guided program implementation. In addition, attracting new audiences aligned with Parks Canada's On Target Strategies (2011 & 2019-20 to 2022-23), which emphasised investing in visitor infrastructure for the purpose of attracting new visitors.

The Program's relevance to visitors was demonstrated by aligning with national and international trends in camping by offering roofed accommodation options (oTENTik, Ôasis, MicrOcube) similar to those in parks in other provinces and territories. Further, occupancy data reflected a rising demand for units from 48% (2018-19) to 72% (2023-24).

Effectiveness

An assessment of effectiveness centered on several principles outlined in the Program Guidelines, including environmental impact reduction work and accessibility. The effectiveness of support provided to field units by the Program was also explored.

Environmental impact reduction: Parks Canada's environmental impact assessment policies ensured that the appropriate processes were employed to determine the feasibility of unit installation and to implement effective environmental mitigation measures.

Many units remain in good condition and with ongoing maintenance, interviewees felt that their lifespan could be extended further. Structurally reinforced units—like those with plywood under tarp roofs or mounted on stilts—performed well in challenging climates. However, units exposed to harsher weather or placed near damaging elements like the ocean suffered more damage, resulting in some units being decommissioned.

Accessibility: National parks made efforts to provide accessibility features for diversified accommodations, such as accessible ramps, widened

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Diversified Accommodations Program was created in 2011 to help respond to a decline in camping in the early 2000s as well as international trends towards more services and comfort at camping sites.

The Visitor Experience Infrastructure - Camping and Accommodations team delivered funding for the development and implementation of roofed accommodation structures between 2013 and 2020. The oTENTik unit was introduced in 2013 and two additional types were introduced in 2017: the MicrOcube and Ôasis.

Overall, the Fund provided approximately \$15 million to field units for the construction and installation of diversified accommodation units. During that time, 470 units were installed in 38 different locations, the majority of which were oTENTiks (428).

doorways, and raised tables for wheelchair users. There is some opportunity to increase efforts to ensure all accessibility features are clearly communicated to visitors.

Program support: Overall, interviewees and site visit staff were satisfied with the level of support provided by the Program team. Some field units may have benefitted from further support and expertise in the initial estimation of life-cycle costs, including ongoing maintenance and repair, as well as the potential for revenue generation at their sites.

Efficiency

Program efficiency was explored through the clarifying of roles and responsibilities and the implementation of the cost-recovery model. It was found that with the recent creation of the Real Property and Assets Directorate (2023), increased communication to field units on their role and expertise would enhance opportunities for internal efficiencies.

The average revenue was calculated by unit from 2018-19 to 2023-24 and found that diversified accommodation units generated approximately \$9,000 of revenue/unit, while campsites generated \$2,800 of revenue/unit. With diversified accommodations units representing 13% of revenue but only 4% of inventory, diversified accommodations units represent a higher proportion of the revenue relative to the percentage of inventory.

Though the revenue numbers provide evidence supporting the potential cost-recovery of the Program, barriers to determining accurate operational costs meant that it was not possible to determine whether the Program successfully implemented a cost-recovery model. Further exploration of operational and capital costs will be needed to determine an accurate assessment of cost-recovery for the Program.

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Recommendations	Management Responses
<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>To further support field units in the management of diversified accommodations, the Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, in collaboration with the Vice-President, Real Property and Assets, should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Define and communicate the roles and responsibilities of the Real Property and Assets Directorate related to diversified accommodations; and2. Develop guidance on structural assessment data entry into Maximo to assist lifecycle planning of diversified accommodation units.	<p>Agree. The Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, will collaborate with the Vice-President, Real Property and Assets, to clarify and communicate the roles and responsibilities of the Real Property and Assets Directorate regarding diversified accommodations. This collaboration will aim to improve operational clarity and support for field units.</p> <p>In addition, the Vice-President, Real Property and Assets, will lead the development of national guidance for the consistent collection and formatting of structural assessment data into Maximo, in collaboration with the Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience. This initiative aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of asset conditions, thereby supporting more effective lifecycle planning for diversified accommodation units.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>To enhance visitor experience, meet Parks Canada’s accessibility commitments, and support strategic decision-making on future investments the Vice-President, Real Property and Assets Directorate, the Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, and the Senior Vice-President, Operations, should collaborate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop and implement a standardized data entry process for accessibility features of all diversified accommodation units;2. Ensure that accessibility features for diversified accommodation units are clearly and consistently communicated to the public; and3. Develop a set of accessibility requirements for diversified accommodation units to support strategic investments into unit upgrades.	<p>Agree. The Vice-President, Real Property and Assets, in collaboration with the Senior Vice-President, Operations, and the Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, will lead the development of an inventory of accessibility features available across all diversified accommodation units and develop a set of accessibility requirements for diversified accommodations.</p> <p>In parallel, and in collaboration with the Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, the Senior Vice-President, Operations, will ensure that all field units clearly and consistently communicate to visitors the accessibility features of diversified accommodations and associated infrastructure.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>With the goal of efficiently managing Parks Canada’s assets and to assist financial decision-making, the Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, should collaborate with the Vice-President, Real Property and Assets, and the Senior Vice-President, Operations, to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Conduct a cost-recovery assessment of diversified accommodations, taking into consideration variations in cost and revenue at the individual site level; and2. Develop a plan to prolong the lifespan of existing units and for decommissioning units in poor condition, where necessary.	<p>Agree. The Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, will lead the cost-recovery assessment of diversified accommodations in collaboration with the Vice-President, Finance, and in consultation with the Vice-President, Real Property and Assets, and the Senior Vice-President, Operations.</p> <p>In parallel, the Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, will work jointly with the Vice-President, Real Property and Assets, in collaboration with the Senior Vice-President, Operations, to develop guidance to extend the useful life of existing diversified accommodation units and to identify units for decommissioning where appropriate.</p>

