

**REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE
STUDENT INVESTMENT AND
OPPORTUNITY CORPORATION**

Volume I of II

Findings, Recommendations and Summary Analysis

Prepared by Hollett and Sons Inc.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| CEYS | Career Employment Youth Services Division (HRLE) |
| CNA | College of the North Atlantic |
| CSO | Client Services Officer |
| CYN | Community Youth Network |
| FG | Focus Group |
| GEP | Graduate Employment Program |
| HRLE | Provincial Department of Human Resources Labour and Employment |
| IS | Income Support |
| MUN | Memorial University |
| NL | Newfoundland and Labrador |
| SEP | Student Employment Program (Levels I, II, III) |
| SIOC | Student Investment and Opportunity Corporation |
| SWASP | Student Work and Service Program |
| TWEP | Tutoring Work Experience Program |
| WHSCC | Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission |

Readers Note

Although the information in this report has been obtained from sources that Hollett & Sons Inc. believes to be reliable, its accuracy and completeness cannot be guaranteed. This report is based on focus groups, interviews, telephone and online surveys, document review, and secondary research conducted between December 2007 and March 2008.

This report is for information purposes only. All opinions included in this report constitute the views of the consultants upon consideration of the primary and secondary research combined with our judgment as of this date and are subject to revision.

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Executive Summary

In November 2007 the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (HRLE) issued a request for proposals to seek an external consultant to evaluate a suite of Student Investment and Opportunity Corporation (SIOC) programs over the last 3-4 years. These programs have many intended results and the evaluation was to determine whether the desired results were attained, whether there are changes to be made and to determine whether the programming fits the current priorities of government.

HRLE offers programming aimed at supporting Newfoundland and Labrador youth through post-secondary and employment opportunities. The Department is also focused on offering youth an alternative to income support and decreasing the number of new income support entrants through its programming.

The SIOC came into operation under the Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education (YSPSE) in 2001 and subsequently moved to HRLE in 2004 when the Youth Services Branch of YSPSE was moved to HRLE. Since being moved to HRLE there has been an increased emphasis on serving at-risk youth through existing and new SIOC programs..

The summative evaluation was conducted between November 17, 2007 and March 31, 2008. Data was gathered through focus groups, telephone surveys, interviews, document review, and best practice review. Feedback was sought from past participants, employers, and internal and external stakeholders. Considerable effort was put into the analysis and writing of the evaluation report, requiring more time than anticipated to complete this final report.

Overall, the findings of the evaluation are very positive. These programs have largely fulfilled their stated goals. Participants and employers agree the programs are worthwhile and have had positive impacts by providing work experience and financial support to young people in this province.

Areas identified as being in need of improvement are those related to updating the programs and bringing them in line with the current context in which they are operating. There's also a need to refocus these programs specifically on the needs of students and youth along with business and employers to ensure their needs are being met.

The data collected over the course of the evaluation supports the following recommendations.

1.1. Recommendations Related to Future Evaluations

***Recommendation 1.** To enhance future and ongoing evaluations, the following changes should be made to all programs, particularly the SWASP and the GEP:*

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- a. Exit surveys should be administered to all future participants and employers of the programs for future analysis. Ideally this would be done online to facilitate data analysis, but may also be done in a paper format and sent back to the department when an online format is not possible or feasible.
- b. Each proponent and potential employee that signs on for the program should continue to be required to provide permission that their data may be used for evaluation purposes.
- c. HRLE should add evaluation participation as a requirement for all future employers and participants that sign on for the programs.
- d. Logic models¹ should be developed for all existing programs in order to more clearly determine the exact goals of each program.
- e. Logic models should be one of the bases of program development in the future.

Recommendation 2. *Many new research avenues exist that can offer further insight into the success and needs of the programs. For example, it would be useful to compare the GTEP, GEI and the GEP programs in terms of employment rates and speed of services.*

Recommendation 3. *There should be continual research by HRLE to review and research the results of all of the programs under the SIOC, thereby providing ongoing information to the department regarding their Return On Investment (ROI).*

Related to SWASP-Paid

Recommendation 4. *The SWASP-Paid program needs more extensive promotion – what it is, who can use it, and how to find out more information. The two main means of promotion should be: a) a comprehensive and detailed brochure mailed to every employer in the province (perhaps through WHSCC), and b) a dynamic and comprehensive web site that is user friendly and provides comprehensive details on this and other programs available to employers – the conditions, eligibility, application deadlines, etc. All application, payment and reporting forms should also be online. This website should be heavily promoted through industry and employer associations. The current use of LMI Works effectively buries the information on wage subsidies; this information needs to be more readily available.*

Recommendation 5. *Students should be made aware of the summer employment positions available to them. A mirror website to the employer one as proposed in recommendation 4*

¹ A roadmap or a diagram showing chain results connecting activities to the expected initial outputs, and intermediate and final outcomes. It provides a basis for developing the performance measurement and evaluation strategies. (Source: *Human Resources and Skills Development Canada*)

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would provide students with all the information they need to know regarding the different types of provincially subsidized employment programs, how they may be eligible for them, and what to expect from them. This website should be promoted through schools, universities, and public and private colleges.

Recommendation 6. When a participant is enrolled in SWASP-Paid (as well as other programs), a letter should be mailed to each participant enrolled that clearly delineates their “rights and obligations”, as well as contact information for HRLE should they have questions about the program.

Recommendation 7. There should be a contact person within HRLE that participants and employers can call to discuss any issues regarding the SWASP-Paid (or other) placement.

Recommendation 8. All application, payment and reporting forms should be available online for SWASP-Paid and all other programs, and proponents should be able to email the forms back to HRLE to increase the efficiency of processing.

Recommendation 9. HRLE should re-examine how quickly approvals are granted and when this information is communicated to proponents. Ideally, such information should be communicated in April for SWASP-Paid.

Recommendation 10. HRLE should review the funding allocation process and previous records of extensions to determine if it is feasible to allocate more weeks in the initial offer to a SWASP-Paid sponsor.

Recommendation 11. There should be a training allowance of \$200 for every SWASP-Paid employee. This increases the value of the experience to the employee, provides the employee with greater skills (also a benefit to the employer), and instills in post-secondary students the importance of training and continual learning in the employment world.

Recommendation 12. HRLE should review how it “checks in” with students and employers for SWASP-Paid placements. Ideally, there should be at least one contact during the placement.

Recommendation 13. HRLE should strongly encourage employers to have more detailed placement descriptions to help potential candidates better assess how the placement relates to their career goals.

Recommendation 14. The SWASP-Paid should be changed to an internship, with the focus more clearly concentrated on creating meaningful career-related employment for students. There are two reasons for this. First, the original reason for the program’s existence is no longer as valid – whereas the program was created to provide work for students who could not find it elsewhere, in the current labour market the challenge in some regions is that there are

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sometimes not enough students to fill placements. Second, if government's goal is that these programs are to help students see the benefit of working and living in this province, then it stands to reason that more focused and rewarding employment will result in students more readily seeing the possibilities for making a rewarding living in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Recommendation 15. *It should be clearly communicated that tuition vouchers can still be used after the standard 24 month period. There is a process allowing the student to either pay it on their student debt or use it for other education-related expenses if the voucher cannot be used for tuition, but this is not well known.*

Recommendation 16. *Post-secondary (PS) students should receive a higher salary than high school (HS) students. For example, if HS students receive minimum wage, then PS students should receive minimum wage plus \$1.*

1.2. Recommendations Related to Student Employment Program (Levels I, II, III)

Recommendation 17. *The SEP program needs more widespread promotion – what it is, who can use it, and how to find out more. (Details are similar to the SWASP-Paid program discussed above; see Recommendations 1 and 2.)*

Recommendation 18. *HRLE needs to re-examine its approval process with regard to how quickly approvals are granted and when this information is communicated to proponents. Ideally, such information should be communicated in May for SEP.*

Recommendation 19. *There should be a training allowance of \$100 for every SEP employee. This increases the value of the experience to the employee, provides the employee with greater skills (also a benefit to the employer), and instills in high school students the importance of training and continual learning in the employment world.*

Recommendation 20. *While there is less focus on HS employment to be directly career-related, it is still important that these positions have clearly defined duties and be well supervised so that the students develop an understanding of good working relationships, communication skills, and other employment-related skills. To accomplish this, HRLE should continue SEP, but more closely scrutinize the work placements proposed for it – i.e., proponents should demonstrate that they can provide students with meaningful work and effective supervision.*

1.3. Recommendations Related to SWASP Variations

Recommendation 21. *All partners should receive administrative funding in addition to program funding.*

Recommendation 22. *HRLE should consider entering block funding arrangements with MUN (as well as CNA) so they can allocate the funding to different programs as demand dictates. For example, if there were more demand for SWASP PACEE and less for GEP, then they would be able to move funds around internally to meet those needs.*

Recommendation 23. *In order to increase the efficiency of reporting, Memorial should be allowed to submit reports on a semester basis and a method for exchanging reports electronically should be developed.*

Recommendation 24. *Discussions should be held with stakeholders of the SWASP-CSC, MUN and CNA programs to consider no longer using the stipend. In participant focus groups in particular, stipends were characterized as only addressing the needs of students living at home with minimal expenses and were barriers for students who paid rent or had significant travel expenses.*

1.4. Recommendations Related to Graduate Employment Program

Recommendation 25. *The GEP program needs more widespread promotion – what it is, who can use it, and how to find out more. (Details are similar to the SWASP program discussed above; see Recommendations 4 and 17.)*

Recommendation 26. *HRLE should implement more frequent check-ins for each GEP placement.*

Recommendation 27. *The GEP is highly successful and, with a few exceptions (see following), should continue its basic operation essentially as is.*

Recommendation 28. *There should be a training allowance of \$500 for every GEP employee. This increases the value of the experience to the employee, provides the employee with greater skills (also a benefit to the employer), and instills in graduates the importance of training and continual learning in the employment world.*

Recommendation 29. *The GEP subsidy should increase from \$10,000 per year to \$15,000 per year, or 60% of actual wages, as this program subsidy has not increased in 20 years.*

Recommendation 30. *There should be a completion bonus for GEP participants who stay for the full length of the placement that is in the range of \$2,500 and is paid in cash. This would be*

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a financial incentive to the graduate to stay for the duration of the placement. GEP employers would be urged to match or provide some additional portion of the completion bonus.

Recommendation 31. *GEP employers should be required to increase their percentage contribution to the salary. Currently employers have to pay a minimum of 40% of salary.*

Recommendation 32. *HRLE should be able to enter multi-year funding contracts with organizations interested in long-term participation in the GEP program and its variants. (This should apply to third-party contracts only, not to individual employment contracts.)*

1.5. Recommendations Related to Faculty-focused Education and Work Experience Programs

Recommendation 33. *Discussions among the stakeholders of the Rural Practice program of the Faculty of Education and the Rural Physician program of the Faculty of Medicine should be expanded to other professional disciplines for careers that have a shortage in rural areas – nursing, lab technology, etc. These programs should be made available to students at colleges and universities outside of Newfoundland and Labrador as well.*

1.6. Recommendations Related to Relationships with Youth Serving Organizations

Recommendation 34. *There are many groups that work with youth at risk. Some of them currently offer employment assistance programs (FINALY and St. Francis Foundation, for example). These are successful programs that are tailored to their target population. Government should each year have a call for proposals to youth-serving agencies for innovative transitions to employment and/or education programs. This would make the process more transparent to all such groups and would enable HRLE to set out its goals for such pilots. The pilots should be evaluated each year with a possibility of renewal for 3 years.*

Recommendation 35. *Once these pilots have been in place for 3 years, they should be fully evaluated and either made a program of HRLE or discontinued, as it is an unnecessary strain on an organization to constantly be applying for funding.*

Recommendation 36. *All programs operated by external agencies and funded by HRLE should be regularly evaluated and the results of the evaluation made available to HRLE for input into subsequent project design and delivery.*

1.7. Recommendations Related to Efficacy for Income Support Recipients

Recommendation 37. *The SEP is perhaps the best time to intervene with young people with an attachment to IS. HRLE should continue to aggressively promote work opportunities to these individuals. As well pre-interview training/counseling/role-playing is important to develop their skills for interviews and employability skills. This support should continue throughout their placement (see following recommendation).*

Recommendation 38. *HRLE should consider hiring summer mentors who keep in touch with and support any SEP employees with attachment to IS. The mentors would offer advice, guidance, and encouragement, demonstrating that it is possible for such students to become unattached from IS. Ideally these mentors would have been formerly attached to IS.*

Recommendation 39. *All SIOC application forms should ask about child care, transportation, and other employment readiness needs so that participants can be matched with programs able to meet those needs.*

Recommendation 40. *HRLE should ensure supports for employers who are hiring IS attached individuals through any SIOC program are well known*

2. Introduction

In November 2007 the Provincial Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment Relations (HRLE) issued a request for proposals to seek an external consultant to evaluate a suite of Student Investment and Opportunity Corporation (SIOC) programs over the last 3-4 years. These programs have many intended results and the evaluation was to determine whether the desired results were attained, whether there are changes to be made, and whether the programs fit the current priorities of government.

HRLE offers programming aimed at supporting youth through post-secondary and employment opportunities. The department is also focused on offering youth an alternative to income support (IS) and decreasing the number of new IS entrants through its programming.

The SIOC came into operation under the Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education (YSPSE) in 2001 and subsequently moved to HRLE in 2004 when the Youth Services Branch of YSPSE was moved to HRLE. This summative evaluation was conducted between November 17, 2007 and March 31, 2008. The first section of the report details the methods used over the course of the evaluation. The second section outlines the context in which the programs operate, including relevant factors in the current social and economic climate and the priorities of the current provincial government. Following information on the provincial context is a review of best practices identified in other jurisdictions, nationally and internationally.

The evaluation findings are then presented by program with an emphasis on the two main programs of the SIOC, SWASP and GEP. The report concludes with a set of recommendations.

Also part of this report is a second volume of appendices. The appendices include the detailed evaluation goals, a list of the programs included in the evaluation, the complete best practices review report and associated annotated bibliography, complete focus group and survey data sets, research instruments and a document source list.

3. Methods

3.1. Focus Groups

Focus groups were used extensively in this evaluation as a mechanism to gather groups of people together who had similar experiences (i.e., they were all participants, all employers, etc.) and to facilitate discussion among them about the programs.

Original Plan

The original plan was to conduct focus groups (FGs) of employers and participants for the SWASP and GEP programs as well as for non-participants, and to have the FGs separated by program (so that only SWASP participants or GEP employers, for example, would be in the same group). The original plan also targeted rural and urban areas for the FGs.

Actual Research

Employers

Enticing people to participate in FGs is notoriously difficult. When the evaluators began to set up the FGs for the rural areas, there were very few employers who would participate – they were too busy, unavailable, or simply not interested. The evaluators scheduled the FGs at a convenient site and time and offered refreshments, but they were still refused. It quickly became evident that employers outside of the larger areas (i.e. St. John's and Corner Brook) could not come together in great enough numbers (4+) to conduct focus groups.

It was decided that a change in approach was required. It was agreed with HRLE that for the areas outside of St. John's and Corner Brook, the focus group approach would be set aside in favour of in-depth telephone interviews, 8 per site, for a total of 56 interviews. These sites were:

1. Clarenville
2. Gander
3. Grand Falls-Windsor
4. Marystown
5. Port aux Basques
6. Happy Valley-Goose Bay
7. Carbonear

The benefit of this approach is that the evaluators were able to contact employers from a broader geographic area in this in-depth manner.

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Four employer FGs were held in both Corner Brook and St. John's. These were mixed by program as employers' schedules did not permit program specific FGs. The evaluators also offered a \$50 enticement and refreshments to further attract employers to these FGs.

Participants

Because most of the participants for which the evaluators had contact information were SWASP-Paid, the majority of these were at school in another jurisdiction (university or college) during the FG time frame and were unable to attend FGs in their home area (defined as the area for which the evaluators had contact information). GEP participants were also concentrated in the urban areas. In order to find SWASP-Paid students the evaluators decided to pursue them through their educational institutions. The evaluators posted colourful flyers with tear away contact info slips throughout campuses in St. John's and Corner Brook, such as MUN, College of the North Atlantic, Academy Canada, and Keyin College. These flyers invited SWASP participants to share their opinions on the programs with the evaluators; in return they would be paid \$50 and provided with refreshments. This proved successful and 9 participant FGs were conducted (3 in Corner Brook and 6 in St. John's). They were all mixed programs except for one, which was comprised of only GEP participants.

It was also anticipated that a special focus group concentrating on the participants with the St. Francis Foundation would yield enlightening information about their programs. Upon discussing this with the program's executive director, it was decided that this should not be pursued at this time as HRLE provides funding for only one day a week, and it would not be easy to separate the funding and benefits for that day from that of the rest.

Non-participants

A list of people who had been eligible for the SWASP and other HRLE programs but did not avail of them was also provided to the evaluators. These people were scheduled for 2 FGs on March 13, 2008 - both of which were cancelled due to weather. As there was no remaining time to re-schedule, the participants were called to do a telephone interview. If they participated in the interview, they were reimbursed with the \$50 they had been originally offered to participate in the FG.

3.2. Surveys

The purpose of the surveys was to gain quantitative information about participants' and employers' experience with the SWASP (paid and other variants), Student Employment Program and Graduate Employment Program.

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Original Plan

The plan put forward by the evaluators in the accepted proposal was an online survey supplemented by a limited amount of telephone surveying. The evaluators later learned that email contact information was not available and surveys would have to be conducted via telephone. There were also considerably more (approximately twice as many) participants and employers to be surveyed than originally thought. The intent was to have statistically significant results within a reasonable level of confidence.

Actual Research

It was agreed that, with an increase in resources from HRLE, a full telephone survey would be conducted by two external firms (one to survey participants and one to survey employers). This was managed by the evaluators.

The small populations of the program groups make it virtually impossible to get a statistically representative sample with a 5% margin of error (confidence interval). As an example, there are 300 GEP employers (approximately). A statistically significant sample with a 5% confidence interval and a 95% confidence level (accurate 19 times out of 20) would mean successfully surveying 172 of them (even though HRLE originally requested 100). The attempt was made to survey 172, but we were unable to accomplish that.

There was also an online link to the participant survey so that if participants wanted to complete it online instead of over the phone then they would have that option. Virtually no one took advantage of this.

There were many challenges around survey completions, particularly with participants. PS students were mostly away at school while the contact information provided for them was at home. Although some parents were comfortable forwarding contact information, most were reluctant to do so to an unknown surveying firm. Much of the GEP participants' contact information was deemed "not in service", even though the list was only one year old.

For the employers, the database was classified as urban or rural. The rural quota was established as at least 30% of the sample across all three programs, and at least 50% of the sample was urban.

3.3. Stakeholder Interviews

3.3.1. External

Stakeholder interviews were in-depth interviews (up to one hour in length either via telephone or in person) with program stakeholders. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into the operation and administration of the programs. The program stakeholders were selected by

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HRLE and were the key contact between HRLE and the program. For many of the programs, these were the only contact the evaluators had. HRLE was to write each stakeholder in advance to ensure they knew about the evaluation. The evaluators could not proceed to the interview stage until this letter was received.

A list of 38 external stakeholders was given to the consultants, representing 22 different programs.

Original Plan

The original intent was to interview at least one representative from each program.

Actual Research

At least one representative from each program was interviewed, with one exception .

The letter from the department was received by stakeholders in mid-March, resulting in a compressed interview time frame. During this period eastern Newfoundland and Labrador also had three blizzards, forcing many of the interviews to be rescheduled.

TWEP and CYN program people were all asked to do an online survey while the program heads of TWEP and CYN were interviewed by the evaluators. In addition, there was a focus group of CYN co-ordinators. Only 2 individuals responded to the TWEP survey, and therefore this data was not analyzed. Seven individuals responded to the CYN survey; analysis of this data is included in this report.

3.3.2. Internal *Original Plan*

Initially, internal interviews for the programs were not part of the evaluation plan.

Actual Research

A list of 18 Career and Youth Employment Services (CEYS) individuals was given to the evaluators, of whom they agreed to interview 11 (2 from each region except the Avalon, where 3 were interviewed due to the larger population of the region). 9 interviews were ultimately completed.

3.4. Interviews from other Jurisdictions

HRLE provided several names of individuals in other jurisdictions for the evaluators to interview. Two of these were in program areas relevant to the evaluation; the evaluators tried to contact them but their messages were not returned.

3.5. Best Practices Literature Review

The Best Practices Literature Review is intended to review the literature on the subject of successful youth and student employment programs, looking in particular at application to IS clients.

The literature review of other jurisdictions was based upon published articles, internet information and conference proceedings to ascertain best practices in the field. It was completed as planned.

3.6. Participant Profiles

The Participant Profiles are intended to provide a statistical profile of the participants for which we have data. These are developed from statistical data that we have on the GEP and SWASP participants who had placements managed by the Department rather than an educational institution or community group.

3.7. Case Studies

The purpose of the perspectives is to provide some snapshots of people who have been successful and unsuccessful with some of the programs. They were selected through the FG process, as well as interviews when the evaluators felt an individual's story was compelling. The case studies are found in the appendix.

3.8. Potential Biases

In examining the findings of the evaluation some limitations of the data must be considered and there are a number of biases that may have affected the outcomes. These are outlined below.

3.8.1. Participants

- *Relatively small sample size*

The small population made it difficult to achieve a statistically significant sample. It is not possible then to generalize from the findings to the population in general.

- *Focus group recruitment method*

Focus group participants were recruited through posters placed around university and college campuses. Students were asked to call and then given the time and location of a focus group. Because this method relied on the initiative of the participants, it is likely that those who attended may have felt strongly one way or another about the program. Their responses may then represent the two ends of the spectrum of opinion. It is also

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possible that those who attended were encouraged by the \$50 honorarium and represented a group with higher financial need.

- *Students in Newfoundland and Labrador*

The significant majority of participants involved in the evaluation were those attending college or university in NL. With regard to questions about recruitment and retention in the province, it may be that the sample is one that is already predisposed to stay in the province. A group of students from NL attending school in other provinces may have had different opinions about the programs and their relevance to recruitment and retention.

- *Lack of understanding of the program*

Due to the wide variety of student employment programs offered by the provincial and federal governments and other youth-serving agencies, there is a significant amount of confusion among students about the programs available. This lack of awareness regarding the goals and rules of the various programs and the distinctions between them may have resulted in participants making comments directed at programs outside of the scope of the evaluation.

3.8.2. Employers

- *Relatively small sample size*

The small population made it difficult to achieve a statistically significant sample. It is not possible then to generalize from the findings to the population in general.

- *Focus group recruitment method*

Focus group participants were recruited through phone calls. Employers were called and asked to participate. Because this method relied on the willingness of the employers to attend, it is likely that those who attended may have felt strongly one way or another about the program. Their responses may then represent the two ends of the spectrum of opinion.

- *Participation in multiple government programs*

Due to the wide variety of student employment programs offered by the provincial and federal governments and other agencies there is a significant amount of confusion among employers about the programs available. This lack of awareness regarding the goals and rules of the various programs and the distinctions between them may have resulted in employers making comments directed at programs outside of the scope of the evaluation.

3.8.3. Non-Participants

- *Very small sample size*

The small population made it difficult to achieve a statistically significant sample. It is not possible then to generalize from the findings to the population in general.

- *Focus group cancellation*

Due to weather conditions, the non-participant focus groups were cancelled. Instead, focus group participants were contacted by phone and asked to answer questions for the evaluation. It was challenging to reach non-participants, which reduced the total number of non-participants involved in the evaluation and may have limited the scope of their responses.

- *Lack of understanding of the program*

Due to the wide variety of student employment programs offered by the provincial and federal governments and other youth-serving agencies, there is a significant amount of confusion among youth about the programs available. Most non-participants were unfamiliar with the programs in question and their comments were more general in scope.

While these factors should all be taken into consideration when reviewing the data, they are not considered to bias the data so strongly as to negate the results.

In order to enhance future evaluations, the following recommendation is made.

Recommendation 1. *To enhance future and ongoing evaluations, the following changes should be made to all programs, particularly the SWASP and the GEP:*

- a. Exit surveys should be administered to all future participants and employers of the programs for future analysis. Ideally this would be done online to facilitate data analysis, but may also be done in a paper format and sent back to the department when an online format is not possible or feasible.*
- b. Each proponent and potential employee that signs on for the program should continue to be required to provide permission that their data may be used for evaluation purposes.*
- c. HRLE should add evaluation participation as a requirement for all future employers and participants that sign on for the programs.*

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d. Logic models² should be developed for all existing programs in order to more clearly determine the exact goals of each program.

e. Logic models should be one of the bases of program development in the future.

Recommendation 2. *Many avenues of new research exist that can offer further insight into the success and needs of the programs. For example, it would be useful to compare the GTEP, GEI and the GEP programs in terms of employment rates and speed of services.*

Recommendation 3. *There should be continual research by HRLE to review and research the results of all of the programs under the SIOC, thereby providing ongoing information to the department regarding their Return on Investment (ROI).*

² A roadmap or a diagram showing chain results connecting activities to the expected initial outputs, and intermediate and final outcomes. It provides a basis for developing the performance measurement and evaluation strategies. (Source: *Human Resources and Skills Development Canada*)

4. Program Context – Recent Labour Market Changes

While the programs grouped under the SIOC have a significant history in the province, the context in which they operate has changed dramatically over the past five to ten years. Some of the key changes relevant to this evaluation are summarized below. These changes were raised by employers, stakeholders and participants throughout the evaluation.

- Changes in the labour market
 - Growing divide between rural and urban labour markets
 - Demand for labour is greater than supply
 - Employers must be more flexible to get staff – need to become employer of choice
 - More pressure to get able-bodied IS people to become active in the work force

- Experiences of youth
 - Going to Alberta is a real option for youth because of established networks and higher pay
 - Pervasive attitude that staying in NL is not an option or requires sacrifices
 - Perception that there are no "good" jobs in NL
 - Young graduates are being recruited through incentive packages by employers in other provinces and countries
 - Starting salaries for graduates are often insufficient to live on while also paying off student debt
 - Young people feel they lack information about financial issues and opportunities for training and career development

- Experiences of employers
 - Used to have significantly more applications than positions and now positions are left unfilled
 - Need to compete with other businesses for employees
 - Change in employees' expectations
 - Need for increased HR capacity to develop recruitment and retention strategies

It is important to point to these changes for the purpose of this evaluation, as the programs being evaluated must be capable of meeting established goals in this new environment.

5. Best Practices from Other Jurisdictions

There is an existing body of research related to the effectiveness of various programs and policy approaches for assisting young people in the transition from school to work. While it is important to note that wider social and economic conditions have a significant influence on the effectiveness of any given approach, there are some key features of effective programs that can be used to guide ongoing program delivery and development.

Based on the literature review included in the appendix, there are key characteristics that are expected of successful programs. The following is a summary of these best practices:

- *Strong links between education and employers.* Successful programs would be expected to combine classroom learning with on-the-job training.
- *Focus on skills in demand.* In order to ensure success, supply-side investments should be aimed at addressing skills shortages identified through up-to-date labour market information.
- *Multiple pathways through education into employment.* Successful school-to-work transitions require multiple methods to accommodate the broad range of needs of individuals; these would include opportunities for experiential learning (where classroom based education is unsuccessful), and “second chance” programs to allow individuals to upgrade their education.
- *Integrated packages of services developed to meet the needs of individuals across the course of life.* Greater coordination of services across government departments and agencies should allow individuals to access all the varied services and supports they may need to successfully make the transition from school to work.
- *Target programs to those most at risk.* Programs have been shown to have the greatest impact on those most at risk, making a targeted approach the most cost-effective.
- *Incentives for employers.* These should help to offset the cost of on-the-job training, time spent mentoring new employees, and lower productivity during the training period.
- *High quality work experience.* In order to promote successful school-to-work transitions, emphasis should be placed on providing opportunities for quality, career-related work experience.

6. Overall Goals of Government and HRLE

6.1. Blueprint 2007

The government has committed to:

- Develop a comprehensive strategy to **encourage our youth to stay in our province**
- Continue to work with IS clients, low-income earners and others to **promote labour force attachment** in effective and innovative ways
- Continue to **invest in adult basic education and lifelong learning initiatives** to provide people with the tools they need to expand their opportunities for career advancement, income enhancement and greater self-reliance

6.2. Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment – Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (HRLE) is to support human resource development through providing:

- Income and employment support;
- Youth support;
- Emergency social services; and
- Policy and information services for labour market development and immigration.

6.3. Employment and Youth Services

The department provides employment and youth services to individuals and groups that meet designated criteria. More specifically, the department provides:

- Assistance to acquire the necessary skills and experience to prepare for, find and keep employment, including self-employment;
- Career counseling services;
- Financial assistance to employers offering on-the-job training and experience;
- Grants to community agencies offering employment services;
- Additional support to persons with disabilities to prepare for, find and keep employment, including self-employment, and accommodation of their unique circumstances;
- Youth employment initiatives, including tuition vouchers and wage subsidies; and
- Support for youth leadership, including awards programs, grants to organizations, and the provincial Youth Advisory Committee.

7. Evaluated Program Findings

This evaluation extensively researched four programs, Student Work And Service Program – Paid Employment (SWASP - Paid) and Community Service Council (SWASP – CSC) variants, Student Employment Program (Level I,II,III) (SEP) and Graduate Employment Program (GEP), which involve the most employers and clients. The remainder of the programs researched are included here, but do not include the same depth or scope of information.

8. Student Employment Programs

The programs discussed in this section include SWASP–Paid and SWASP-CSC and the SEP for high school students (SEP). Other variations on the SWASP program will be discussed in the following section.

8.1. SWASP

8.1.1. Student Work and Service Program

This program is designed to provide students with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience that can facilitate future labour market participation. There are many program variations of SWASP. The two largest components are discussed in this section — the remainder are discussed in Section 9.

8.1.2. Paid Employment

Under the Paid Employment component of SWASP, a wage subsidy of \$3.50 per hour is provided to employers (both private and not-for-profit) to hire students who intend to start or continue post-secondary studies. In addition to the wage subsidy, the government provides a \$50 weekly tuition voucher to the student. This is administered by HRLE.

8.1.3. Community Service

Through this program, persons entering or returning to post-secondary education within the next year earn a tuition voucher of \$1,400 by performing 35 hours per week of service activity with a not-for-profit organization for an eight-week period. The participants also receive a \$75 per week cash stipend to offset out-of-pocket expenses. This program is administered by the Community Services Council. The program is jointly funded by Service Canada and HRLE. \$70,000 of this program is administered by the Community Youth Network. The objectives of the Community Service component of SWASP are to:

- Provide career-related experience for students attending post-secondary institutions in the coming academic year;
- Facilitate the development of transferable work-related skills;

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- Help reduce student debt load through the issuance of tuition vouchers redeemable at any recognized post-secondary institution;
- Encourage students to pursue a post-secondary education;
- Help students develop employment networks in the non-profit sector;
- Meet some of the broader needs of the community through well-planned student placements in the non-profit sector; and
- Assist sponsoring organizations in meeting their objectives.

8.2. Participant Profile – SWASP - Paid

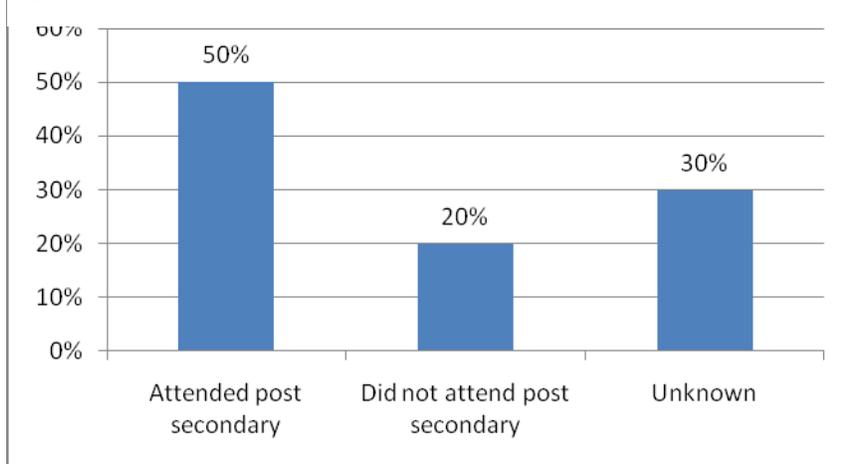
Based on program data from 2007, 63% of SWASP participants were female and 37% were male. The average age of participants was 21 with 88% of participants between the ages of 17

and 23. Less than 1% of participants were persons with a disability.

The majority of participants reported their marital status as single (73%) and had no dependents (65%).

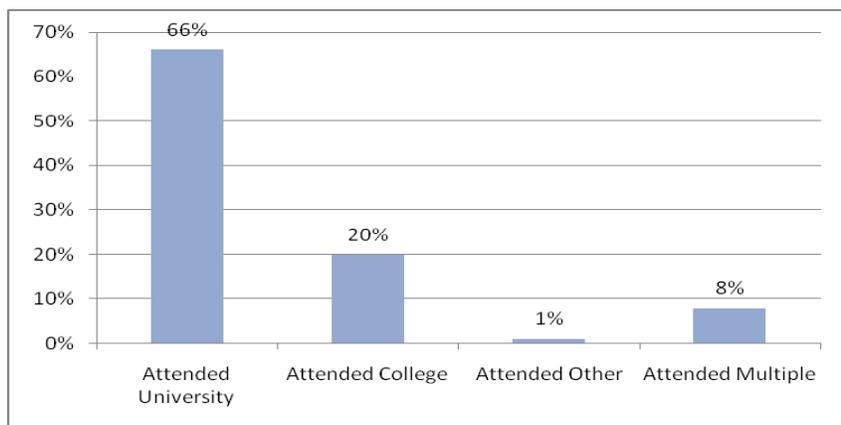
50% of participants had gone on to some post-secondary education. 20% had no post-secondary and the education level was unknown for 30%.

Figure 1 Rate of post-secondary attendance



Of those that attended some post-secondary, 66% had attended university and 20% had attended college.

Figure 2 Type of post-secondary institution



The majority of participants earned \$7.00 per hour (64%) (minimum wage at the time). The average salary per hour was \$7.53.

Slightly more participants were from rural areas of the province (52%). 48% of participants were from urban areas.

8.3. Evaluation Findings

Finding 1 The most common source of information for SWASP-Paid cited by participants and employers was word of mouth or having participated in the program before.

37% of participants surveyed indicated they found out about the program from their employer and 29% learned of it from friends or family. Participants thought the program could be better promoted by information sessions at schools (31%), information emailed to students (28%) and posters (22%).

The most common means of finding out about SWASP-Paid among focus group participants were word of mouth (friends and family), being approached by an employer, and information provided through school. Options for better promotion that were suggested included targeted promotion to students attending high school or post-secondary institutions through information sessions, posters and broadcast emails, and use of mass media to reach young people not affiliated with educational institutions. (It is important to note that SWASP Paid is, according to HRLE, promoted through various mediums including newspaper ads, HRLE website, CSC website, direct mail outs to all previously participating employers and all not profit organizations listed with CSC.

50-60% of employers surveyed had been on the program before and knew about it, or HRLE had sent them an application. Employers suggested the program could be better promoted through a website, mail outs and industry associations.

Employers who participated in a focus group indicated they became aware of the program through word of mouth, using it consistently over the years and consequently receiving applications annually by HRLE, or actively searching for such programs. A few were referred to it by their MHA or the schools. When asked how it could be promoted, the most frequent responses were to send a brochure with all pertinent information to businesses, maintain a website containing both comprehensive and relevant information and applications (either online or application forms) for each program, and promote through business associations and schools.

Most employers interviewed could not remember how they found out about the program. Of those that did recall, the following methods were found to be the most frequent (at approximately 15% each): through the mail, through a newspaper ad, or through a government office. The majority of interviewees (61%) thought most people knew about SWASP-Paid. Mail-outs (39%) and newspaper ads (22%) were thought to be the most effective ways of promoting the program.

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Recommendation 4. *The SWASP-Paid program needs more extensive promotion – what it is, who can use it, and how to find out more information. The two main means of promotion should be: a) a comprehensive and detailed brochure mailed to every employer in the province (perhaps through WHSCC), and b) a dynamic and comprehensive web site that is user friendly and provides comprehensive details on this and other programs available to employers – the conditions, eligibility, application deadlines, etc. All application, payment and reporting forms should also be online. This website should be heavily promoted through industry and employer associations. The current use of LMI Works effectively buries the information on wage subsidies; this information needs to be more readily available.*

Recommendation 5. *Students should also be made aware of the summer employment positions available to them. A mirror website to the one proposed in recommendation 4 would provide students with all the information they need to know regarding the different types of provincially subsidized employment programs, how they may be eligible for them, and what to expect from them. This website should be promoted through schools, universities, and public and private colleges.*

Finding 2 Participants are attracted to SWASP-Paid positions for the tuition voucher and the work experience.

71% of participants surveyed indicated that the tuition voucher was important to their decision to participate in SWASP-Paid.

Most focus group participants indicated that they simply wanted a summer job and did not apply specifically because it was SWASP-Paid. However, some did apply because of the tuition voucher.

Finding 3 Employers are attracted to the SWASP-Paid for the wage subsidy, which provides them with the ability to hire additional staff during busy periods.

The most frequent reasons for applying for the SWASP-Paid given by employers attending the focus groups were to subsidize wages, to enable them to hire staff during the busy season, to be able to offer their programs and activities (if a non-profit employer), and to be able to offer the tuition voucher, which they saw as a real incentive to the students that makes the position more attractive than other retail or service sector positions.

Of the employers interviewed, 100% indicated they were drawn to the program for the wage subsidy and 87% indicated that it was their busy season and therefore they had to hire extra staff.

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Employers interviewed also said that providing an opportunity for students to make some money was very important. Employers did not think in terms of influencing the students' lives long-term, but saw their role as basically providing them with financial support and, to a lesser degree, job experience. Many indicated the value in introducing youth to the tourism industry as a career option.

Finding 4 Internal stakeholders identified the tuition voucher and work experience as the strengths of the program.

Internal stakeholders interviewed thought the tuition voucher was an advantage of the program, as it made the positions more financially attractive to students and helped to offset the cost of their education.

The work experience provided by SWASP-Paid was also seen as an advantage. Internal stakeholders thought that even when placements were not career related, they still provided participants with transferable employment skills.

Finding 5 Information about the program and application form was rated well by participants surveyed, but not by participants in focus groups.

When participants surveyed were asked to rate elements of the program administration, most responded positively. The majority of participants surveyed thought that information about the program was promptly provided, accurate, and easily available. In addition, the application form was easy to understand and of a proper length. Questions about the program were addressed promptly and answered accurately.

While representing a much smaller group than the survey respondents, the focus group participants reported more negative opinion. Focus group participants thought the program administration was inconsistent; weaknesses identified included difficulty getting paid or receiving tuition vouchers, a long delay in placement approvals, and evaluation processes that, from the students' perspectives, lacked accountability and transparency.

94% of participants surveyed also believed the date upon which they were told they had the job was appropriate, and 72% believed the program was the right length of duration.

Finding 6 Participants identified the need for ongoing review of placements by the department.

Finding 7 Participants identified the need for greater flexibility around the duration of placements and the provision of sick leave.

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Participants in the focus groups noted a lack of ongoing review of placements by the department; participants who did have difficulties generally felt they had no one to contact for support or clarification. There was a general perception of a lack of information both on the part of participants and employers.

Participants also identified the need for more flexibility around the duration of the placements – 8 weeks worked well for some placements and participants, while others felt the placements would have been improved by increasing their length. Focus group participants also identified the need for provisions for sick leave.

Recommendation 6. *When a participant is enrolled in SWASP-Paid (as well as other programs), a letter should be mailed to each participant enrolled that clearly delineates their “rights and obligations”, as well as contact info for HRLE should they need to discuss the program or ask questions.*

Recommendation 7. *There should be a contact person within HRLE that participants and employers can call to discuss any issues regarding the SWASP-Paid (or other) placement.*

Finding 8 Employers have a high level of satisfaction with SWASP-Paid.

97%-98% were somewhat or very satisfied with the program, and 99% would recommend the program to a colleague.

Most employers who attended focus groups thought the application process and the application itself was quite good – there was no need to change it. The only exception was that many would like to be able to access it online, and some would like to be able to submit it online as well as do their progress and payment forms online.

Employers interviewed thought that overall the administration was very positive and the payment system was excellent. They did suggest that the department should enable applications to be received online.

Internal stakeholders interviewed also agreed that program forms and information should be available online.

Recommendation 8. *All application, payment and reporting forms should be available online for SWASP-Paid and all other programs, and proponents should be able to email the forms back to HRLE to increase the efficiency of processing.*

Finding 9 Employers would like earlier notification of approval.

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30-36% of employers surveyed were not satisfied with when they received notification of approval. Employers want to receive notice of approval earlier; 89% of SWASP-Paid employers wanted the approval notice in April (51%) or May (39%).

All employers who attended focus groups thought that the time of notice was too late, causing them to lose some good candidates. They need to know by April/May in order to plan and recruit.

One of the more consistent comments made by employers interviewed relates to the timing for program approval. Businesses may have determined who they will hire under the program, but are not able to notify them until approval is given later in May. Therefore, many students will seek employment elsewhere in the absence of knowing whether or not approval will be granted.

Another consistent comment was the approval process took too long, causing employers and students to miss out on the opportunity. Employers noted they need more time in order to get staff in place and that approval should therefore come by the end of April.

At the time of the evaluation, decisions about overall funding levels and regional allocations for the SIOC programs happens at the provincial level (sometimes also working within federal schedules). Internal stakeholders interviewed thought this could be improved by having more decision making ability at the regional level, but they understood it was not always under the control of the department.

Recommendation 9. *HRLE should re-examine how quickly approvals are granted and when this information is communicated to proponents. Ideally, such information should be communicated in April for SWASP-Paid.*

Finding 10 Employers and internal stakeholders would like the program to be longer than the current 8 weeks.

At the time of the evaluation, successful SWASP-Paid sponsors would be approved for a period of eight weeks or less to ensure equitable division of the total funds available. Extensions may be granted to sponsors who apply for them if there is money still available. However, 47% of SWASP-Paid employers surveyed thought the program was too short; 51% thought it was the right length. The average number of weeks in the program desired for SWASP-Paid was 13.

Almost every employer who attended a focus group thought the SWASP-Paid should be longer than 8 weeks – ideally up to 12 weeks.

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Many employers interviewed wanted to see the number of weeks covered by the program extended to no less than 12 weeks. This would position them to recruit post-secondary students when they are available in May, thereby providing them with more employment and greater tuition subsidies. It also reflects employers' needs in the workplace. Currently, the delay in being able to offer employment to post-secondary students under the SWASP-Paid results in some leaving the province to access longer periods of employment. The duration of the program was the primary area for dissatisfaction with the program. Some employers do not get approval for the full 10 weeks and, while they might get an extension, they cannot guarantee the work to the student until their employment has almost ended.

Internal stakeholders interviewed thought that additional weeks would provide more security for both employers and students. Extra weeks would also increase the amount of pay and the amount of the tuition voucher students receive, which would be another benefit. Internal stakeholders suggested that some placements could be up to 14 weeks.

Recommendation 10. *HRLE should review the funding allocation process and previous records of extensions to determine if it is feasible to allocate more weeks in the initial offer to a SWASP-Paid sponsor.*

Finding 11 Employers interviewed identified a need for employability skills training for participants.

35-37% of PS employers surveyed said students' employability skills were inadequate at the beginning of the program, but that they were improved by the end of the program.

Employers who attended focus groups suggested that some information for generic training on customer service and other work-related skills should be provided – perhaps through a DVD.

Most employers interviewed noted that post-secondary students lack some basic job skills – interacting with the public, taking initiative, looking presentable, and developing work ethics – and suggested that there should be some sort of training program, potentially in high schools, to educate future workers on the basic standards that they need to meet.

Recommendation 11. *There should be a training allowance of \$200 for every SWASP-Paid employee. This increases the value of the experience to the employee, provides the employee with greater skills (also a benefit to the employer), and instills in post-secondary students the importance of training and continual learning in the employment world.*

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Finding 12 Participants and employers both felt they benefited from their participation in the SWASP-Paid.

94% of participants surveyed thought their employability skills had increased through their participation in SWASP-Paid, and 55% believed they had gained contacts for future employment. Overall, 90% of participants surveyed indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the program. When asked to rate the level of influence the program had had on various decisions, participants surveyed thought SWASP-Paid generally had a positive influence on their decisions to complete post-secondary training, to pursue further education, and in choosing their career. 61% of participants surveyed also indicated that the tuition voucher was very helpful in lowering the cost of post-secondary education.

Many focus group participants also felt that they had gained transferable skills through the SWASP-Paid, although there was a significant amount of variation across placements in terms of the type of training and learning opportunities provided. The main strengths of the program identified by focus group participants were:

- The tuition voucher, which helped students lessen their debt load, provided an easy means of saving, and seemed like a bonus at the end of the summer;
- The work experience itself, which helped students build their resumes and provided them with exposure to a work environment;
- The ability to create jobs for students in rural communities where they may not otherwise be able to find work; and
- Levels of pay and program duration were seen as a strength by some participants; it depended on a number of factors including whether the participant was paid a wage as well as a tuition voucher or whether they received the stipend, if the participant was living at home with his or her parents, and whether the participant was a high school or post-secondary student.

The majority of participants who attended focus groups indicated they would participate in SWASP-Paid again or would consider doing so.

98% of employers surveyed thought the SWASP-Paid was of benefit to them. The most frequent benefits cited were the wage subsidy and the ability to hire individuals to help with a specific project at work. The majority (61%) of employers said they would not have hired someone for the summer without the program.

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Employers who participated in focus groups indicated that the SWASP-Paid is very important to employers in running their summer programs and updating for the busy season. Many employers felt they would not be able to operate without the SWASP-Paid because they are financially marginal as it is. The SWASP-Paid has a significant impact on the bottom line of these small businesses. Employers also think SWASP-Paid is a good program for students because the tuition voucher enforces savings and the placement gives them some experience.

Some employers interviewed noted that the subsidy enabled them to provide a higher standard of service, notably in tourism operations.

Finding 13 Some participants thought the placements should be more career-focused.

Although 18% of participants surveyed thought that their SWASP-Paid placements were directly related to their career goals, 49% said that the placements were not at all related to their career goals and were only somewhat related for 31%. As well, when participants were asked to evaluate components of the program, the relevance of placements to career goals received a lower score than other areas. Participants surveyed suggested that this could be improved by providing more detailed job descriptions up front and more monitoring throughout the placement to ensure placements fulfill the objectives given to participants in those job descriptions.

Recommendation 12. *HRLE should review how it “checks in” with students and employers for SWASP-Paid placements. Ideally, there should be at least one contact during the placement.*

Recommendation 13. *HRLE should strongly encourage employers to have more detailed placement descriptions to help potential candidates better assess how the placement relates to their career goals.*

Some barriers identified by focus group participants included poorly defined roles and responsibilities, a focus on “busy work” rather than quality work experience, and a lack of direct supervision. Focus group participants suggested positive learning environments could be created by providing well defined roles and responsibilities up front, ensuring there is a focus on quality work experience and providing adequate supervision. Participants felt they needed more support in gaining quality career-related work experience and mentoring. They felt that resume and network building were important factors in future success.

Recommendation 14. *The SWASP-Paid should be changed to an internship, with the focus more clearly concentrated on creating meaningful career-related employment for students. There are two reasons for this. First, the original reason for the program’s existence is no longer as valid – whereas the program was created to provide work for*

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students who could not find it elsewhere, in the current labour market the challenge in some regions is that there are sometimes not enough students to fill placements. Second, if government's goal is that these programs are to help students see the benefit of working and living in this province, then it stands to reason that more focused and rewarding employment will result in students more readily seeing the possibilities for making a rewarding living in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Finding 14 Employers would like SWASP-Paid to provide them with higher subsidies and greater flexibility.

Increasing the program length and providing greater subsidies were the most frequent program improvements suggested by SWASP-Paid employers surveyed. Those that asked that the subsidy be increased indicated it should be \$4.50 - \$4.75 per hour. A large majority (75-78%) were interested in staggering the subsidy to enable employers to provide higher wages to students who return in subsequent years as they progress in their education.

Employers in focus groups indicated they would like the subsidy to be increased to reflect an actual 50% of costs, rather than 50% of minimum wage.

Employers who attended focus groups wanted more flexibility around:

- How they allocate their number of hours per week (within reason) to accommodate their busiest periods;
- Hiring before notification is received from SWASP-Paid;
- Being able to hire people in the slow months when revenue is scarce, but students still want to work part-time;
- Applying extra hour extensions to current employees, instead of having to hire new ones; and
- Using SWASP-Paid year round for work terms – not just summer ones.

Employers interviewed added that they should be allowed to rehire if a funded employee is dismissed or leaves.

Internal stakeholders interviewed agreed that greater flexibility should be provided in terms of the weeks, hours and overall eligibility of participants.

Finding 15 Recruitment and retention of SWASP-Paid participants in NL is dependent on financial concerns and a pervasive poor perception of the provincial labour market.

49% of SWASP-Paid participants surveyed thought that the program did encourage them to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador to work. 47% of participants surveyed thought the program

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could be improved to encourage participants to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador to work if wages were sufficient to enable young people to live and to service their student loans.

Focus group participants indicated that financial issues play a significant role in decision making around pursuing post-secondary education, choosing careers and choosing to live and work in the province. High student loans, a perception of low starting salaries, and a desire to get ahead are all influences upon graduates' decisions to seek careers in other markets. Incentives suggested by participants to encourage graduates to stay in the province included longer periods of interest relief on student loans, student loan reduction, higher starting salaries, and bonuses for signing contracts.

Focus group participants generally had very poor perceptions of the labour market in Newfoundland and Labrador. They felt there were few 'good' jobs in the province, available jobs lacked security and benefits, and individuals with post-secondary education were not in demand. Suggestions for improvement included additional incentives for employers to hire young people and support for individuals interested in creating their own jobs.

Finding 16 Employers and internal stakeholders also emphasize the importance of financial issues in the recruitment and retention of youth in NL.

67% of SWASP-Paid employers surveyed thought the program did enable young people to stay and work in Newfoundland and Labrador. Employers thought SWASP-Paid was more effective than SEP. Most (63%) thought the impact of the program on recruitment and retention in the province could be improved by either paying more or making it longer. Most did not think the program was an effective tool to get young people to return to the province.

Issues identified by employers in focus groups related to recruitment and retention in the province were:

- Students' need for financial incentives to stay in the province such as debt reduction measures, tax reduction, bonuses for working in the province post-graduation, and interest forgiveness; and
- Need for competitive wages.

Employers indicated a desire to pay students more but said they could not afford to do so.

Employers interviewed thought the ability of the program to encourage workers to stay in the province is probably minimal. The wage rates are at or near minimum wage and the main draw for workers to other provinces are the higher wages. When asked what government could do to

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retain more people here, 57% said financial incentives and 30% said job creation. Employers emphasized that “it’s all about the money”. They also suggested incentives or mechanisms to help reduce student debt.

Internal stakeholders interviewed suggested that financial incentives are required to encourage graduates to stay in NL. Higher wages, tax breaks and a willingness to pay expenses such as moving costs may provide encouragement for youth to stay in the province.

Finding 17 Participants thought the wages paid through the SWASP-Paid should be increased to reflect the higher cost of post-secondary education and associated student debt load.

Finding 18 A modest increase in rate of pay would allow SWASP-Paid to compete with other employment opportunities.

Finding 19 Students living at home with parents thought wages and voucher amounts were fair.

The rate of pay and amount of the tuition voucher were rated positively by most participants surveyed.

Levels of pay were seen as a strength by some focus group participants; it depended on a number of factors including whether the participant was paid a wage as well as a tuition voucher, if the participant was living at home with his or her parents, and whether the participant was a high school or post-secondary student. Focus group participants thought that the low wages would discourage those students who are not living at home or who have additional expenses such as child care from applying for SWASP-Paid positions.

Many participants who attended focus groups worked second jobs in addition to their SWASP-Paid position. Students in some cases had to choose between higher pay in service sector jobs and career-related SWASP-Paid positions, which limited the ability of the program to meet some of its objectives. Participants suggested that even a modest increase in remuneration would be an improvement.

Increasing the flexibility in using the tuition vouchers for other school related costs was also suggested as a means of improving the financial impact of the program on participants.

Recommendation 15. *It should be clearly communicated that tuition vouchers can still be used after the standard 24 month period. There is*

“When tuition vouchers can’t be used it is like taking money that I own” - SWASP Participant

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a process allowing the student to either pay it on their student debt or use it for other education-related expenses if the voucher cannot be used for tuition, but this is not well known.

Finding 20 Employers would like wage subsidies provided by SWASP-Paid to be increased.

Employers surveyed suggested that the subsidy should be increased to \$4.50 - \$4.75 per hour.

In focus groups, employers suggested that the wage subsidy should be greater than 50% of minimum wage. The rationale is that the actual costs (when MERC and tax on the subsidy are included, plus other miscellaneous costs of the employer) are closer to 20% of the cost than 50%. Many employers also felt that paying minimum wage to students does not enable them to get the best students.

While employers interviewed were glad of the wage subsidy, they noted that the employers' costs actually exceed 50% considering that they have to make CPP and EI contributions and may also incur other expenses. Employers indicated that they have to be competitive on wages.

Finding 21 Internal stakeholders thought the wage rates and amount of tuition vouchers should be increased.

Internal stakeholders interviewed thought that SWASP placements could be made more financially attractive to young people. They expressed the concern that these placements are not competitive with other employment opportunities. It was indicated that wages and the tuition voucher should reflect increases in the cost of living and tuition in recent years.

Recommendation 16. *Post-secondary (PS) students should receive a higher salary than high school (HS) students. For example, if HS students receive minimum wage, then PS students should receive minimum wage plus \$1.*

8.4. SWASP-Paid – Evaluation Summary

The stated goal of the SWASP-Paid program is to provide students with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience which may facilitate future labour market participation.

As stated above, 94% of participants surveyed thought their employability skills had increased and 55% believed they had gained contacts for future employment through their participation in SWASP-Paid. However, SWASP-Paid placements were not at all related to the career goals of 49% of participants surveyed and only somewhat related for 31%. When asked to evaluate components of the program, the relevance of placements to career goals received a lower score

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than other areas. Participants surveyed suggested that this could be improved by providing more detailed job descriptions up front, and more monitoring throughout placements to ensure placements are fulfilling the terms of the job description. Some barriers identified by focus group participants included poorly defined roles and responsibilities, a focus on “busy work” rather than quality work experience, and a lack of direct supervision. Focus group participants suggested that positive learning environments could be created by providing well defined roles and responsibilities up front, ensuring there is a focus on quality work experience, and providing adequate supervision.

Participants felt they needed more support in gaining quality career-related work experience and mentoring. They felt that resume and network building were important factors in future success. This suggests that the SWASP-Paid is not entirely meeting the goal of providing valuable work experience for participants. While participants are given job placements, these are not always quality placements that will provide the type of experience likely to improve the future labour market prospects of participants.

The scope of this evaluation does not allow us to determine the influence the SWASP-Paid may have on the long-term labour market attachment of participants.

The goals of SWASP-Paid community service are broader than the SWASP-Paid in general. These include:

- Provide career-related experience for students attending post-secondary institutions in the coming academic year;
- Facilitate the development of transferable work-related skills;
- Help reduce student debt load through the issuance of tuition vouchers redeemable at any recognized post-secondary institution;
- Encourage students to pursue a post-secondary education;
- Help students develop employment networks in the non-profit sector;
- Meet some of the broader needs of the community through well-planned student placements in the non-profit sector; and
- Assist sponsoring organizations in meeting their objectives.

8.5. Student Employment Program (Level I, II and III) (SEP)

The Student Employment Program (SEP) provides funding to not-for-profit organizations to provide summer employment for students from Levels I, II & III. Employers are reimbursed 100% for minimum wage salaries plus a 12% administration fee to cover mandatory employment related costs. Funds were

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allocated equally to each of the 48 provincial electoral districts. The purpose of the program is to provide Level I, II and III students in all areas of the province with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience and to help offset educational expenses.

8.6. Participant Profile

Based on program data from 2007, 49% of SEP participants were female and 51% were male. The average age of participants was 17. 2% of participants were persons with a disability.

The vast majority of participants earned \$7.00 per hour (97%). The average salary per hour was \$7.03.

Significantly more participants were from rural areas of the province (70%). 30% of participants were from urban areas.

8.7. Evaluation Findings

Finding 22 The SEP is promoted primarily through word of mouth. There is little direct promotion of the program to potential participants.

55% of participants surveyed found out about the program from friends or family. 16% were approached by an employer and 13% found out from a teacher. Participants thought the program could be better promoted by information sessions at schools (39%), posters (23%), and emails to students (19%).

Recommendation 17. *The SEP program needs more widespread promotion – what it is, who can use it, and how to find out more. (Details are similar to the SWASP-Paid program discussed above; see Recommendations 1 and 2.)*

Finding 23 Information about the program and the application process were rated well by participants surveyed.

When participants were asked to rate elements of the program administration, most responded positively. The vast majority of participants surveyed thought that information about the program was promptly provided, accurate, and easily available; the application form was easy to understand and of the proper length; and questions about the program were addressed promptly and answered accurately.

91% of participants surveyed believed the date when they were told they had the job was appropriate. 76% believed the program was the right length of time.

Finding 24 Employers would like earlier notification of approval.

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Employers surveyed indicated they would like earlier notification of approval. 78% of SEP employers wanted the approval notice in April (35%) or May (44%).

Recommendation 18. *HRLE needs to re-examine its approval process with regard to how quickly approvals are granted and when this information is communicated to proponents. Ideally, such information should be communicated in May for SEP.*

Finding 25 Employers think the duration of SEP placements is appropriate.

Most (64%) employers surveyed thought the duration of SEP placements was for the right amount of time, and 36% thought it was too short. The average number of weeks desired by employers surveyed was 8.5.

Finding 26 Participants think the program improves their employability skills.

97% of participants surveyed thought their employability skills improved by the end of the program, and 47% believed they had gained contacts for future employment. Employers surveyed showed that while 59% of them rated students' employability skills as 1 or 2 when starting the placement ("1" meaning "excellent"), 92% thought that these skills had improved by the end of the program. Additional investment in training would enhance this process and help prepare students for more taxing demands on their employability skills later in their careers.

Recommendation 19. *There should be a training allowance of \$100 for every SEP employee. This increases the value of the experience to the employee, provides the employee with greater skills (also a benefit to the employer), and instills in high school students the importance of training and continual learning in the employment world.*

Finding 27 Participants are generally satisfied with the program and believe it had a positive influence on their decisions to start a post-secondary program and pursue further education.

Overall, 87% of SEP participants surveyed indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the program.

When asked to rate the level of influence the program had on various decisions, participants thought SEP generally had a positive influence. 70% thought the program had a strong influence on their decision to start a post-secondary education program and 75% thought the program had a strong influence on their decision to pursue further education

Finding 28 SEP placements are not generally related to the education or chosen career areas of participants.

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The placement was not at all related to the education or chosen career area of 52% of SEP participants surveyed. It was somewhat related for 37%. Placements had some relevance to the career goals of 73% of participants surveyed.

Recommendation 20. *While there is less focus on SEP employment to be directly career-related, it is still important that these positions have clearly defined duties and be well supervised so that the students develop an understanding of good working relationships, communication skills, and other employment-related skills. To accomplish this, HRLE should continue SEP, but more closely scrutinize the work placements proposed for it – i.e., proponents should demonstrate that they can provide students with meaningful work and effective supervision.*

Finding 29 Employers indicate the SEP enables them to create jobs.

81% of employers interviewed noted that they could not hire or provide the same level of employment without the subsidy.

Finding 30 SEP participants and employers thought the program had a positive influence on students' decisions to stay in NL.

SEP participants surveyed thought the program had a positive influence on their decision to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador

55% of employers surveyed thought the program enabled students in Newfoundland and Labrador to stay and work at home.

Finding 31 Participants agree with the current rate of pay.

The rate of pay was rated positively by most SEP participants surveyed.

Finding 32 SEP employers would like wage subsidies to be increased.

Providing a greater subsidy was the most frequent program improvement suggested by SEP employers surveyed. Those that asked the subsidy to be increased indicated it should be \$4.50 - \$4.75 per hour.

Finding 33 Internal stakeholders think SEP is the most appropriate program for individuals with attachment to IS.

Internal stakeholders interviewed thought the SEP was a good program to provide an early intervention to youth with IS attachment. It effectively introduced them to the labour market and they began to gain transferable skills.

8.8. SEP -Evaluation Summary

The goal of the SEP is to provide Level I, II and III students in all areas of the province with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience and to help offset educational expenses.

The evidence presented above indicates that 97% of participants surveyed thought their employability skills improved by the end of the program and 47% believed they had gained contacts for future employment.

When asked to rate the level of influence the program had on various decisions, participants thought SEP generally had a positive influence. 70% thought the program had a strong influence on their decision to start a post-secondary education program and 75% thought the program had a strong influence on their decision to pursue further education.

The rate of pay was rated positively by most participants surveyed.

This evidence suggests that the SEP is largely meeting its stated goals.

9. SWASP Variations

9.1. Community Youth Network (Year Round) (SWASP CYN)

This program, administered through the Community Youth Network, is intended to allow SWASP opportunities year round for those students who have dropped out of school in an effort to bring these youth back into the educational setting. Participants are provided with one-on-one assessment, career exploration and planning, and work experience in their chosen field. They receive a stipend of \$75 per week and a tuition voucher (\$1,400) for post-secondary.

A second component, Career Employment Experience for Income Support (CEEIS), was added in 2005-06 and continued in 2006-07 which addresses some of the financial needs of higher-at-risk youth. This group is provided a \$100 per week stipend and a \$200 per week tuition voucher.

The Community Youth Network (CYN) provides a range of services for youth between the ages of 12 and 18 who are living in, or at risk of, poverty. This network enhances opportunities available for youth to participate in social and economic development by focusing on subjects such as learning, employment and community building.

For purposes of this evaluation, all CYN program staff were asked to complete an online survey (7 completions) while the program heads of CYN were interviewed by the evaluators. In addition, there was a focus group of CYN co-ordinators.

Finding 34 The main values of the SWASP CYN program identified by CYN are the tuition voucher and work experience.

When asked to identify the strengths of the SWASP CYN, CYN staff indicated that the savings provided by the tuition voucher and the work opportunities created for youth, particularly in rural areas, were very valuable.

Finding 35 The weaknesses of the SWASP CYN from the CYN perspective include the perceived limitations of the voucher, the low amount of the stipend, and the lack of funding for program administration.

The need for greater flexibility in the use of the voucher was identified as a challenge in the survey. Focus group participants identified this as a perceived limitation; their experience was that although flexibility exists with regards to the uses of the voucher, this is neither widely known nor promoted. The challenge, then, is the perceived limitation of the voucher as redeemable only for tuition.

The low stipend and lack of wages were identified as a concern in terms of the ability for SWASP positions to compete with other positions.

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The lack of funding to cover the cost of administering the program was also identified as a challenge in both the focus group and survey responses.

Additional weaknesses identified for the SWASP CYN were the difficulty of matching applications to the available labour pool and potential applicants, the short duration, and the lack of flexibility.

Recommendation 21. *All partners should receive administrative funding in addition to program funding.*

Finding 36 Suggested program improvements include increasing the wages and tuition voucher, and providing resources to allow organizations to commit the resources needed to support participants.

In the current provincial and national employment context, those better equipped to attach themselves to the workforce are doing so without a need for or reliance on programs. Those who are less equipped now make up the majority of participants in this and other career development programs. As a result, more time and resources are needed to support participants, network and mediate with employers, and connect participants with community resources. The CEEIS program model is not structured to allow for the hiring of additional staff to adequately address ever-increasing participant needs, nor to deliver comprehensive career awareness workshops. Having additional staff resources would also help in the recruiting of participants (both HRLE and non-HRLE attached).

The program can be improved if the stipend was increased to \$100/week and the tuition voucher increased to \$1500. This would make it comparable to a standard minimum wage job and the \$100 would entice more youth to pursue this employment route.

It was also suggested that the requirement of matched applications be removed from the SWASP because of the challenge in finding the matched application. CYN.

Finding 37 CYN staff believes that the SWASP CYN only somewhat contributes to the goal of keeping more young Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans working in the province.

71% of those surveyed indicated that the SWASP CYN only somewhat influences the decision to stay and work in the province.

Respondents suggested that other contributing factors, including community resources, pay scales, local opportunities, adequate transportation systems, child care, and student grants or interest relief for those who remain in the province, may have a more significant impact. They indicated that the tuition vouchers do help young people pursue post-secondary education;

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however, these need to be matched with incentives for them to stay in the province once they graduate.

The SWASP CYN is seen as addressing the short- but not long-term issues facing young people.

Finding 38 Some CYN staff think the program contributes to the attachment of individuals on IS to the work force or to continuing their education.

43% of those surveyed agreed that the SWASP CYN does contribute to the labour force attachment of individuals on IS and 43% thought it somewhat achieved this goal. They indicated the tuition voucher provided by the program did give youth an incentive to pursue post-secondary education.

The main concern about the ability of the SWASP CYN to meet this goal was that individuals with an attachment to IS frequently have additional needs that have to be addressed before they begin working, and the SWASP CYN does not address all of these issues.

Finding 39 Some CYN staff think the program contributes to the goal of providing valuable work experience and income to students.

43% of those surveyed agreed that the program provides valuable work experience and income to students and 43% thought it somewhat achieved this goal.

Respondents suggested that this could be improved by bringing the wages in line with the increase in minimum wage, and providing more information to the employer to encourage them to provide a quality work placement.

Finding 40 Most components of the program were rated well by CYN staff.

The program areas that were not rated well include the amount of the stipend and the amount of the tuition voucher.

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Figure 3 SWASP program ratings (Y Axis = n)

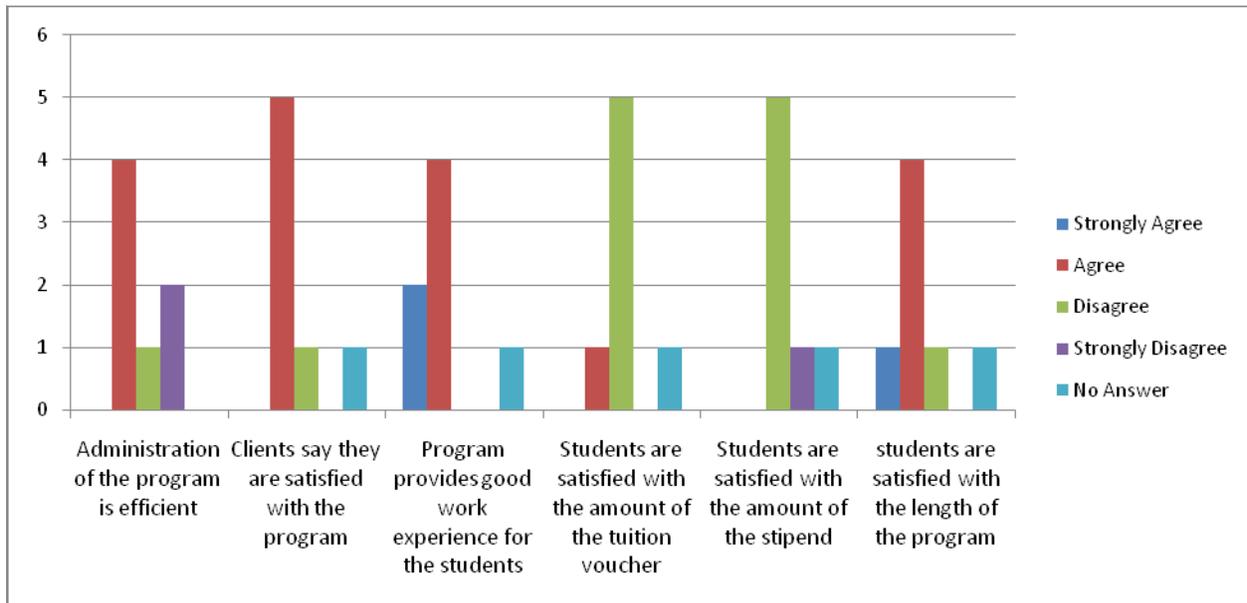
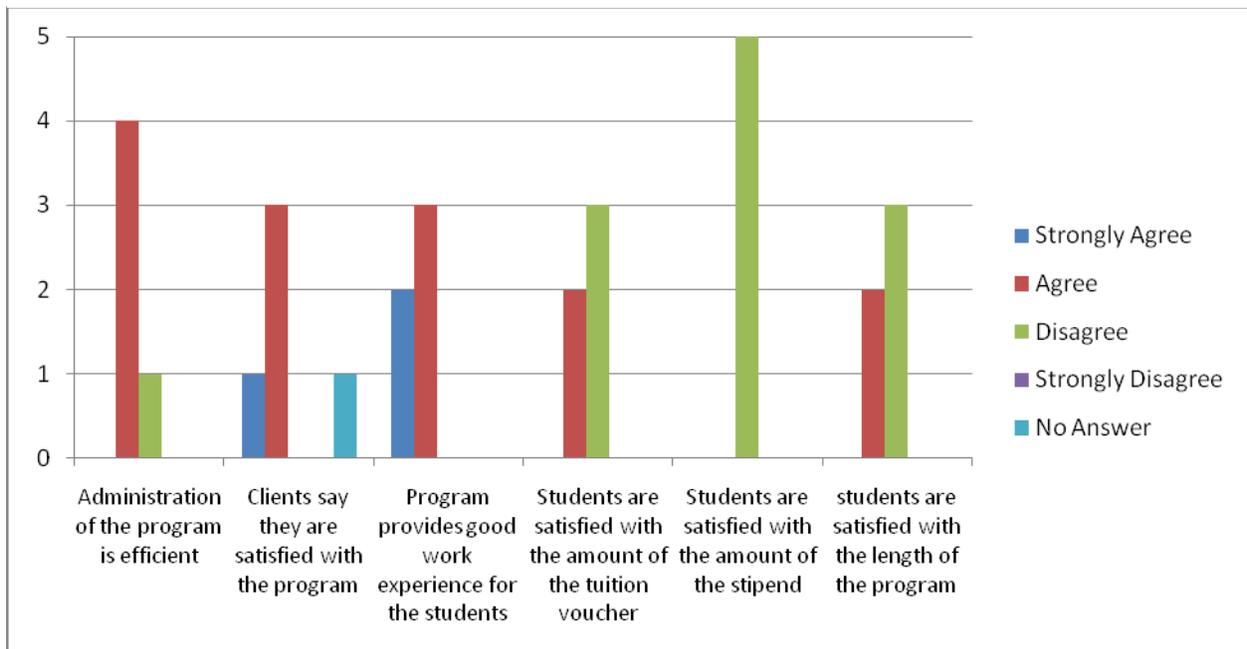


Figure 4 SWASP Community Service Program Ratings (Y Axis = n)



The same pattern is reflected in the responses about the SWASP CYN.

Finding 41 CYN staff say the strength of CEEIS is the ability to assist IS clients in gaining work experience.

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CYN staff thought the strength of CEEIS was the ability to assist IS clients in gaining work experience and making the transition to education.

Finding 42 CYN staff identify the challenges of CEEIS as including the need for an assessment process for participants and additional funding to cover administrative costs.

CYN staff thought CEEIS could be improved by implementing a screening process to identify suitable participants and then providing employment readiness training where required. The lack of funding for program administration was also seen as an area in need of improvement.

9.2. SWASP Memorial University of Newfoundland (SWASP MUN)

The program provides placements to departments and organizations within MUN. Students are provided with a tuition credit of \$1,400 for an eight-week placement in addition to a \$50 per week stipend for out-of-pocket costs.

Finding 43 The program is very positively received by both the university and the students. There are many positive aspects to it and it appears the program has contributed to the success of participants.

The university thinks very highly of this SWASP program. It provides valuable work experience and tuition vouchers to students. At Memorial, this program is offered at both the St. John's and the Sir Wilfred Grenfell Campuses. There have been success stories where students have done 4-5 SWASPs; some have had very difficult backgrounds and this program contributed to their eventual success. The program gave students networking opportunities, the ability to explore a field, the opportunity to be mentored by a person in that field, and references for further work.

Finding 44 The claw-back of the SWASP MUN tuition voucher and stipend through the student aid program makes it more difficult for student parents to get by.

One of the weaknesses identified is dealing with Student Aid, because the SWASP MUN participants stated it was seen as income for the purposes of calculating student aid. According to student parents, they generally take longer to finish their degrees than other students. While this does not seem to be an overriding concern, it is still a barrier to some students.

Finding 45 The program would like more funding for this program as the demand, particularly in the summer and at Sir Wilfred Grenfell Campus, is higher than the supply.

Recommendation 22. *HRLE should consider entering block funding arrangements with MUN (as well as CNA) so they can allocate the funding to different programs as demand*

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dictates. For example, if there were more demand for SWASP PACEE (see Section 9.4) and less for GEP, then they would be able to move funds around internally to meet those needs.

Finding 46 The program does contribute to people staying in Newfoundland and Labrador to work by establishing them in the field they are interested in, reducing their student debt, and facilitating reflection on the value of their experiences.

Participants in the SWASP MUN program are able to establish roots and network here. Student parents in particular are more likely to stay if they have viable options because of their children. In addition, the SWASP MUN program includes a reflection component – this is guided by Memorial, and is a way to focus participants on what they have done and what they have gained by participating in the programs.

Finding 47 The quarterly reporting requirements of HRLE do not coincide with the semester system at Memorial, forcing them to produce two sets of reports. This is onerous work.

Memorial operates on a semester-based system and all financial and other reporting are conducted on that basis. HRLE, however, requires reports on a quarterly basis. This requires Memorial employees to submit partial reports that are finished at a later date, which is inefficient for both parties. Memorial would also prefer to the ability to exchange information and reports with HRLE electronically, which is not, according to Memorial, currently the case.

Recommendation 23. *In order to increase the efficiency of reporting, Memorial should be allowed to submit reports on a semester basis and a method for exchanging reports electronically should be developed.*

Finding 48 Memorial must reapply every year for this funding, even though it is essentially a roll-over of the previous year's proposal. It would be more efficient if HRLE was able to streamline this process and reduce the amount of work required each year.

9.3. SWASP College of the North Atlantic (SWASP CNA)

This program provides placements to departments and organizations within each CNA campus. Students are provided with a tuition credit of \$1,400 for an eight-week placement in addition to a \$50 per week stipend for out-of-pocket costs.

Finding 49 The SWASP CNA has been successful at the college and has led to several students being hired on permanently.

CNA reports the program is quite good from their perspective and the feedback they receive from students. It gives students exposure to the college as an employee, and they have often provided former SWASP CNA students with permanent employment. It is a good service for

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students and shows a commitment to them from CNA that the college is interested in them. It also encourages students to save money with the tuition voucher.

Finding 50 The tuition voucher and stipend are not attractive to most CNA students as their tuition is already paid; many would prefer wages.

Finding 51 Positions are becoming increasingly difficult to fill because there are fewer applicants applying, the competition offers better wages, and advertising is often posted too late for the students.

The amount of the tuition voucher and stipend does not encourage students to see it as an incentive for enrolment. CNA enrolment includes a large number of sponsored students (funded through Service Canada, HRLE, band councils, etc.), and so their tuition is already fully funded, either directly or indirectly. Students consider it a deterrent not to be able to use the voucher towards residence or book fees. Mature students would also prefer cash in hand to the voucher, considering it to be more flexible and therefore more valuable.

As well, out of town students who would be willing to stay on or near campus for a SWASP CNA placement require more money for increased rental costs, but they cannot afford this on the stipend. Finally, positions are becoming increasingly difficult to fill as there are fewer students applying and the competition is offering better wages.

Recommendation 24. *Discussions should be held with stakeholders of the SWASP-CSC, MUN and CNA programs to consider no longer using the stipend. In participant focus groups in particular, stipends were characterized as only addressing the needs of students living at home with minimal expenses and were barriers for students who paid rent or had significant travel expenses.*

Finding 52 The program does not keep college students in the province because it is not competitive in remuneration.

Finding 53 The program is not particularly attractive to IS clients as they either already have their tuition paid or the remuneration is not able to support them.

CNA does not think the program keeps students in the province as it is impossible to compete with the draw of Alberta for summer employment. Also, they expressed the opinion that few IS clients apply for it because of the type of remuneration – they felt that the tuition voucher was of little use to them and they cannot afford to live on the stipend only due to other responsibilities. The remaining attraction of the SWASP CNA for such participants would be the work experience.

9.4. Partners in Academic Career Education and Employment (PACEE)

9.4.1. College of the North Atlantic

The PACEE (also known as Above and Beyond) Program provides student jobs in paid positions at the College of the North Atlantic. Under this program, students receive wages only and are not provided tuition vouchers as in other SWASP programs.

Finding 54 PACEE Above and Beyond is more attractive to students on IS and those contemplating leaving for opportunities out west because it is cash-based yet still offers a valuable work experience.

This program has fewer restrictions and meets some of the challenges identified in the SWASP program while still providing the cash salary and valuable work experience available with SWASP. The biggest challenge with the program is that it provides only a minimum wage salary, and the competitive labour market suggests that students believe that they can receive and are looking for more competitive remuneration. It can be argued that students should take the best paying job available to them. The other side of the equation is that employers rely on these positions to subsidize their labour force.

Finding 55 CNA would like to expand the program to all 17 campuses.

CNA would like to be able to enhance the program even more by having it at each of its 17 campuses. It considers the program to have great potential to keep people in the province because it pays a salary instead of a stipend and tuition voucher. Above and Beyond is also more attractive to IS clients because it is salary-based.

9.4.2. Memorial University of Newfoundland

The PACEE (also known as Above and Beyond) Program provides student jobs in paid positions at Memorial University. Under this program, students receive wages only and are not provided tuition vouchers as in other SWASP programs.

Finding 56 The program is highly thought of by both students and employers, providing tangible benefits to both groups.

The PACEE program is highly valued by Memorial – it has a high degree of support from the academic partners and the university itself, who are the employers of the SWASP students. Students are paid the regular university student rate (generally minimum wage plus \$0.50 per hour). The program provides valuable work experience and enables participants to build their resume and establish deeper roots in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Finding 57 The program has not had an increase in funding in the last 13 years.

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According to Memorial, the program has funded an average of 20 placements per year over the last 13 years. No funding is provided for the administrative support provided by the university.

9.5. Tutoring Work Experience Program (TWEP)

Through this program, post-secondary students may earn a weekly stipend of \$75 plus a tuition voucher for post-secondary education by tutoring, in their home communities, high school students who are preparing for year-end exams. The program objectives are to assist post-secondary students in earning money to be put towards the cost of their education, while at the same time providing them with an opportunity to participate in meaningful work experiences that are related to their field of study.

Tutors are selected based on:

- Good academic standing
- Good interpersonal skills
- Prior experience with the program
- Other tutor training / experience
- Career relatedness, such as students enrolled in MUN's Faculty of Education
- Financial need

Finding 58 The program is successful, with many clearly articulated strengths identified for both tutors and students being tutored.

This is perceived as a highly successful program with many strong points, including the following:

- Provides young people an opportunity to teach in the field that they are studying
- Enables students to earn a voucher towards post-secondary tuition, thereby contributing to reduced student debt
- Enables tutors to:
 - work with their peers
 - go back to their home communities to teach
 - give back to their home communities
- Provides the following benefits to students being tutored:
 - Better relationship with tutor, as young people relate more to their peers than to adults
 - Academic improvement
 - Role model in the tutor

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- Positive attitude by encouraging them to see what other graduates from their school have accomplished

The applications for the TWEP are provided through schools and the placements are administered by school boards. Initially it was publicized, but there is no need now perceived for this as the number of applicants currently exceeds the supply of positions.

The school boards are strong partners in the delivery of the program. They assign consistent staff that work at it at the school district level as well as providing support at the school level. The program is overseen by a joint committee of the 5 school districts plus the Department of Education, HRLE and Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association.

Finding 59 The tuition voucher and the remuneration are considered too low to be competitive with other employers.

As with many programs studied within the scope of this report, the only identified weakness of TWEP is the inability to pay students competitively. While there are many applicants to the program, the students attracted to the TWEP program are of interest to many employers and often have several offers of employment. If the tuition voucher and salary were higher it would enable schools to offer such students a more competitive package, keeping them in the TWEP program.

Finding 60 The Online TWEP variation has been quite successful in working with more rural students and bringing tutoring to areas that might not otherwise have access to it. It often supplements face-to-face tutoring as well.

Finding 61 Online TWEP also requires a higher tuition voucher and stipend in order to make it competitive with other summer employment positions. Flexibility is also requested in order to enable Online TWEPs to work part-time during the year. This would expand the tutoring service beyond the preparations for final exam.

A variation of the TWEP was developed by the CDLI (see the following section) whereby an online TWEP component was added. This enabled about 10 online tutors to tutor subject matter at a distance. These tutors are university students hired to work for 6 weeks to assist high school students in preparing for finals. They receive the same remuneration and tuition voucher as the “regular” TWEP tutors. This component gives high school students the ability to access tutoring assistance regardless of where they are located. Often utilization is greatest within the most rural schools in the province, where face-to-face tutors may not be readily available. Other benefits of this program are the ability of online TWEPs to be anywhere in the province, and the development of computer and telecommunication skills in addition to tutoring skills.

It should be noted that the 6 week period for the online TWEP placement is meant to bridge these students into other summer employment, not to be the sole summer employment provider.

The Online TWEP has the same challenges as the traditional TWEP: competition is high for these students as they tend to be quite attractive to employers, and there are more positions available for Online TWEPS than there are suitable applicants.

9.6. IT Tutoring for Tuition

The IT Tutoring for Tuition program specifically targets students enrolled in online courses within the secondary school system. These are course offerings which are not available in the physical school setting and mainly benefit students from rural areas. There are approximately 1000 students in the province who take online courses from Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (a division of the department of Education), or CDLI, in 103 primarily rural schools. Each school has the option to employ a student eTutor.

Student eTutors receive a tuition voucher for tutoring in the various subject areas that are offered online. The student is physically located within the school and also assists with the computer equipment used for the online courses. The program is administered by a partnership among HRLE, CDLI, and the Nova School District.

Tutors are high school students who have demonstrated aptitudes in working with computers and software applications and may be interested in information and computer technology (ICT) as a career path. They are selected by the individual schools (financial need is also a consideration in their selection).

The objective is to assist post-secondary bound high school students to earn tuition toward their education. The high school eTutors start in October and work throughout the academic year. They work face-to-face with any students taking online courses.

Finding 62 The strengths of the program include the ability of the eTutor to develop computer-specific skills, earn a tuition voucher for debt reduction, and develop teaching and other people-based employment skills.

The eTutors are available to students at flexible hours and will work with any student that expresses an interest, not just those with greatest academic need. One of the challenges is that often the students who avail of the program are the ones that are keen to succeed, not necessarily the ones that are really struggling with the course material.

There were no identified weaknesses in the program by the stakeholders.

10. The Graduate Employment Program (GEP)

The Graduate Employment Program provides a 60% wage subsidy (up to \$10,000) to employers who employ recent graduates in jobs related to their training. Employment is for a 52-week period. The purpose of the program is to assist recent graduates of post-secondary programs in obtaining employment related to their field of study.

Both Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic have implemented their own version of the GEP where they administer the funds and manage the programs, but this is not a consistent arrangement over time.

The GEP has been in operation for almost 20 years and the subsidy rate (\$10,000) has stayed the same throughout that period. Originally there was a requirement that the graduate had to be graduated for 3 months before being eligible, but this has since been lifted and is no longer a requirement of the program.

10.1. GEP Participant Profile

Based on program data from 2007, 68% of GEP participants were female and 32% were male. The average age of participants was 26, with 80% of participants between the ages of 18 and 29. Less than 1% of participants were persons with a disability.

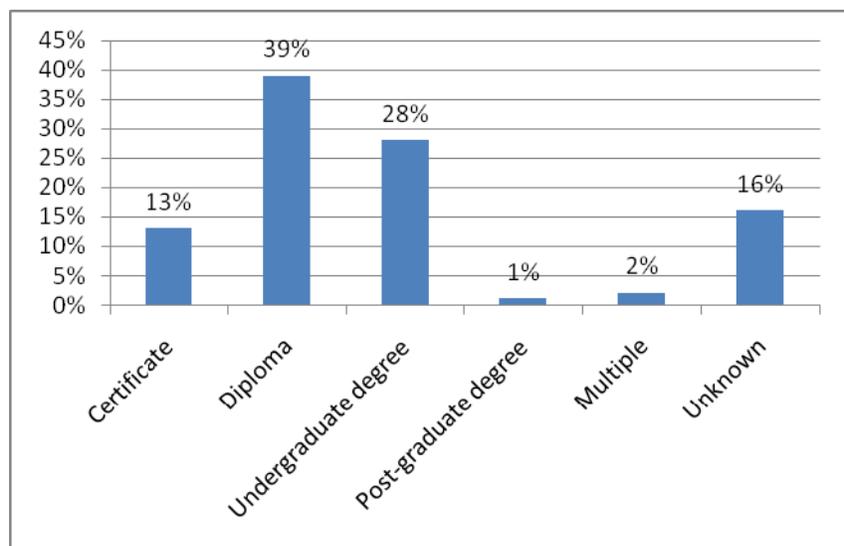
The majority of participants reported their marital status as single (75%) and had no dependents (74%).

Most participants had completed a diploma (39%) or degree (28%) program.

Most participants (55%) earned an annual salary between \$15,001 and \$25,000. The average annual salary was \$22,302.

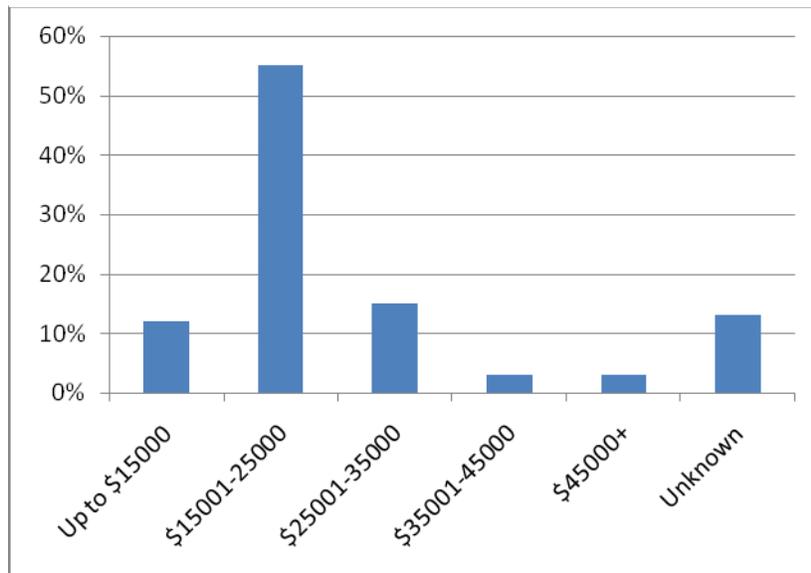
Significantly more participants were in urban

Figure 5 Type of post-secondary completed



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Figure 6 Annual Salary Level



areas of the province (73%). 27% of participants were in rural areas.

44% of GEP participants indicated that they hold Canada Student Loans. 7% indicated they received Employment Insurance (EI) while attending post-secondary. 8% indicated they received IS while attending post-secondary, and 8% received other sources of funding.

Before starting the GEP, 8% of participants were receiving IS, 7% were unemployed, 32% were working, 48% were looking for work, and 26% were engaged in other pursuits.

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Finding 63 There is little formal promotion of the GEP and participants and employers are more likely to learn about the program through informal networks.

When asked how they found out about the GEP, 39% of participants surveyed said they were approached by an employer. 14% learned about the program from friends or family, and 13% learned about it informally from teachers or professors. It was most common for participants to find out about available positions either on their own (33%) or through contact with an employer (33%). GEP participants who attended focus groups indicated they found out about the GEP through word of mouth and used the Internet as a place to get further information about it. No one mentioned official contact from their educational institution as a source of information about the GEP.

39% of participants surveyed thought that the program should be better promoted through information sessions at schools and universities, and 19% suggested that information be sent directly to all college and university students.

50% of the employers surveyed said that they learned about the program in a way other than those provided in the survey. These included:

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- HRLE mailed me an application
- I was in it before
- I heard from other business colleagues
- I went looking for the info online
- I called HRLE looking for info on employment programs

The most common of these “other” responses were that they were approached by the graduate, that they could not recall how they had found out about the program, or that they had heard about it from (unspecified) others. 19% had used the program before in the past and 13% had gone online to find information. 12% had received an application from HRLE. Employers who attended focus groups either knew about the GEP through word of mouth or they had participated in it before.

All employers who attended focus groups thought the GEP could be better promoted, and that techniques such as a mail-out to all potential proponents and a “good” website would be effective. 68% of those interviewed thought the program could be better promoted, and suggested suggesting mail-outs to businesses, promotion through the students, and a website. 32% of GEP employers surveyed thought that a brochure mail-out would improve promotion. 14% suggested advertising the program in local newspapers.

Internal stakeholders interviewed thought that the lack of awareness about the GEP was greater in rural areas of the province. They indicated that the program could be used to entice young people back to rural areas if there was more directed promotion.

Recommendation 25. *The GEP program needs more widespread promotion – what it is, who can use it, and how to find out more. (Details are similar to the SWASP program discussed above; see Recommendations 4 and 17.)*

Finding 64 Participants use the GEP to give them an advantage when searching for employment after graduation.

Focus group participants indicated they used the GEP to “give them an edge” over other applicants when applying for positions after graduation.

Internal stakeholders interviewed also thought the program was beneficial for participants because it provided them with an advantage when applying for employment.

Finding 65 Employers use the GEP primarily for the wage subsidy.

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Employers in focus groups indicated that they use the GEP primarily for the wage subsidy. They also indicated it was a means of screening employees and a way to defray the expense of training someone to be productive.

100% of employers interviewed said that they used the program for the wage subsidy. Needing new staff, using it as an opportunity to train new people, and using it as an opportunity to determine the suitability of a person were all reasons for 60% and higher of employers interviewed to use the GEP.

Finding 66 Information about the program, application and administration were rated well by participants and employers.

When GEP participants surveyed were asked to rate elements of the program administration, most responded positively. The majority of participants surveyed thought that information about the program was promptly provided, accurate, and easily available; the application form was easy to understand and of the proper length; and questions about the program were addressed promptly and answered accurately.

GEP employers rated elements of program administration as well done and efficient. Employers thought that information about the program was timely, accurate, and easily available; the application form was easy to understand and of the proper length; and questions about the program were addressed promptly and answered accurately. 60% of employers surveyed were satisfied with the length of time it took to receive notice of approval, and 74% were satisfied with the length of time it took to process the wage subsidy claim for payment.

Some employers who attended focus groups indicated that the time it takes to get the GEP approved has been problematic for a number of them, and is made more difficult due to the fact that graduates are unemployed and waiting while the application is pending. Employers suggested they would like to be pre-approved and then search for a graduate so they can start immediately after the offer is made.

Internal stakeholders interviewed thought the length of time required for approvals to be made could be improved by having more decision making ability at the regional level.

92% of employers interviewed thought the program administration was good overall.

Finding 67 According to CYN staff, the strengths of the GEP are well established administrative processes and the work experience it provides for graduates.

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Focus group participants thought the strengths of the GEP were its well-established administrative processes and the ability to provide work experience to graduates.

Finding 68 CYN staff see the challenges of the GEP as being lack of funding for administration, lack of flexibility, and lack of awareness about the program.

Focus group participants pointed out that, particularly for non-profit organizations, the lack of provision for administrative costs and mandatory employment-related costs were a significant challenge.

The lack of flexibility around the length of placements and the lack of awareness about the program were also identified as challenges.

Finding 69 Participants and employers generally agree that the current 12 month duration of the GEP is appropriate.

64% of GEP participants surveyed thought that the length of the program was an appropriate amount of time; 18% thought it was too short.

Most focus group participants thought that two years would be a better length of time for the program, particularly if there was some sort of transition period for the subsidy so that it decreased as the graduate became more productive.

62% of employers surveyed were satisfied with the length of the program, whereas 31% thought it was too short.

Finding 70 Participants who attended focus groups indicated a need for increased reviewing of GEP placements.

Focus group participants indicated that some review did exist throughout the placement but expressed a need for more. Participants thought an evaluation mechanism should be available to both employers and graduates at some point midway throughout the placement to ensure the placement is mutually satisfactory.

Recommendation 26. *HRLE should implement more frequent check-ins for GEP placements. There should be at least one contact per student/graduate.*

Finding 71 GEP participants who had received IS did not think there were any barriers to their participation.

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Only 12% of GEP participants surveyed indicated that they received assistance through IS while participating in GEP. Of those, 71% said that they did not find there were any barriers to their participation because they were on IS.

For one participant who attended a focus group, the GEP was a powerful support and enabled her to get off IS as a single parent. Others saw no reason why it could not be a good tool for people on IS.

Finding 72 GEP participants indicated that their placements were career related, improved their employability skills, and helped them develop contacts for future employment.

95% of GEP participants surveyed said that their placement was directly or somewhat related to their education or chosen career area.

The vast majority (85%) thought their employability skills had improved by the end of the program. 74% also thought they had made contacts during the program that may assist them in finding future employment.

Finding 73 GEP participants reported a high level of satisfaction with the program overall.

When asked to rate aspects of the program, the majority of GEP participants surveyed gave the program positive scores on the following factors: relevance of placements to career goals, on-the-job support and training, opportunities to learn new employment-related skills, training before the placement, and rate of pay.

When asked about potential barriers to participation, respondents indicated that transportation (92%), child care (86%), and career counseling (81%) were not issues.

Overall satisfaction with the GEP was high with 79% of participants surveyed, giving a response of 1 or 2 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant very satisfied and 5 meant very unsatisfied. General comments provided indicated that the program was excellent, provided work experience, and would be recommended to others.

When asked to rate aspects of the program, participants surveyed gave the program positive scores. 48% indicated the rate of pay was satisfactory. Participants who attended focus groups indicated they were somewhat satisfied with the wages they received – all would have liked to have been paid more but found the current rate of pay manageable for their financial needs.

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When asked to rate the level of influence that the program had on various decisions, participants generally thought the program was a positive influence on their decisions about pursuing further education, choosing a career, and staying in Newfoundland and Labrador.

All GEP participants who attended a focus group considered the program a success and highly recommended the program.

Recommendation 27. *The GEP is highly successful and, with a few exceptions (see following), should continue its basic operation essentially as is.*

Finding 74 Most GEP participants complete the full length of their placement and continue to work with their employer after the GEP is completed.

58% of participants surveyed stayed with their employer for the full length of the GEP. Of those who did stay, 82% also continued to work with the employer after the GEP was completed and 67% were in the same position they held during their placement. The average number of months with the employer after the placement was 13. The majority (85%) had not worked at different jobs within the company. Most (74%) had also received a higher salary. Those who did not remain with their employer beyond the GEP placement left because of low pay, other employment opportunities or the relocation of a spouse or partner.

Of those participants surveyed who did not complete the GEP placement, 42% left to pursue other employment opportunities and 38% left for “other” reasons including having children, health reasons, and personal reasons.

According to employers surveyed, 79% of participants stayed with the organization for the full length of the GEP and 73% continued to work with the organization after the program was completed. Of those who did stay with the organization, 73% were working in the same position and 80% were receiving a higher salary. 60% of employers in focus groups said the graduates were still working there and most businesses were prepared to hire the client once the program was over. Employers in focus groups noted that some clients will use the program to secure the experience they need and will then move on to another better paying position, which was sometimes out of province. One business indicated that all recruits under the program have left the province.

Employers surveyed indicated that of those who did not continue with the organization, 43% left to pursue other employment opportunities, 36% left for other reasons (including returning to school), and 21% left because of the employer’s inability to continue employment without the wage subsidy.

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According to employers surveyed, the average number of months the participant was employed after the subsidy ended (including those still working there) was 14.33.

Finding 75 GEP employers think the program is beneficial for both themselves and participants.

A significant majority of employers surveyed (74%) indicated that they would not have hired someone full-time if the GEP had not been in place. The majority (59%) also said that they would not have hired a recent graduate if the program had not been in place.

96% of GEP employers surveyed thought that the program was a benefit to them as an employer. The main benefits identified were the subsidized wages (40%), the opportunity to train an individual (21%), and the ability to bring in staff to fill existing vacancies (19%). All employers surveyed said that they would hire a graduate through the program again and 97% said they would recommend the GEP program to a colleague. Overall, 64% of employers were very satisfied with the program and 33% were somewhat satisfied.

Several GEP employers who attended focus groups thought one of the biggest benefits of the program was the 12 month duration, and that if it could be increased to 16 then that would be even better.

Many GEP employers interviewed indicated they may have hired someone if they had not received the GEP – but not at that time or for that number of hours. Therefore, the program enabled them to hire someone when needed for a full year. The GEP is highly valued by the employers interviewed and is used not to address temporary staffing needs but more as a tool to develop their workforce. Employers use the program to assess if workers are suitable for permanent work, provide graduates with employment experience, and cushion the costs incurred in training their workers. Some employers noted it is particularly valuable when hiring an apprentice and developing their skills. 95% of employers interviewed indicated they would participate in the program again.

The responses of GEP employers surveyed indicate that the program has a positive impact on graduates' employability skills. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 represents "excellent" and 5 "poor", 57% of employers rated participants' employability skills as 1 or 2 when they started with the organization. There was a considerable increase to 87% of employers indicating they thought participants' employability skills were adequate (1 or 2) at the end of the program.

Internal stakeholders interviewed also thought that graduates do not necessarily gain the employment skills they need through their education. They suggested that a training component

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of the GEP would allow graduates to develop the specific skills they need to work with their employer and would make the program more attractive to both participants and employers.

Recommendation 28. *There should be a training allowance of \$500 for every GEP employee. This increases the value of the experience to the employee, provides the employee with greater skills (also a benefit to the employer), and instills in graduates the importance of training and continual learning in the employment world.*

Finding 76 Participants and employers suggested the GEP could be improved by increasing the wage subsidy, offering a completion bonus, improving access to program information, and increasing the overall flexibility of the program.

Participants surveyed indicated that a student debt reduction voucher would be a very strong enticement to participate in and complete the GEP. The average amount suggested by participants for a student debt voucher was \$2000. Participants who attended focus groups were also interested in the idea of a completion bonus with different options – paying down on student debt, a tuition voucher for future education, or cash in hand.

Employers interviewed suggested that mechanisms be put in place to encourage workers to continue working in the province beyond the initial year under GEP, especially in industries where skills shortages occur. In particular, they suggested providing tuition repayment vouchers or other mechanisms that could repay student debt to workers who remain in the province to work, suggesting that such assistance continue for a 3-5 year period. 65% of employers surveyed thought it would be of benefit to stagger the subsidy to provide higher wages to the graduates as they become more experienced over time.

77% of employers thought it would be of benefit to offer a completion bonus to graduates to encourage them to finish the full GEP. The average suggested amount of the completion bonus was \$1,434.

Employers in focus groups suggested that the subsidy be increased; explaining that this amount has remained the same for 20 years and no longer reflects the changes in the labour market. Most suggested an extra \$2,000 - \$5,000 per year.

The wage subsidy was largely considered to be quite fair by employers interviewed (75% thought the subsidy rate was good), but in some cases employers are still not able to provide wages that will encourage people to stay in the province. Employers thought that once their GEP participants gained some experience they were in a better position to find work in markets where wages are higher.

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Several participants who attended focus groups thought the GEP should be more flexible around hours. They would rather work harder in the busy times and not have to “find work” in the less busy times.

When asked for specific suggestions on how the GEP could be improved, 18% of employers surveyed suggested increasing the length of the program. 78% suggested “other” improvements, including providing more information about the program to employers and graduates, increasing the overall flexibility of the program in terms of length and payment options, and increasing the efficiency of program administration related to approval and payment.

In focus groups GEP employers suggested that program applications (and other forms) should be online, the program should be better promoted, and the subsidy should be increased to between \$12,000 and \$15,000.

Employers interviewed suggested providing funding support for incremental training required for workers, improving access to program information, better promotion, and more incentives for participants like higher pay for the first 6 months.

Internal stakeholders interviewed also thought the GEP wage subsidy should be increased to make the positions more attractive. They suggested the wage subsidy be increased to be more than minimum wage.

Recommendation 29. *The GEP subsidy should increase from \$10,000 per year to \$15,000 per year, or 60% of actual wages, as this program subsidy has not increased in 20 years.*

Recommendation 30. *There should be a completion bonus for GEP participants who stay for the full length of the placement that is in the range of \$2,500 and is paid in cash. This would be a financial incentive to the graduate to stay for the duration of the placement. GEP employers would be urged to match or provide some additional portion of the completion bonus.*

Recommendation 31. *GEP employers should be required to increase their percentage contribution to the salary. Currently employers have to pay a minimum of 40% of salary.*

Finding 77 The majority of GEP participants and employers surveyed think the GEP encourages graduates to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador.

84% of participants surveyed thought that the GEP encouraged them to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador to work. 81% of GEP employers surveyed think the program enables young people to stay and work in Newfoundland and Labrador. 71% of employers also thought there

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are ways it can be improved to enable young people to stay in the province. 48% suggested higher subsidies and wages; 60% offered other suggestions including more promotion, more programs and increased flexibility within the programs, and offering completion bonuses.

Only 32% of GEP employers surveyed think the program encourages young people to return to Newfoundland and Labrador. In order to improve this, employers suggested increasing advertising and promotion of the program, and offering higher subsidies and wages (36%).

Participants who attended focus groups thought that the GEP had very little impact on keeping graduates in NL. They suggested that the people who leave need to make large amounts of money to pay off their loans, and that the amount a GEP pays cannot compete with that. Those who stay make a conscious decision to stay and make sacrifices to do so.

Employers who attended focus groups agreed that the GEP does not pay enough to keep people in Newfoundland and Labrador whose main priority in finding employment is wages, but it does help those who want to work here to find an attachment to the labour force and stay. These employers thought that student debt was the primary cause of graduates leaving the province. Employers interviewed also thought the GEP had limited success in keeping people in the province. As noted, some workers will leave the province once they have secured sufficient experience. Employers were also consistent in their response that higher wages are what really drives workers to other areas of the country for work, and that unless the province can meet those wages people will continue to leave. Many employers noted that workers are driven to earn higher wages because of student debt. Therefore, programs that would assist students in reducing their debt while working in the province are seen as offering the potential to retain young people.

Internal stakeholders interviewed also suggested that financial incentives are required to encourage graduates to stay in NL. Higher wages, tax breaks and a willingness to pay expenses such as moving costs to employment positions within the province may provide encouragement for youth to stay in the province.

Finding 78 Most GEP employers do not think a requirement for employers to pay minimum wage before a subsidy would make any difference to them.

When asked specifically about the possibility of adding a requirement to the GEP program that employers pay minimum wage before the subsidy to make it a competitive wage (instead of the current subsidy approach), 45% of employers surveyed indicated that this would make no difference to employers; 33% thought it would make the program less attractive to employers and 22% said it would be more attractive.

10.3. Graduate Employment Program Variations

10.3.1. Graduate Transition to Employment Program (Memorial University)

The Graduate Transition to Employment Program (GTEP) is the Graduate Employment Program as administered by Memorial University. Memorial secures a block of funding from HRLE and delivers the GTEP from application to completion for both the employers and the graduates. They also require graduates to participate in professional development programs at MUN (4 one hour sessions). They are able to offer quick turnarounds and customized service to the people who use the program. The program is highly thought of and their research documents their success in obtaining a 95% employment rate at the end of the program.

Finding 79 The program is considered successful and responsive to the needs of both graduates and employers. It is of special interest to international students.

The GTEP is a program that can enable graduates to stay in the province, even at an entry level position. According to the university it is a “fabulous program with lots of success stories, particularly for international students.” It does enable international students to get significant work experience here in the province and has led to some becoming permanent residents.

Finding 80 The university would like the subsidy to be increased and/or to require the employer to offer a higher salary.

The challenge with the GTEP is the same as with the GEP (and the GEI as well, which is discussed below) – the subsidy is not enough to enable the employers to compete in the current labour market. Generally employers offer matching funds to the GTEP subsidy (around \$20,000 per year), but they need to offer more in order to attract new graduates .

Finding 81 The university would like to be supported for the administration of the program and not to have to re-apply each year for the same funds.

The university receives \$300,000 for this program annually for 30 GTEP placements. They receive no funds for administration, even though they offer services above and beyond the application and processing of the program. The university must also reapply every year for the same program. They would prefer a block amount of funding over a multi-year period, to allow flexibility in the allowance of funds and improve efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of the program.

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Recommendation 32. *HRLE should be able to enter multi-year funding contracts with organizations interested in long-term participation in the GEP program and its variants. (This should apply to third-party contracts only, not to individual employment contracts.)*

10.3.2. Graduate Employment Initiative (College of the North Atlantic)

The Graduate Employment Initiative (GEI) is the Graduate Employment Program as administered by the College of the North Atlantic.

Finding 82 The GEI is a positive program with a lot of potential for both employers and employees.

The program is very highly thought of by CNA. They count its strengths as:

- Definitely keeps people in the province
- Gives them an opportunity to get some experience for a full year
- Connects them with a potential long term employer
- Gives them greater opportunity to find employment in their field of study

Finding 83 While the GEI is a program with a lot of potential, very few CNA graduates take advantage of it – most graduates seem intent on following opportunities outside the province and are not interested in what the GEI can offer them here.

One major challenge for the GEI is that there are few graduates who actually apply for it – the number of employers inquiring about the program is higher than the number of graduates interested in it. The college promotes it to the graduates; last year it sent direct mail about the GEI to all 5200 graduates in addition to newspaper ads and promotion to the alumni association, but despite these actions the level of interest in the program did not increase significantly. It is possible that graduates form an early impression that there are no suitable or interested employers in the province, and do not remain here long enough after graduation for that impression to alter.

Finding 84 If the GEI were more flexible for seasonal employers, this might result in increased interest from employers and graduates.

Another challenge is that there is no seasonal component to the GEI – even if employers can best offer seasonal work, they still must hire graduates for 12 consecutive months. If this were addressed, perhaps by providing a hiatus in the program during seasonal shutdowns or slowdowns, this might result in an increase in interest from employers and graduates in sectors where this type of work pattern is the norm.

11. Faculty-Focused Education and Work Experience Programs

11.1. Small Enterprise Co-op Placement Assistance Program (SECPAP)

This program provides private sector employers with a 50% wage subsidy for students enrolled in co-op education programs and who are employed on work term placements. The objectives of the program are to:

- Expose small businesses throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to the value of co-operative education, thereby creating a long-term demand for co-operative education students and graduates.
- Present the small business sector and entrepreneurial activity in general as viable and attractive career options to co-operative education students.

The SECPAP is applicable to faculties at Memorial that include a work term: Human Kinetics and Recreation, Economics, Masters in Social Psychology, Computer Science, Commerce, and Engineering. The program is administered by the university and provides a direct subsidy to employers who would not otherwise be able to afford a work term student.

Finding 85 SECPAP is a successful program that is in high demand. It provides an opportunity to employers who normally would not be able to afford work term students.

Finding 86 The program is under-funded compared to the demand. The university would like to be able to offer more positions and higher wages to students.

The program consistently uses 100% of the allotments and could always allocate more. The university would like to increase the wages paid to the students.

Finding 87 The university would like to introduce the program to the not-for-profit sector.

Currently, the only eligible sector is small business. There was previously a portion of the program targeted to the voluntary, not-for-profit sector, but it was removed. The university would like to be able to reinstate that sector into the eligibility criteria, with the funding to implement it.

Finding 88 The administration of the program is generally good, but if the funding were secured for multi-year contracts instead of one year, the problem of short notice would be eliminated.

Generally, the administration of the program is considered efficient. The only identified challenge is the lateness of notice for funding, which makes it more difficult for the programs to

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make it available to all the work term placements. The proposal to HRLE is a joint one with the College of the North Atlantic. Because the program is essentially the same each year, Memorial would prefer a longer term contract – perhaps 3 years. This would enable them to spend more time in planning and implementation and less on proposal writing. Reporting on a quarterly basis vs. the semester basis also creates extra work.

11.2. Professional Practice Seminar and School Placement Program

Based on evidence that teacher shortages were emerging in intermediate and secondary subject specializations (mathematics, physics, chemistry, French, computer technology, physical education, art, and music), particularly in rural areas, the Faculty of Education at Memorial University developed the Professional Practice Seminar and School Placement Program. The program provides assistance to Faculty of Education students to take part in a comprehensive seminar-based instructional component, as well as a four-week placement in the school system. The program complements the mandatory internship placement of the Bachelor of Education program.

Students face a competitive process to be accepted into the program and students who are specializing in subject areas in highest demand (French, math, sciences, and physical education) are given priority. Currently, the focus is on the high schools (and students who are specializing in high school studies) and there is more demand than there are positions. There is interest expressed from students in the primary and elementary areas as well.

Once selected, the students undergo a 6 week program – 4 weeks in the rural classroom and 2 weeks allocated to in class work. The selected students receive three course credits once the program is completed.

Finding 89 The results of the programs indicate participants develop a more favourable assessment of working in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, which translates to the majority of them working in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

The program started in 2000 with 50 placements per year @\$3,000. This was subsequently increased to 70 placements per year and the remuneration was reduced to \$2,000 per placement. In some years, more than 80% of the students involved in the program do end up in rural teaching settings. The financial aspect of the program does assist them with student debt reduction as well.

Finding 90 There is a high demand for the program and if funding were available it would welcome the expansion of the program to the primary and elementary teaching fields.

The relationship between the Faculty of Education and HRLE is considered quite positive and there are no issues identified with the funding process. The Faculty would like to be able to offer the program to more students – particularly in the elementary and primary areas – if more funding were available.

11.3. Youth Opportunities Marine Co-op

The Youth Opportunities Marine Co-op program provides students and employers with financial assistance to cover salaries and expenses incurred in arranging work terms placements.

Finding 91 The program is valuable in helping to secure work placements for students.

The main strength of the program identified is that it provides funding to secure work placements for students that may not otherwise be available to them. These placements often also help students meet the sea training course requirement.

The program provides enough flexibility to meet needs as they come up and covers the cost of travel as well as providing a subsidy for the student.

The school appreciates the support of the department and believes that this partnership is very valuable to the students.

Finding 92 The program could be improved by providing multi-year funding.

The only weakness of the program identified is the need to apply for funding on an annual basis. The program could be improved by having multi-year funding agreements that would allow for flexibility in planning and improved logistics.

Higher funding levels would also be beneficial.

Finding 93 Program administration is rated positively.

No problems were identified related to administration of the program. The organization and department were able to work cooperatively to develop administrative processes.

Finding 94 Financial support for students, additional supports to enable transitions from education to employment, and better promotion of opportunities in the marine sector are needed.

Although there are opportunities for employment in the marine sector, some people seem to have difficulty acquiring the loans, grants and scholarships needed to allow them to do programs.

Graduates also require more programming to help them make the transition from education into industry. There needs to be more emphasis on job search techniques and employability skills. Increased promotion of employment opportunities in the marine sector is also needed.

11.4. Rural /Practice Medical

The Rural Practice Work Experience for Medical Students Program, administered by the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association, provides incentives for medical students to gain work experience while working in rural areas of the province. The program is viewed as an early recruitment intervention. Reimbursement is in the form of combined wages and tuition vouchers. The program objectives are:

- To provide medical students the opportunity to participate in work related to their chosen profession.
- To provide unique rural shadowing experiences in cooperation with practicing physicians.
- To provide community health organizations/associations with the opportunity to educate medical students about their role early in the medical career.
- To provide medical students with first-hand knowledge about how rural physicians practice and how they relate to specialists and rural regional hospitals.
- To provide support to physicians investigating an issue in their practice.
- To provide medical students with a means of reducing personal debt; this inevitably influences decisions regarding the location of future practice.
- To support Newfoundlanders studying medicine outside the province/country to experience rural practice and develop professional networks.

Finding 95 Program administration is good and the program itself is flexible.

The administrative processes of the program are rated well. Templates were developed internally to increase the efficiency of reporting. Since these were developed during the first year of the program, the administration of the program has gone well.

The program also provides a great deal of flexibility, allowing administrators to use it to meet the needs of particular situations. For example, not all placements are in rural areas of the province due to the limited amount of time students have off to relocate to a rural location, and NL students studying abroad can also be included in the program.

Finding 96 The program is valuable to medical students and benefits them by providing experience, access to mentors, and reducing their student debt.

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Through the program students are provided valuable opportunities to gain exposure to medical research, gain mentors, and develop long-term job-shadowing opportunities. Encouraging Canadian students to look at medical careers in rural settings is positive and gives them opportunities to network and gain exposure in that environment.

The program is also helpful in reducing medical students' debt. The academic year is longer for medical students, which means they do not have much time over the summer to earn money. This program caters to medical students and provides them with the four to six week placements they need.

Finding 97 The program could be improved by broadening eligibility.

The program could be improved by making it available to medical school students from universities across Canada as well as pre-medicine students. There are not very many graduates from other universities who come to the province, and this could be a way to expose them to work in Newfoundland and Labrador. Pre-medicine students could also use the program to explore careers in medicine in the province.

Recommendation 33. *Discussions among the stakeholders of the Rural Practice program of the Faculty of Education and the Rural Physician program of the Faculty of Medicine should be expanded to other professional disciplines for careers that have a shortage in rural areas – nursing, lab technology, etc. These programs should be made available to students at colleges and universities outside of Newfoundland and Labrador as well.*

12. Community Grants to Youth Serving Organizations

12.1. Career, Employment Programs

12.1.1. Conservation Corp

The Conservation Corps, administered by a provincial board of directors, runs a variety of programs related to environmental concerns. While the core funding for programs is from the Student Investment and Opportunity Corporation, 25% of project costs are contributed by Green Team proponents. Principal focus areas for programs are:

- Employment creation / job placements
- Career/personal counseling and life skills
- Training and job readiness
- Community development
- Environmental conservation and rehabilitation
- Cultural heritage conservation and enhancement
- Public education
- Entrepreneurial support

Green Team Program – recruits, trains and employs young people across the province each summer. Projects are related to environmental and cultural heritage enhancement.

Environmental Leadership Program – volunteer work experience program that selects between 5 and 6 young people annually to work internationally and then return to NL to work in the Green Team Program. This program helps young people develop project management and leadership skills.

Internship Program – each year young people are placed in conservation-related internships for 12 weeks.

Finding 98 The Conservation Corps is a successful program that offers communities the ability to implement environmental programmes in their communities. It is a rewarding, focused, team-based program for the participants with many opportunities for personal growth and development.

The Conservation Corps programs have a successful history, particularly the Green Team programs, which affect the majority of the participants. The Conservation Corps program originated outside of HRLE and was transferred there in a later re-organization. This has created some challenges for the Corps programs in meeting the goals of HRLE, particularly in the

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employment of IS clients. The Green Team program is made up of small (4 member) teams that work intensively on community-based projects and also work within the community. The community must have a sponsoring organization that contributes cash (\$3,000), supervisory responsibilities, a lot of training (a full week in areas such as occupational health and safety, first aid, and media relations) to prepare them for the worksite, and a regional camp. There is a regional supervisor who provides on the ground support and they are constantly evaluating and monitoring what is happening. Skill development and training is a large component of being on a Green Team – participants must take part in 4-5 environmental days and are responsible for leading public education and outreach initiatives on those issues.

Finding 99 Incorporating IS clients into Green Teams is an ongoing challenge for the organization because of differences in age and skills. This mismatch makes it more difficult to reach the goals of the Green Teams.

The average age of Green Team participants is 19 (and is falling because of the lack of senior post-secondary students interested in returning to their home communities). Some of the challenges include trying to incorporate IS clients who may be much older and with different skill sets than post-secondary skills. HRLE has specific goals for the number of IS clients to be employed and it is difficult for the Conservation Corps to reach those goals because of the lack of suitable candidates.

Finding 100 The Conservation Corps is struggling with the administration of the programs with increasing costs and stagnant funding levels. They are faced with either downloading increasing costs on community partners or else diminishing the number of teams.

The Conservation Corps writes a proposal to continue funding every year, which is considered onerous. Because there has only been one increase in funding in recent years, essentially HRLE now only pays for 2/3 of the Green Team program. The organization is getting more concerned about financial sustainability over the long term. If HRLE does not increase their funding, they may be faced with either decreasing the number of teams or increasing the community partners' contribution from \$3,000.

Finding 101 The Green Team strives to forge a strong attachment among participants to the community and the issues of the community, with the intent they will want to be involved in the future of the community and the province.

Quote from Employer in FG:

I want to be able to talk about the Conservation Corps – it is the best program of its kind across Canada --one of the very few programs that work with the environment. It is stellar.

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The Green Team program anticipates [that] the experience does create an attachment to the province among participants because it is designed to draw out their desire to stay in the province by creating environmental awareness etc. They connect with the community and the issues of the community and the province – some want to stay to help solve those problems.

12.1.2. Youth Exploring Trades - CNA Placentia Campus

Youth Exploring Trades is a 36 week exploratory program for “at-risk” youth to help them discover apprentice-based trades. The objectives are:

- Promoting a greater understanding and appreciation of the challenges and barriers facing young people.
- Developing strategies to overcome these barriers and challenges by developing individual action plans.
- Encouraging lifelong learning for young people.
- Developing partnerships with local businesses that will provide paid work terms and become mentors to participants.
- Instilling confidence in local businesses in hiring apprentices upon completion of entry-level training programs.
- Providing equal opportunity for male and females to discover the benefits of skilled trades.
- Providing young people with opportunities for personal growth and work experience.
- Forming partnerships with other groups and organizations and providing them with the opportunity to meet the youth of our area and share with them their expertise and knowledge. Both groups will realize the value of their individual contributions to the region.

The program includes modules in personal development, career planning, trades-shop exposure and work placements.

Finding 102 The strengths of the program are the qualified instructors, the personal development program, and the sustained contact with instructors while in the workplace.

The program works well because of the qualified instructors involved in the program. The instructors stay in contact with the students when they are working, which is very important.

The personal development program worked very well. Changes were evident in the participants; they had increased independence, excitement, interest and changed attitudes.

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“The change in participants from day one to the last day was awesome!”

Finding 103 Program administration was rated positively.

A good working relationship was developed between the project team and the HRLE contact. The group met on a continuous basis, which contributed to the program’s success.

Finding 104 The program could be improved by conducting more information sessions with businesses and providing more transitional support to participants.

Finding placements for students in rural areas is one of the challenges of the program. It takes effort to get businesses on side. More information sessions with businesses and better promotion of the program in the community may increase the placements available.

Participants could also be assisted by expanding the program to include supports to help them make the transition from the program into education or employment. Young people need more resources to show them what is out there and how to do things.

Finding 105 This program is designed for youth at risk and is very good at meeting their needs.

This program is designed, and well-suited for, youth at risk and individuals with attachment to IS. Initial assessments are done to determine the needs of participants, and then these needs are met. The program builds their self-esteem and confidence. The participants become part of the college, which is very important.

13. Summer Career Exploration Employment Programs

13.1.1. Marine Camp

In partnership with the Marine Institute, this program was designed to create awareness amongst high school students of the various career opportunities available in the marine and related industries. High school students attend one of three different week long camps throughout the summer. Camps include a career camp (Marine Pursuits 1 & 2), an underwater robotics camp, and camp Glow (for young women interested in firefighting). The objectives of the program are:

- To increase awareness among high school students of the career opportunities available in the marine industries.
- To provide students the opportunity to explore their career options, make new friends, and have fun learning through hands-on activities.
- To introduce students to the Marine Institute and the various academic programs offered.
- To discuss career opportunities with the students and get them thinking about their futures.
- To provide students from rural communities the opportunity to experience university life in St. John's

Finding 106 The strength of the program includes the exposure of secondary students to a wide spectrum of marine careers.

Finding 107 Considering the prevalence of marine careers in Newfoundland and Labrador, the support of this program through funding of the administration and co-ordination of the program should enhance the uptake of marine related careers and the retention of those youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Based upon an interview with the Marine Institute, the program is very successful and has evolved from one Marine Pursuits camp to include a second, more advanced Marine Pursuits 2 camp for students that want to come back the following year and do more. According to the Marine Institute, the program is well received, and broadens their perception of what marine careers are while exposing them to the variety of marine careers.

13.1.2. Exploits Valley Economic Development Corporation - FAM Tour

This program consisted of a familiarization tour (FAM Tour) of the Exploits Valley Region for summer students working in the tourism industry. The students were hired directly by the 13 heritage sites in Zone 12 (Exploits Valley) through the SWASP program.

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The HRLE assistance was brought in by funding a one day familiarization tour in year one and a two day familiarization tour in year two. The goal of the tour was to provide an opportunity for the students to familiarize themselves with the region and what they would be talking to tourists about at the heritage centres. They needed to be able to explain their own heritage site but also to be able to explain the other 12 heritage sites.

Finding 108 A small program like the “Fam Tour” added significantly to the job experience of the students, providing them with a more rewarding summer employment experience and a better understanding of their cultural heritage. It leveraged the benefit of the SWASP dramatically.

The program enriched the knowledge base and consequently the working experience of the students. It enabled them to have a better understanding of their working environment, provided them with a networking opportunity, and enabled them to approach the visitors as more informed workers and to better fulfill their information requests.

According to the proponent, the program worked quite well and HRLE was excellent to work with on it.

13.1.3. Baccalieu Trail Tourism Ambassador Program

This program includes an orientation and training session as well as a FAM tour for summer students working in the tourism industry. The ambassador program consists of a coordinator, an assistant coordinator, and 5 students. They are taught about the history of the area to become ambassadors and receive significant training (OHS training and SuperHost training through Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador) to ensure they are able to promote the area.

The students are provided with uniforms and then they are taken to various events, particularly in the St. John’s area, where they approach the crowds and promote the Baccalieu Trail to entice people to come visit there. They rent a van for the summer to eliminate the challenge of travel for young people.

The program is offered in partnership with Service Canada (70% Service Canada and 30% HRLE). HRLE contributes towards the administration and 50% of the van cost.

Finding 109 The program is successful because it is team based, structured with large amounts of training, and creates high expectations of the students’ ability to perform in public. Aspects of the program such as extra training and having the van costs included in the funding have enabled them to be successful.

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The students learn a lot about responsibility and work ethic and develop their self confidence as well. According to the stakeholder:

They grow roots and get a better appreciation of where they are from and who they are. It solidifies their attachment to the area and that has to help in the long term when they make decisions about whether to settle in Newfoundland and Labrador as adults.

Finding 110 The program has not been so successful in bringing IS clients into the program because applicants do not have the required skills to be successful.

There are challenges with trying to integrate IS clients into this program because the team approach, where everyone is required to act as “ambassador”, requires very specific skill sets. It has been difficult to find these skill sets among IS applicants.

Finding 111 Working with the regional office of HRLE has been very productive. They are very supportive of the program, and are flexible and accommodating.

According to the stakeholder, the assistance provided by HRLE has been excellent, with no problems encountered either in application, administration, or processing of the project.

13.1.4. Irish Loop Tourism Assoc. - Enhanced Youth Employment

This program included an eight-week employment program with workshops, an orientation session, and a familiarization tour for students working in the tourism industry.

Finding 112 The strengths of the program include the ability to use funds to develop other funding partnerships and the standardization of the level of service across the region.

This program provides the tourism association with the capacity to bring together organizations and attract additional funding.

The impact of the program is that it provides a standard level of services across the region; regardless of the community the same interpretation could be provided and the same questions could be answered.

Finding 113 More contact between community partners and department is encouraged.

The program could have benefited from more contact with the department. Limited engagement and communication between partners contributes to program uncertainty. All relationships require an investment of time from partners but is necessary for success.

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Finding 114 Funding decisions are made too late in the year.

The approval process did not occur in a timely manner. Approval was needed in May but not received until mid-June. Hiring was delayed as a result.

Finding 115 Program improvements suggested include more focus on career planning, longer, more meaningful placements, and multi-year funding agreements.

One identified area for improvement was the need for more career and education planning supports for youth. Guidance counselors in schools are challenged to provide this service as they are often spending more time providing crisis management.

Another suggestion is that placements be longer than eight weeks; include a training component and a detailed work plan. This may ensure a more meaningful work experience than is currently provided. Poor quality work placements risk reinforcing every negative perception of employment opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Multi-year funding agreements would also be an improvement. This would provide more stability for programs and a greater ability to plan.

14. Employment Readiness Programs

14.1.1. Youth at Promise - Choices for Youth

The Youth at Promise program is a basic literacy skills program that provides a supported learning environment for youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who face significant barriers in accessing educational programs. The program goals are:

- To create a supportive learning environment, which will help youth to learn at a level and pace that is appropriate for them.
- To support youth to obtain a basic literacy level that will enable them to access subsequent education, employment and personal development opportunities.

The program objectives are:

- Re-introduce learning to youth who have dropped out of school or who have fragmented educational histories
- To address other issues impacting these youth that fall outside of the learning environment
- To increase confidence and self-esteem of youth
- To offer an individual program to youth base on personal academic needs
- To create an opportunity for youth to achieve success in a learning environment
- To ensure all aspects of the program are youth friendly, flexible and non-judgmental
- To provide basic nutritional supplements as part of a learning opportunity
- To facilitate employment, educational, and skill development brokerage functions to connect youth to additional community opportunities

14.1.2. St. Francis Foundation/ WayPoints - Youth Are Working

The 42 week program is a comprehensive skills program including community-based work placements for youth (ages 17-24) in the St. John's region who face barriers to employment. The goals of Youth Are Working are to provide youth who face barriers to employment with the prerequisites needed to overcome these obstacles, thereby helping them find and maintain employment. The program provides social and independent learning skills, practical work experience, and continued learning opportunities. The objectives are:

- To provide youth with access to the labour market by advocating on their behalf, by providing opportunities to gain skills and work experience, and by encouraging lifelong learning;
- To ensure youth have the information, skills and work experience they need to find and keep a job;

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- To observe and learn from other successful youth employment programs in Canada and around the world;
- To engage youth serving agencies to work together, to build on each other's particular strengths, to offer a more successful, holistic approach;
- To engage the business community in assisting youth serving agencies in the process of reintegration and rehabilitation of youth;
- To utilize the stability of a sustained funding arrangement to form solid partnerships and secure other sources of financial support, both public and private;
- To empower youth to realize their potential, to enhance their skills, and to provide them with the opportunity to recognize their abilities through work experience and pro-social activities;
- To act as a catalyst – to set into operation the conditions and forces that lead to change for youth based on the understanding the change must come from within; and
- To share the model for success with other Canadian communities.

The Youth Are Working program originated between the St. Francis Foundation (now renamed “WayPoints”) and the federal government in 2003, but it did not have the high school component. This was added when it was determined that the participants were not being successful when they did try to go back to school.

HRLE enabled WayPoints to hire an employment outreach person and a high school teacher who helps the youth prepare for the return to school. Most of the 10 youth in the program every year have 0-10 high school credits. The program supports these youth (18-24 years) in getting their high school transcript. This serves to diminish one barrier of them being successful in the workplace (that of low reading comprehension) and to enhance their interest and likely success if they do return to school.

Finding 116 HRLE funding enabled WayPoints to enhance an existing program in a critical area – improving participants’ comprehension, supporting them in earning high school credits, and encouraging them to continue their education to complete their high school education.

The HRLE Funding also allowed WayPoints to be creative in preparing participants to go back to school, and to assess whether they needed any other intervention (for example, around learning disabilities).

Finding 117 Not all project sponsors are clear what are the goals of the SIOC program.

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Some projects that have been funded by SIOC are in response to unsolicited proposals, and some of these proponents have not been aware of, or clear about, the program objectives. Making sure that proponents understand the program would assist proponents in ensuring their proposals meet the goals of HRLE.

Finding 118 Youth Are Working does keep youth participants here in the province to work and help them complete their high school education. It also directly addresses some of the many issues of youth at risk of being on IS or who are on IS.

The program has been very successful in helping to keep these youth in the province and developing an attachment between them and their workplaces, schools and the possibility of staying in Newfoundland and Labrador. The purpose of the program is to work with youth at risk of being on IS or who are currently on IS. It provides a lot of individual support and interventions and it has good results.

Finding 119 The organization would prefer multi-year funding to be put in place instead of having to reapply every year for the same support.

WayPoints reports they continually have to reapply for the same funding. This work is time-consuming and inefficient; they would prefer to be able to secure multi-year funding.

14.1.3. FINALY

HRLE funded the Youth LEAP (Leaders, Entrepreneurs and Partners) Conference 2005. The objective of this project is to raise youth awareness of opportunities in NL as leaders in their communities, and to inspire youth entrepreneurship and labour market development.

FINALY offers a range of programs including youth fiscal leadership, the Breaking Barriers website, a youth development officer, and a newsletter.

Finding 120 The funding is flexible and program administration processes are excellent.

The funding provided was flexible enough to apply to multiple budget areas. The contact at the department was excellent and provided ongoing support, making the application process and reporting very simple.

Finding 121 The program could be improved through access to core funding and multi-year funding agreements.

Currently, all funding is program-based and generally applied for on an annual basis. Core, multi-year funding would improve the stability of the program.

Recommendation 34. *There are many groups that work with youth at risk. Some of them currently offer employment assistance programs (FINALY and St. Francis Foundation, for example). These are successful programs that are tailored to their target population. Government should each year have a call for proposals to youth-serving agencies for innovative transitions to employment and/or education programs. This would make the process more transparent to all such groups and would enable HRLE to set out its goals for such pilots. The pilots should be evaluated each year with a possibility of renewal for 3 years.*

Recommendation 35. *Once these pilots have been in place for 3 years, they should be fully evaluated and either made a program of HRLE or discontinued, as it is an unnecessary strain on an organization to constantly be applying for funding.*

Recommendation 36. *All programs operated by external agencies and funded by HRLE should be regularly evaluated and the results of the evaluation made available to HRLE for input into subsequent project design and delivery.*

14.1.4. Other Programs

Other smaller programs were also included in the scope of this evaluation. As discussed in the Methods section, they were not included in the final evaluation.

15. Relationship with Youth Serving Organizations

HRLE has contractual relationships with several youth serving organizations through the SIOC. Specifically, these include:

- Choices for Youth
- College of the North Atlantic
- Community Youth Network
- Conservation Corps
- Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador for Youth (FINALY)
- Marine Institute (of Memorial University)
- Memorial University
- School Boards
- St. Francis Foundation (WayPoint)

As well, HRLE has contractual relationships to deliver programs to the following organizations:

- Baccalieu Trail Tourism Association
- Community Services Council
- Exploits Valley Development Association
- Irish Loop Tourism Association

(Although the mandates of these organizations are not specifically youth-serving, the mandates of the specific programs from these organizations that are described in this report are meant to focus on youth.)

HRLE has developed an Accountability Framework for employment programs offered by third party agencies that are funded by the Department. It is currently applied to projects funded under the Community Partnerships program, but potentially could be used for many of the SIOC programs.

Generally, the purpose of the Accountability Framework is to ensure that:

1. There are goals and objectives for each program that are in line with the department;
2. The programs funded have a plan to work towards the accomplishment of those goals and objectives;
3. Once the programs are completed, the reports sent back to the funding organization analyze each of the goals and objectives and how they were achieved or any variances; and
4. The funding department(s) has the appropriate tools and agreements developed and in place to facilitate this accountability process and subsequent evaluations.

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The Request for Proposals for the SIOC evaluation asked specifically whether the current template for funding proposals, the method used to assess and make recommendations related to funding proposals, the current contract template, and the organizations' required performance reports are in line with the purpose of SIOC.

In the evaluators' observations, all youth serving organizations commented on the positive working relationship they had with HRLE (none mentioned SIOC specifically). They did, however, have several suggestions around proposals and reporting in order to make them more in line with their own needs including the need for a proposal template which they thought would be useful. It is important to note that HRLE has developed an Accountability Framework that includes a proposal writing template, contract template, reporting requirements and data sharing; the applicability of this template to the services provided by SIOC agencies is addressed later in this evaluation.

Some organizations take it upon themselves to provide in-depth reports and proposals, while others are quite brief. Upon review of the proposals from these organizations for renewal of funding for their programs, they generally meet all the requirements for SIOC.

All organizations provide activity reports, to varying levels of detail. Few are evaluated independently and this is a challenge. It is important the work of the organizations which is publicly funded, be independently evaluated on a regular basis and the results reported to HRLE.

It is worth noting that incorporating IS clients into the programs was not defined as a specific goal under SIOC. However, targeting this group and supporting their needs is a priority for the Department, and the supporting IS clients to enter and benefit from post-secondary education is an area in which HRLE is expanding its activity.

The second question asked in the RFP was to determine if the required youth information to be used for performance measurement, monitoring, and evaluation is submitted to the department and if the information provided meets the needs outlined in the Accountability Framework.

Generally, the program information submitted to the department (that was available to the evaluators) by the various organization was not in a consistent format. Some organizations submitted program information regularly, while others were more intermittent. The information that was submitted was valuable and it is important to analyze and learn from the reports. (See recommendations that refer to departmental capacity.)

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The third question asked in the RFP was to determine if the current client assessment tools used by contracted community groups are in line with the purpose of the SIOC and, when relevant and meaningful, HRLE's accountability framework.

All of the client selection tools for the different programs ensured that clients were eligible for the programs: age and attachment to the educational system being the primary criteria for assessment. Some programs were also strongly encouraged to screen for attachment to IS, but this was not always possible for many of the programs and was therefore not always done.

Some programs are specifically designed to work with “at risk youth” who are either at risk as young offenders or by being attached to the IS system (or both). The eligibility criteria of these programs are exclusive to youth in these categories. The programs include Waypoints, Youth at Promise, Choices for Youth and others.

The fourth question asked in the RFP was to determine if there are appropriate protocols for sharing information between community agencies and HRLE, as are outlined in the accountability framework.

While SIOC did have agreements and protocols in place through the form of contracts, participant data was not always accessible for evaluation purposes. The Accountability Framework developed for community agencies includes data sharing protocols through systems such as ARMS. The department is exploring the adoption of the Accountability Framework for SIOC initiatives.

16. Income Support Clients

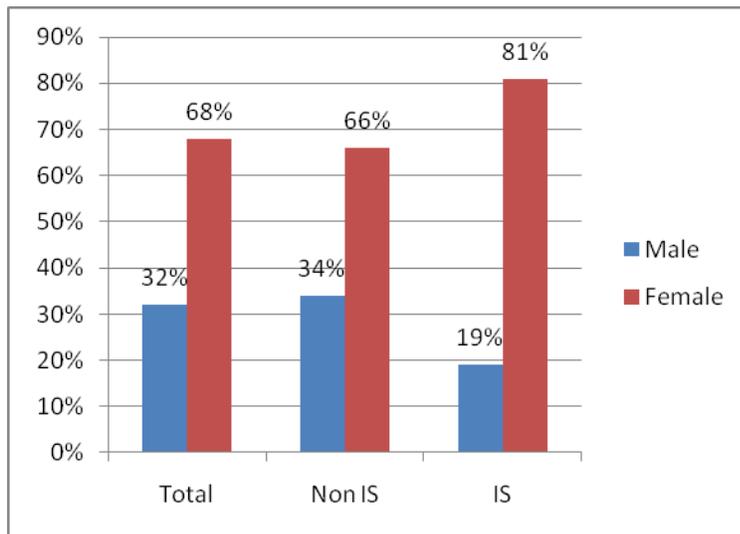
16.1. Income Support Participant Profile (SWASP)

There is no data on IS recipients for SEP or SWASP - Paid or SWASP-CSC.

16.2. IS-attached Participant and Non-IS Participant Profiles (GEP)

With the GEP statistics, we were able to construct a profile of both the general GEP population and a slice of that population that were on IS before participating in the program. **The comparative analysis below is for IS participants and non-IS participants within the GEP only.** Other programs, such as SEP and SWASP-Paid, did not contain sufficient data to generate separate profiles related to the participant's attachment to IS.

Figure 7 Sex of participants



Finding 122 IS-attached GEP participants are more likely to be female.

The general trend for higher participation of women in the GEP is even more striking for IS-attached participants. Men with IS attachment make up a relatively small percentage of GEP participants.

Finding 123 IS-attached GEP participants are more likely to be 30 years of age or older.

The average age of GEP participants in general is 26. Non-IS attached participants also have an average age of 26. The average age of IS-attached participants is 33, 7 years older than the

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average age of the other groups. 54% of IS-attached participants are between the ages of 30 and 35 or older.

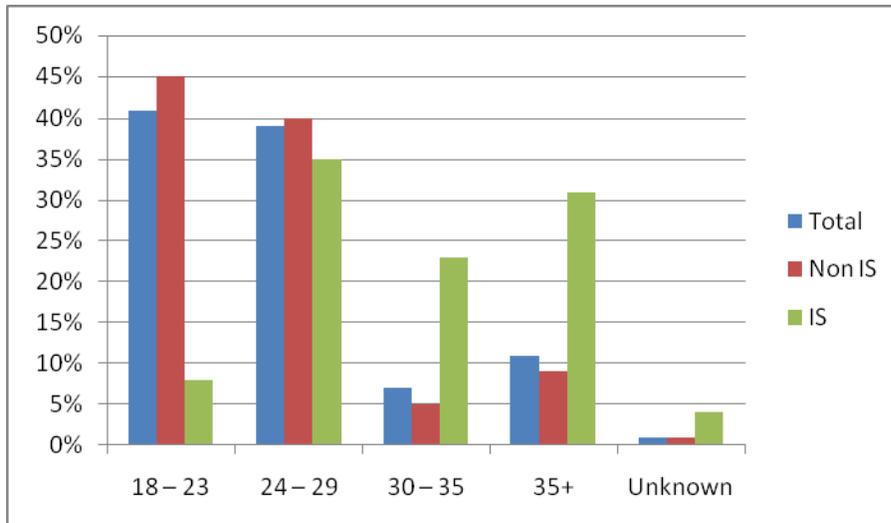


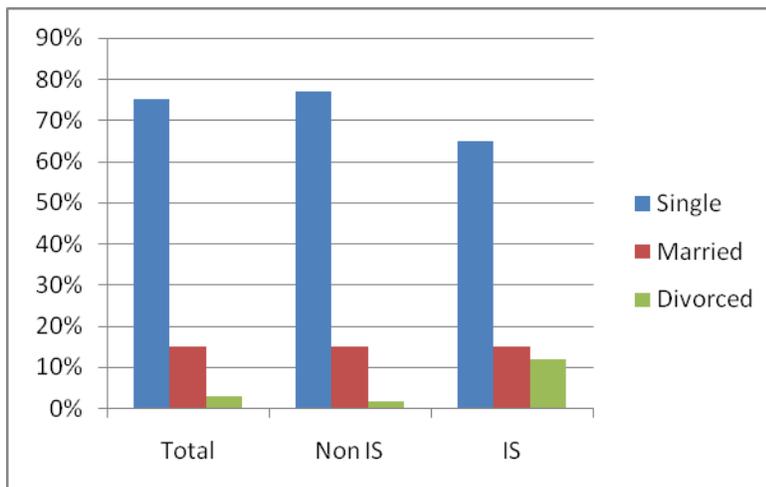
Figure 8 Age of participants

Finding 124 Analysis of data about rates of disability among participants is inconclusive.

It is not possible to conduct a comparative analysis of the rate of disability among the groups due to a high percentage of unknowns in the data.

Finding 125 Non-IS attached participants are more likely to be single and less likely to be divorced.

Figure 9 Marital Status



77% of non-IS attached participants reported their marital status as single compared to 65% of IS-attached participants. 12% of IS-attached participants reported their marital status as divorced compared to 2% of non-IS attached participants. The percentage of participants who reported their marital status as married was the same across all groups.

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Finding 126 IS attached participants are significantly more likely to have dependents.

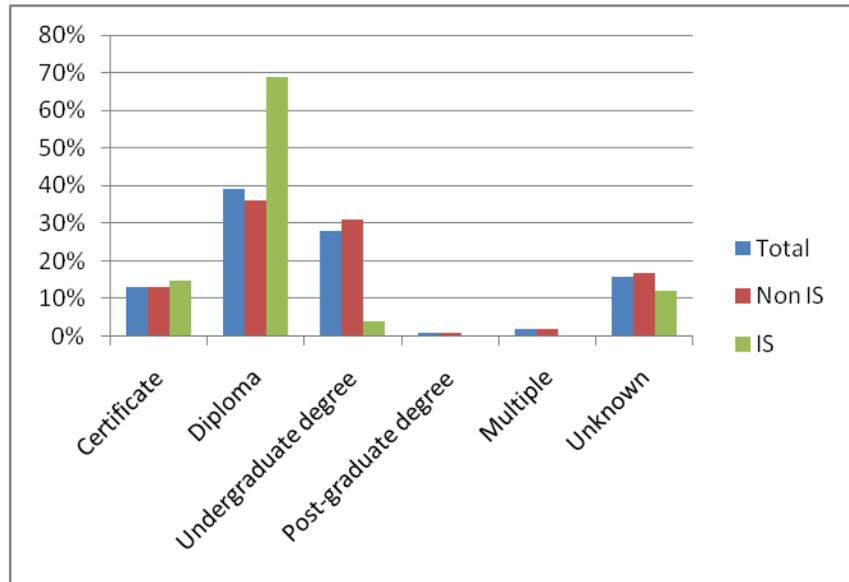
Only 15% of non-IS participants reported having dependents compared to 46% of IS-attached participants. There is also a considerably higher number of IS-attached participants whose dependent status is unknown (23%) compared to non-IS participants (6%).

Finding 127 IS-attached participants are significantly more likely to have completed a diploma granting program than any other type of education.

69% of IS-attached participants completed diploma granting programs compared to 36% of non-IS participants. IS-attached participants were significantly less likely to have completed a degree granting program, and none had completed a post-graduate program. 31% of non-IS participants had completed degree granting programs, 1% had completed a post-graduate degree and 2% had completed multiple programs.

Figure 10

Type of education completed



Finding 128 IS attached participants had a lower average salary than non-IS participants.

Figure 11

Average annual salary



62% of IS-attached participants had annual salaries in the range of \$15,001 and \$25,000 compared to 53% of non-IS participants. Only 4% of IS-attached participants had salaries in the range of \$25,001 and \$35,000 compared to 15% of non-IS participants. No IS-attached participants reported annual salaries above \$35,001. 6% of non-IS participants had salaries at or above that level.

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IS-attached participants had an average annual salary that was \$3,817 less than the average for non-IS participants.

Finding 129 Non-IS participants are slightly more likely to be in urban areas than IS-attached participants.

73% of non-IS participants were in urban areas of the province while only 65% of IS-attached participants were in urban areas. The percentage of participants in rural areas was 27% for non-IS participants and 35% for IS-attached participants.

Finding 130 Non-IS participants are more likely to have student loans.

85% of IS-attached participants received IS while they were attending post-secondary. However, 8% of non-IS participants did receive EI while attending post-secondary compared to 0% of the IS-attached participants.

45% of non-IS participants indicated they held student loans. Only 27% (n= 7 out of 26) of IS-attached participants indicated they held student loans (This percentage may not reflect the actual situation due to the small sample size).

Finding 131 IS-attached participants most likely to have been receiving IS prior to entering the GEP, while non-IS participants were most likely to have been looking for work.

81% of IS-attached participants were in receipt of IS prior to starting the GEP. Non-IS participants were most likely to have been looking for work (49%), working (34%), or pursuing other opportunities (28%) prior to starting the GEP. 8% of IS-attached participants were working, 23% were looking for work, and 12% were engaged in other pursuits.

Finding 132 Participation in non IS targeted SIOC programs among individuals with IS attachment is similar to that of the general population.

Based upon the program files, 6% of SWASP-Paid participants (10 individuals) and 12% of GEP participants (7 individuals) indicated they had received IS.

This rate is not far from that of the general population. As of mid-2008, for 18-29 year olds the “point-in-time” rate of individuals currently in receipt of IS is 7.9% (8.6% for the whole adult population). The rate for people who were in receipt of IS at some point in the preceding year is higher: 18-29 year olds = 12%; adult population = 13%.

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Table 1 Comparison of SWASP & GEP IS Rates to General Newfoundland and Labrador Population

| | | 18-29 year old | | Adult Population | |
|------------|-----|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| SWASP-Paid | GEP | Point in Time | Over last year | Point in Time | Over last year |
| 6% | 12% | 7.9% | 12% | 8.6% | 13% |

Focus groups and interviews with the Community Youth Network and internal stakeholders indicated staff frequently have difficulty recruiting individuals with IS attachment into programs. Where programs have targets for the number of IS attached participants they indicated these targets are rarely met. While this was a finding from the evaluation, it's important to note that these programs were not developed specifically for people attached to IS, rather a group identified as being at risk and in need of interventions and support.

(see Employment Readiness Chapter in particular).

Finding 133 Internal stakeholders think SEP is one of the most effective programs for individuals with attachment to IS.

Internal stakeholders interviewed thought the SEP was a good program to provide an early intervention to youth with IS attachment to help introduce them to the labour market and begin gaining transferable skills.

Recommendation 37. *The SEP is perhaps the best time to intervene with young people with an attachment to IS. HRLE should continue to aggressively promote work opportunities to these individuals. As well pre-interview training/counseling/role-playing is important to develop their skills for interviews and employability skills. This support should continue throughout their placement (see following recommendation).*

Recommendation 38. *HRLE should consider hiring summer mentors who keep in touch with and support any SEP employees with attachment to IS. The mentors would offer advice, guidance, and encouragement, demonstrating that it is possible for such students to become unattached from IS. Ideally these mentors would have been formerly attached to IS.*

Finding 134 There are many differences between the profiles of IS-attached GEP participants and non-IS GEP participants.

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As can be seen in the GEP profiles discussed above, IS-attached GEP participants were found more likely than non-IS participants to be female, over the age of 30, single or divorced, have dependents, have completed their post-secondary education at a diploma granting institution, receive lower pay, and slightly more likely to live in rural areas.

16.3. IS-attached Non-participants

As part of the evaluation research IS-attached youth who had not participated in any SIOC programs were interviewed to determine their level of awareness of the programs available and reasons for choosing not to participate, if any.

Finding 135 Awareness of programs available among non-participants is very low.

The large majority of non-participants³ interviewed did not think programs had been offered to them and were not aware of the programs that exist.

Finding 136 The challenges identified by non-participants include the need for career information and financial support.

Non-participants suggested that they needed job search assistance and career counseling.

Financial issues identified as challenges included the high cost of post-secondary education, and the complexity of the student loan application process. Non-participants also said that low paying jobs and the high cost of debt was an issue for them.

Finding 137 Non-participants suggested addressing these challenges with initiatives to target the high cost of post-secondary education.

Non-participants suggested either increasing funding for those pursuing post-secondary education or lowering the cost of post-secondary education. They also suggested providing grants based on financial need and academic performance, and lowering the interest rates on student loans.

Finding 138 Non-participants were unsure about employer's willingness to hire people with an attachment to IS.

Non-participants were not sure how employers would feel about hiring individuals attached to IS. Some suggested IS recipients may be perceived by potential employers as less motivated. Generally, non-participants thought hiring should be based on skills and experience.

³ Note to reader, due to weather interruptions, the number of non-participants interviewed was very low and these results may be skewed.

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Finding 139 Participants surveyed who had attachment to IS did not think there were barriers for them in participating in SWASP-Paid.

78% of the participants surveyed indicated that they did not receive IS while on the program. 90% of those who did receive IS did not think there were any obstacles or barriers to the program because of that.

Finding 140 GEP participants who had received IS did not think there were any barriers to their participation.

Only 12% of GEP participants surveyed indicated that they received assistance through IS while participating in GEP. Of those, 71% said that they did not find there were any barriers to their participation because they were on IS.

For one participant who attended a focus group, the GEP was a powerful support and enabled her to get off IS as a single parent. Others saw no reason why it could not be a good tool for people on IS.

Finding 141 Focus group employer participants thought SWASP-Paid may not be able to meet the additional financial needs of those on IS, indicating they are unaware of HRLE IS policies.

Most employer participants who attended focus groups felt the SWASP-Paid would not be suitable for individuals in receipt of IS or children from families in receipt of IS because a) the program does not provide enough in pay or tuition vouchers to meet their current levels of financial support, and b) because such recipients have a need for more individualized support.

No Employer Focus Group participant indicated they were aware of HRLE policy where by:

- The amount of money provided to most young people on IS is considerably less than minimum wage per month.
- for those with higher rates of income support (like single parents, not individuals in most cases) if SWASP pay rates were lower than need as assessed by IS, then they would be topped up to a point slightly beyond what they would normally get on IS.
- if a participant was on IS they would be eligible for total subsidy from Health and Community Services for a licensed day care space (if available) and reasonably good funding for private child care if not.

Recommendation 39. *All SIOC application forms should ask about child care, transportation, and other employment readiness needs so that participants can be matched with programs able to meet those needs.*

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Finding 142 Internal stakeholders interviewed thought SIOC program eligibility requirements may limit the participation of youth at risk.

Internal stakeholders thought the requirement that participants be attending and returning to post-secondary education may be a barrier for many youth at risk, including those with IS attachment, as many do not pursue post-secondary education.

For individuals with IS attachment who are eligible for post-secondary, internal stakeholders thought the programs could work for them if the worker and the officer were supportive and able to identify the additional resources needed to address barriers. A SWASP program with matched IS participants and employers may also help improve participation of those with attachment to IS.

Finding 143 Those SWASP employers who had hired IS clients were satisfied with the experience.

10% of SWASP-Paid employers surveyed had hired someone on IS. The vast majority of them (87%) found it a satisfactory experience.

Finding 144 The majority of SWASP employers expressed a willingness to hire a person on IS if they met the qualifications for the position.

Employers in focus groups indicated they are willing to hire people on IS if they are interested in working. The general perception is that individuals on IS lack employability skills and a work ethic. Many employers also felt they could not pay individuals on IS enough to compete with the benefits they already receive. Employers were not aware that an individual on IS keeps \$75 per month of earnings + 20% of the remainder of the earnings on top of their normal IS entitlement, so they are in a better financial position by working. Employers were also skeptical of the overall impact of the SWASP program on IS recipients' attitudes towards work.

91% of employers interviewed said they would hire a person on IS (17% had previously hired people on IS). The comments added indicated that the person would be judged by the same criteria as other candidates and on work ethic in particular.

Finding 145 The majority of GEP employers have never hired a person on IS that they are aware of; however, they indicated a willingness to do so.

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The majority of GEP employers surveyed (76%) have never hired a person on IS or an individual whose family is on IS for the program. 86% of GEP employers interviewed had never hired an IS client.

73% of GEP employers interviewed indicated they would have no problem hiring an HRLE client and 77% said they had no special concerns about hiring an HRLE client. Most employers had no problem with a client's background or circumstances but indicated their criteria would focus on qualifications and work ethic. Some businesses indicated that they would be looking for professional training and skills and an IS client would not be appropriate.

Some SWASP employers from the focus groups highlighted their opinions and experiences regarding hiring a person on IS:

- the financial benefits of staying on IS often outweighed the benefits of a SWASP placement;
- challenges with the individual's employability skills
- discomfort or disapproval with the reasons why some people turn to IS;

These concerns should be addressed for the benefit of both IS-attached individuals and their employers.

Recommendation 40. *HRLE should ensure supports for employers who are hiring IS attached individuals through any SIOC program are well known.*