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August 2009

Summative Evaluation of the Youth Employment Strategy

Final Report
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Final Report

***Evaluation Directorate
Strategic Policy and Research Branch
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada***

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List of Abbreviations

AAFC	Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
AHRDS	Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy
CF	Career Focus
CFIA	Canadian Food Inspection Agency
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CRA	Canada Revenue Agency
CSGC	Common System for Grants and Contributions
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
EC	Environment Canada
EI	Employment Insurance
HRDC	Human Resources Development Canada
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
IC	Industry Canada
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
KI	Key Informant
NRC	National Research Council
NRCan	Natural Resources Canada
PC	Parks Canada
PCH	Canadian Heritage
RMAF	Results-based Management Accountability Framework
SA	Social Assistance
SC	Service Canada
SL	Skills Link
SWE	Summer Work Experience
YES	Youth Employment Strategy

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the main findings from the summative evaluation of the Youth Employment Strategy (YES or “the Strategy”) conducted by the Evaluation Directorate of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) in 2007-2008. The evaluation covers the three fiscal years of 2003-04, 2004-05, and 2005-06, and addresses issues of rationale, relevance, and success.

Youth Employment Strategy

In 2003, YES was realigned taking into account the information and knowledge gained during the first six years of the Strategy. The realigned YES refocused the delivery model with an added emphasis on skills development. The realigned model has more focused streaming of program initiatives and a greater client-centered approach to delivery of services for youth facing barriers to employment. The overall common goal of the Strategy is to assist youth in enhancing their employability skills while increasing the number of skilled young Canadians in the workforce. Under this overarching goal, each participating department or agency pursues and supports initiatives that also align with its departmental/agency mandate and strategic objectives. During the period of the evaluation there were 31 programs for youth 15 to 30 years old delivered by 13 federal departments and agencies across the three streams under YES: Career Focus, Skills Link and Summer Work Experience.

Evaluation Method

The evaluation was implemented using multiple lines of evidence including qualitative and quantitative methods. The methods included a literature review, document review, key informant interviews, focus groups with participants, surveys of participants, site visits with Aboriginal communities where INAC offers YES programs, pre-post analyses, and net impact analyses. Some of the main limitations and challenges with respect to evaluation methods included limited or dated contact information for YES participants, and the lack of comparison groups for some sets of analyses. The main challenge for the evaluation is attributing many of the results directly to the YES programs. From other surveys of Canadian youth, it is known that as youth mature, their employability and earnings increase with age. This is known as a maturation effect and would be as likely to occur with the YES participants as with other youth. What would be required to make direct attributions of gains to the YES programs is to undertake similar measures for a comparison group of youth who did not participate in YES programs. While this was not an option for all YES participants, the evaluation was able to make these types of comparisons for HRSDC Career Focus and Skills Link participants.

Key Findings

Career Focus Stream (CF)

Programs under CF are designed to provide career-related work and learning opportunities to youth who have some advanced studies¹. CF opportunities include mentoring and coaching that are designed to build advanced employability skills and encourage the continuation of advanced studies. During the period covered by the evaluation, approximately 14,000 youth participated in CF opportunities offered by ten departments and agencies.

Does the CF stream continue to be consistent with the government-wide priorities? Priorities of individual departments and agencies?

The programs delivered under the CF Stream remain relevant to Government of Canada priorities in addition to the specific priorities of the various departments and agencies delivering CF programs. The CF stream has the largest number of participating departments and agencies, with individual programs designed to build on the strengths and sectors of each department or agency. Priorities that are congruent with the CF programming include environment, development of science and technology, participation in the global economy, international development and skill development of Canadians.

Does CF realistically address an actual need?

Many CF participants surveyed (65%) reported that their greatest need was to obtain relevant work experience. The school-to-work transition can be challenging for youth given the lack of integration between the education system and the labour market in many instances. As new graduates, most CF participants in focus groups reported requiring assistance in making a successful school-to-work transition by getting work experience related to their career interests and areas of advanced studies. The vast majority (93%) of CF participants surveyed were satisfied with the quality of the work experience provided by the CF programs. Work experiences offered under CF programs were primarily in the areas of education/social sciences, and natural/applied sciences. The CF work experiences were judged by most youth in focus groups and many employers during interviews to be in areas that current and future employment was available due to either sector growth or an aging workforce.

Some employers during interviews indicated that the CF funding makes entry level positions more attractive to youth. The CF programs assist employers in managing some of the risks in bringing a young, inexperienced person into their organizations to determine their capacity and interest as potential longer term employees.

¹ It is expected that CF participants will be post-secondary graduates.

Is the CF effective in meeting its intended outcomes, and is it making progress toward the achievement of its ultimate outcomes?

Success of the CF stream was assessed according to whether or not it assisted participants in developing employability skills, and increase their employability and earned income. Participants self-assessed employability skill levels increased significantly over the course of their participation in CF. The majority of CF participants (56%) expressed high levels of satisfaction with the opportunities for skill development. Similarly, CF participants experienced gains in both employment and annual earnings (median annual earnings doubling from \$10,000 one year pre-program to \$20,000 at one year post-program) with significant increases in the amount of time spent working full-time (21 percentage points) and significant decreases in the amount of time spent unemployed and looking for work (10 percentage points). Attributing these gains to CF participation is a challenge due to maturation effect and absence of a comparison group for CF participants other than HRSDC.

The mean earnings of HRSDC CF participants were compared with other youth who were looking for employment at approximately the same time as HRSDC CF participants were starting their programs. Results of this comparison group analysis indicated significant positive net impacts in annual earnings while in the program (+\$1,137) and two-year post-program (+\$2,057). These significant impacts can be attributed directly to the HRSDC CF program. The significant positive net impacts were found for male participants, and for those in the younger age group (20-24 years old).

Have CF programs and services operated within budget? What are the reasons for any variances?

The CF stream has a process in place for a mid-year reallocation of funds across the various participating departments and agencies that has likely assisted the CF programs to operate within budget with only moderate variances (average of 6.6%) across the three-year period from 2003-04 to 2005-06. The limited amount of net impact data available for the evaluation combined with the limited post-program timeframe made it unfeasible to proceed with a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing the CF program to various alternatives.

Skills Link Stream (SL)

Programs under SL are designed to help youth overcome barriers to labour market participation through tailored interventions. These barriers could include, but are not limited to, challenges faced by recent immigrant youth, youth with disabilities, single parent youth, youth who have not completed high school, Aboriginal youth, and youth living in rural or remote areas. During the period covered by the evaluation, approximately 91,000 youth participated in SL opportunities offered by three departments and agencies.

***Does the SL stream continue to be consistent with the government-wide priorities?
Priorities of individual departments and agencies?***

Focusing on youth experiencing significant challenges and barriers to successful integration into the labour market, the SL stream remains relevant to the overall Government of Canada priority of *building a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive and rewarding lives, and to improve Canadians' quality of life*. In addition, the SL programming is congruent with the strategic outcomes of the participating departments and agencies (i.e., HRSDC, CMHC, INAC).

Does SL realistically address an actual need?

The profile of SL participants indicates that the programs are targeting youth with considerable barriers and challenges. Approximately one in six indicated that they had a long-term disability, a rate four times that of Canadian youth. Nearly three-quarters of SL participants surveyed had no post-secondary education experience. One-third had not graduated from high school, despite the median age being 22 years old. The consequences of dropping-out of school are substantial suggesting a justification for programs such as SL that assist in mitigating the impacts of dropping-out by providing expanding accessibility to skill development, offering alternative education opportunities, providing alternative pathways to the labour market, and early targeting of such groups for counseling. Barriers identified by youth included not having enough experience for available jobs and not having enough education or training for available jobs. INAC Aboriginal youth also identified the barrier of limited opportunities for employment on-reserve.

It should be noted that the needs of this profile of youth are diverse and extensive including poverty, homelessness, mental health, addictions issues, threats of violence, physical health, self-confidence and self-esteem, and general life skills. The SL programs are addressing key needs such as employability skills, self-confidence, and work experience which in turn are impacting on some of the other diverse needs.

Is the SL effective in meeting its intended outcomes, and is it making progress toward the achievement of its ultimate outcomes?

The outcomes assessed by the evaluation included development of employability skills, increases in employability and income, and success in encouraging participants to return to school. A diverse range of employability skills were consistently rated by both participants and employers as having significantly improved during their time in SL. Similarly, SL participants experienced significant increases in the time spent employed (24 percentage points for full-time employment), as well as increases in earned income (median annual earnings of \$5,000 one year pre-program compared with \$11,000 one year post-program). Significant increases were also found in the amount of time spent in school (7 percentage points). Over one-third of SL participants (40%) indicated that they had returned to school with two-thirds of these (65%) indicating that the SL program had an impact on their decision to return. The SL program assisted in this decision by providing them with information, direction, and self-confidence. Attributing these gains to SL participation is a challenge due to maturation effect and absence of a comparison group for SL participants other than HRSDC.

The net impact analyses for HRSDC SL participants found significant positive net impacts in annual earnings while in the program (+\$706), one year post-program (+\$1,142), and two-years post-program (+\$383). These significant positive net impacts were found for male participants, and for those in the older age groups (20-24 years old; 25-30 years old). Positive net impacts were also more likely to be found among participants who had some form of post-secondary education. Findings for female participants were that differences in earnings during the program and one-year post-program were not significant, while two-years post-program, there were negative net impacts. Given the type of analysis performed, all net impacts described are directly attributable to the program.

Have SL programs and services operated within budget? What are the reasons for any variances?

While the programs under SL were within budgeted amounts, there were substantial variances (24.6%) across the three-year period of 2003-04 to 2005-06. Reasons for the variance, according to reports compiled by program staff and provided in key informant interviews, included reallocation of funds to other employment strategies, shifts in priorities, and challenges with delivery considering the clientele for SL programs (e.g., individual client barriers and challenges).

Summer Work Experience Stream (SWE)

Programs under SWE are designed to provide secondary and post-secondary students returning to school with short-term, career-related work experiences that will build a range of employability skills. During the period covered by the evaluation, approximately 236,000 youth participated in SWE opportunities offered by five departments and agencies.

Does the SWE stream continue to be consistent with the government-wide priorities? Priorities of individual departments and agencies?

The SWE programming is congruent with various government and departmental/agency priorities including skills enhancement, supporting post-secondary education, and youth participation in key areas of the economy including the voluntary sector, cultural industries, environment and parks, and information technology.

Does SWE realistically address an actual need?

SWE programs are meeting the needs of students requiring summer employment to assist in funding their studies and to obtain relevant experience related to their fields of study. Students participating in SWE when surveyed indicated that the main barriers they faced in obtaining summer employment were not having enough experience for available jobs (43%), and a shortage of jobs (32%). Almost all participants indicated satisfaction with the SWE experience and the quality of the work experience offered. The SWE programming under INAC provides opportunities that would not exist in the absence of the program. By offering opportunities on-reserve and within Aboriginal communities, the SWE programs

are often proving the only opportunities for student summer employment that Aboriginal students can access in these communities.

SWE programming is also addressing the needs of employers. Key needs being addressed are the ability to access extra assistance during busy times of the year, access to technical skills that employers' organizations lack (often in the area of IT or second-language skills), and advancement of projects tailored for summer student input.

Is the SWE effective in meeting its intended outcomes, and is it making progress toward the achievement of its ultimate outcomes?

Overall, the SWE participants reported significant gains in all eleven employability skills assessed, as well as technical and occupation-specific skills while participating in SWE. In addition, other benefits of participation in SWE opportunities included clarification of career choice. This was accomplished through either confirmation of career choice, or clarifying their career choice via experience within their chosen field that made them realize they were not suited for that career path, or due to an experience in a field different from their chosen career that then seemed better suited to them. As well, students through their SWE job earned funds (on average \$4,000) that could be used to assist in financing their return to school.

Have SWE programs and services operated within budget? What are the reasons for any variances?

The programs under the SWE stream were within budget overall with relatively small variances (1.5%) over the three period of 2003-04 to 2005-06. Considering the large number of agreements and the very short time period with which to execute the contracts, this low level of variance demonstrates that the delivery system is effectively maximizing budget expenditures.

Management Response

Introduction

The purpose of this management response is to address the areas for program consideration, identified through the summative evaluation of the Youth Employment Strategy (YES), a horizontal initiative led by HRSDC. The management response provides HRSDC officials with the opportunity to communicate their response to the key evaluation findings, to indicate where program policies have been modified, and to identify plans for further examination and possible modifications.

The summative evaluation was undertaken by HRSDC to fulfill Government of Canada accountability requirements, and to provide HRSDC with considerations for management and program policy design decisions. This summative evaluation examined the relevance, success and cost effectiveness of the YES.

The YES summative evaluation covers the three year reference period from April 2003 to March 2006. The evaluation covers the three YES program streams – *Career Focus*, *Skills Link* and *Summer Work Experience* – and the 30 initiatives offered under these streams by the thirteen departments and agencies that participated in the YES during this time period. The preliminary summative evaluation results were used to inform the work related to the continuance of the YES. On December 8, 2008, the Minister of HRSD approved the continuance of the program authorities of the YES.

The Active Employment Measures Directorate would like to thank all those who participated in the evaluation of the Youth Employment Strategy.

Key Findings

The evaluation findings indicate that the YES remains relevant to Government of Canada priorities as well as to the specific priorities of the departments and agencies participating in YES. Further, the evaluation indicates that the Strategy's three program streams are successfully achieving their objectives. The design and implementation of the Strategy has yielded overall positive results that supported the continuation of the Youth Employment Strategy.

The evaluation identified nine considerations for the YES that require action on the part of the program policy area, which are outlined below with corresponding program policy response.

Areas for Consideration and Actions Taken

1. Modification of data sharing agreements to include participants' Social Insurance Numbers

The program agrees with this recommendation. As lead department of the YES horizontal strategy, HRSDC will consult with TBS to discuss options for moving forward with obtaining authorities for YES participant departments to collect SIN information. HRSDC will modify data sharing agreements to include participants' Social Insurance Numbers (SINs) once YES participant departments obtain proper authorities to collect the SIN.

At present, HRSDC is the only YES participant department that has the authority to collect SINs for participants in HRSDC's YES initiatives. At the YES interdepartmental meetings, scheduled for Fall 2009, HRSDC will emphasize the evaluation benefits of collecting SINs, as it allows for impact analyses that directly attribute the gains of youth to their participation in YES programs. For example, HRSDC was able to determine the net earning impact of its YES programming both during and after an intervention as a result of collecting SIN and using Canada Revenue Agency data.

Once a process is agreed to by YES participant departments and TBS, HRSDC will provide the appropriate support in terms of process and development of required documents, such as Privacy Impact Assessments and Treasury Board Submissions.

2. Continue to track net impacts of HRSDC participants for Skills Link and Career Focus

The program agrees with this recommendation. Program officials are pleased with the significant positive findings derived from the net impact analysis of HRSDC's Skills Link and Career Focus programming. These findings provided strong evidence of the success of HRSDC's YES programming and were used to inform the continuance of the YES.

HRSDC is interested in understanding the longer-term program impacts on Skills Link and Career Focus participants. To this end, program officials have worked with HRSDC Evaluation Directorate to develop the new YES evaluation strategy, which includes tracking of net impacts of HRSDC participants. Program officials will continue to work with HRSDC Evaluation Directorate to prepare for the next summative evaluation, scheduled to begin in 2012.

3. Further investigation of differential impacts of programming according to gender

The program agrees with this recommendation. Program officials have examined the findings indicating that HRSDC's Career Focus and Skills Link programs significantly impact the annual earnings of men, but not women.

The net impact analyses examine YES participant income pre and post intervention versus annual income of comparison groups over the same time period. The net impact analyses show that HRSDC's Career Focus and Skills Link programs have positive impacts on YES youth participants' annual earnings. When analysed by gender, findings indicate that Career Focus and Skills Link female participants have lower incomes when compared to the comparison group. The opposite is true for Career Focus and Skills Link male participants.

The program notes that the evaluation also presents positive significant findings based on data from participant surveys and participant focus groups. Survey and focus group results indicate significant improvements in wages and overall annual earnings of Career Focus and Skills Link participants, as well as statistically significant gains across all eleven employability skills. Of those respondents that returned to school post-program, 43% and 65% reported that participation in Career Focus and Skills Link, respectively, influenced their decision to return to school.

Initial internal program research points to factors that may explain the findings from the gender analysis of the net impact analyses, including female participants' return to school rates post-program. Indeed, program administrative data seems to suggest that women have a higher return to school rate than men. Program officials will continue to examine the factors underlying the findings from the gender analysis by conducting further research, such as a literature review, consulting with outside experts, and examining options to test a number of hypotheses via participant surveys/focus groups. The objectives of this research will be to better understand these results, to ensure that the programs are working well for women, and to determine whether program adjustments are necessary.

Longer term data to further analyze HRSDC program net impact will be available for the next summative evaluation, scheduled to begin in 2012. Program officials will work with Evaluation on developing a gender-based analysis model to be incorporated in the YES Summative Evaluation Strategy.

4. Development and implementation of employability skills measures

The program acknowledges that the method currently used to measure employability skills lacks objectivity due to reliance on participant self assessments. Program officials will explore more objective tools for measuring employability skills and will examine options to determine whether and how to incorporate such tools in the future administration of HRSDC's YES programming. HRSDC will also bring this issue to the YES Interdepartmental Operations Committee for further discussion.

5. Consideration given to focusing Career Focus work experiences in growth sectors of the economy

Program officials agree that it is important to ensure that graduates gain exposure to employment opportunities in growing sectors and industries. The Summative Evaluation's

Growth Sectors, Opportunities and Occupations Case Study Report confirms that many of the Career Focus work experiences were in sectors with strong growth. For example, one quarter of Career Focus participants had work experiences in the natural and applied sciences sector, which had among the highest growth rates.

Going forward, program officials will work with YES participant departments to determine the degree to which career opportunities can be further aligned to growing sectors of the economy, recognizing that departments have mandates to address growing sectors as well as sectors facing challenges.

6. Collecting and updating participant contact information

The program agrees with this recommendation. Efforts are underway to increase the participant response rate for the next summative evaluation. Program officials are acting on a specific evaluation recommendation by adding more data fields related to participants' contact information to the YES Participant Information Form. In addition, HRSDC administers the YES Interdepartmental Data Collection System (DCS) through which departments and agencies transfer participant data to HRSDC. The DCS ensures consistent transfer of participant information across departments, including contact information. HRSDC provides support to all departments so they can properly use the DCS. To ensure data integrity, HRSDC monitors the data entered in the DCS via random spot checks.

7. Develop and implement an ongoing overall performance monitoring system for YES programs

The program agrees with this recommendation. Program officials have developed and implemented a multi-pronged performance monitoring system for the YES. The YES Interdepartmental Data Collection System is now fully implemented and serves as the primary tool for data sharing and monitoring results. YES participant departments transfer annually their participant-level data to HRSDC by using the YES Interdepartmental Data Collection System. This data sharing is governed by Memoranda of Understanding between HRSDC and YES participant departments. HRSDC also collects mid-year and year-end reports on an annual basis from all YES participant departments, which serve to monitor the administration and the results of the Strategy's programs.

Program officials have recently updated the YES horizontal RMAF, including the Performance Measurement Strategy. The Performance Measurement Strategy indicates that surveys of participants are to be conducted to measure certain intermediate outcomes; however the Performance Measurement Strategy does allow YES participant departments the flexibility to determine the data sources that are most appropriate to monitor their programming. HRSDC will survey its own participants every two years and also encourages all YES participant departments to survey their participants.

8. *Tracking the leveraging of cash and in-kind contributions from other sources*

The program agrees with this recommendation. Program officials are examining options to improve tracking the leveraging of funds by organizations, such as possible system adjustments. Presently, the leveraging data received is not consistent, therefore making it challenging to collate and compile results.

9. *Tracking of disability types*

The program agrees that it would be valuable to understand more about the specific disabilities of participants. Under the YES, all participants are asked to self-identify using a Personal Information Form, as in all federal programming. To ensure that YES programs meet the needs of YES disabled participants, program officials will explore the possibility of tracking participants' disability types via the YES Personal Information Form. Consideration will be given to using the categories and definitions of disability types used for the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey.

Program comment on cost-effectiveness

A full evaluation of the Youth Employment Strategy's cost-effectiveness could not be conducted in this summative evaluation. HRSDC will be investigating the possibility of obtaining a more fulsome cost-effectiveness assessment in the future when more long-term data is available. Such an analysis may include a comparison of HRSDC's Skills Link and Career Focus programming to various alternatives. A detailed cost-effectiveness assessment is planned for the new YES evaluation strategy.

Conclusion

The conclusions outlined in the summative evaluation include positive findings as well as areas of consideration. Overall, the evaluation indicates that the Career Focus, Skills Link and Summer Work Experience programs under the Youth Employment Strategy (YES) remain relevant to Government of Canada priorities as well as to department-specific priorities. Further, findings show that the three program streams have been successful in achieving objectives, such as assisting youth participants in developing employability skills, and technical and occupational-specific skills. The cost-effectiveness analyses of the three program streams reveals that all programs operated within budget, and notes minor and moderate variances attributable to funding reallocation, shifts in priorities and delivery issues.

The areas of consideration outlined above provide sound advice for senior management and have been used to inform the continuance and implementation of the YES. HRSDC officials are committed to the continuous improvement of this Strategy. To this end, plans are underway to implement some of the considerations while others require further examination.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This report provides an overview of the main findings from the summative evaluation of the Youth Employment Strategy (YES or “the Strategy”) conducted by the Evaluation Directorate of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) in 2007-2008. The evaluation covers the three fiscal years of 2003-04, 2004-05, and 2005-06. The purpose of this report is to provide the main evaluation findings according to evaluation issues and questions.

1.2 Background on the Youth Employment Strategy²

The Government of Canada launched YES in 1997 to address the challenges faced by Canadian youth in making a successful transition from school to full-time employment. The Strategy was designed to create a climate of opportunity to help youth get the work experience, knowledge, skills and information necessary to prepare for, and participate in, the world of work. A key element of YES was its concerted approach involving participation and commitment across the federal government with HRDC³ assuming the lead role.

In 2003, YES was realigned taking into account the information and knowledge gained during the first six years of the Strategy. The realigned YES refocused the delivery model with an added emphasis on skills development. The realigned model has more focused streaming of program initiatives and a greater client-centered approach to delivery of services for youth facing barriers to employment. The overall common goal of the Strategy is:

To assist youth in enhancing their employability skills while increasing the number of skilled young Canadians in the workforce.

Under this overarching goal, each participating department or agency pursues and supports initiatives that also align with its departmental/agency mandate and strategic objectives. During the period of the evaluation (2003-04 to 2005-06) there were 31 programs for youth 15 to 30 years old delivered by 13 federal departments and agencies across the three streams under YES:

² The content of this sub-section is derived from the Results-based Management and Accountability Framework (RMAF) for the Youth Employment Strategy.

³ In 1997, the name of the department was Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). The current name of the department is Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

- 1) **Career Focus Stream (CF)** – Activities under the CF Stream provide students that have some advanced studies⁴ with career-related work experiences and learning opportunities, mentoring and coaching that will build advanced skills and encourage continuation of advanced studies.
- 2) **Skills Link Stream (SL)** – The focus of programs under this stream is to help youth overcome barriers to labour market participation through tailored interventions. These barriers could include, but are not limited to, challenges faced by recent immigrant youth, youth with disabilities, single parent youth, youth who have not completed high school, Aboriginal youth, and those youth living in rural or remote areas.
- 3) **Summer Work Experience Stream (SWE)** – The programs under this stream target secondary and post-secondary school students to build a range of employability skills through short term, career-related work experience for students returning to full-time schooling in the upcoming academic year.

Appendix A contains the program logic model developed for the Strategy.

1.3 Evaluation Objectives and Issues

1.3.1 Evaluation Objectives

Building on the findings from the formative evaluation of YES completed in 2004-05, the present summative evaluation has the main objective of measuring YES outcomes and impacts for youth who participated between 2003-04 and 2005-06 inclusive. As well, the evaluation was designed to meet Treasury Board's requirements to address three main issues⁵:

- a) **Relevance** – Does the program continue to be consistent with departmental and government-wide priorities, and does it realistically address an actual need?
- b) **Success** – Is the program effective in meeting its intended outcomes, and is it making progress toward the achievement of its ultimate outcomes?
- c) **Cost-effectiveness** – Are the most appropriate and efficient means being used to achieve outcomes, relative to alternative design and delivery approaches?

Based on the evaluation objectives and broad issue areas (relevance, success and cost-effectiveness), 15 specific evaluation questions contained in the umbrella Results-Based Management Accountability Framework (RMAF) for YES were addressed. Appendix B contains the evaluation issues, questions and indicators. Findings are presented by stream according to the evaluation questions.

⁴ Participants eligible for CF programs are expected to have demonstrated skills achievement at the post-secondary level.

⁵ The issue of cost-effectiveness was addressed in a very limited manner, focusing on budget variances and leveraging. Given the limited amount of net impact data available for the evaluation, and the limited post-program timeframe, it was not feasible to proceed with a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing the programming to various alternatives.

1.4 Overview of Methodology

The evaluation was implemented using multiple lines of evidence including qualitative and quantitative methods. The methods included a literature review, document review, key informant interviews, focus groups with participants, surveys of participants, site visits with Aboriginal communities where INAC offers YES programs, pre-post analyses, and net impact analyses.

1.4.1 Literature Review

A literature review was conducted on key employment issues for Canadian youth. It focused on issues such as the impacts of an aging workforce, the effects of negative labour market experiences on youth, vocational education, determinants and consequences of dropping out of school, labour market information, training of disadvantaged youth, and transition from school. The review also included relevant findings on equity groups.

1.4.2 Document Review

A document review was conducted during the methodology development stage to provide an understanding of the YES context and to assist with the development of specific evaluation instruments (e.g., questionnaires for youth surveys, key informant guides). These included documents such as Departmental Performance Reports (DPRs), the umbrella YES Results-based Management Accountability Framework (RMAF) and Risk Based Audit Framework (RBAF), individual department and agency documents, and program delivery information.

1.4.3 Key Informant Interviews

The objective of the key informant interviews was to gather in-depth information for evaluation purposes, including views, explanations, examples and factual information that address the evaluation issues. The key informant interviews are a complement to the quantitative evidence gathered as part of this evaluation.

Key informant interviews were conducted with three main groups: 1) YES program managers and participating department/agency representatives; and 2) YES employers and, 3) sponsors and delivery organizations participating in YES programs⁶. Potential key informants for all groups were identified by departmental and agency representatives participating on the Evaluation Working Group. The lists were compiled and key informants selected to ensure that there was representation by department/agency and stream. At the conclusion of this process, 237 key informants were interviewed (57 interviews with program representatives; and 180 interviews with employers, sponsors and delivery organizations). Interviews were

⁶ Depending on the delivery model, some departments and agencies did not necessarily have sponsors or delivery organizations.

conducted using a semi-structured interview guide with questions developed to address the evaluation issues. Three separate versions of the guide were developed for program representatives, sponsors and delivery organizations, and employers. Interviews with program representatives in the National Capital Region were held in-person. All other interviews were conducted by phone.

1.4.4 Focus Groups with Participants

The objective of the focus groups was to gather qualitative information from participants to address specific evaluation issues. The focus group approach was designed to complement other qualitative and quantitative methods used in the evaluation. The group discussions were intended to lead to exploration of the issues, and understanding of the context behind participants' experiences.

Ten focus groups were conducted with 89 youth participants in Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. The YES horizontal database developed for the summative evaluation was used as a recruiting frame for the groups in each city. Youth participants were randomly selected within cities to be invited to participate in a group. Focus groups were conducted according to stream. Participants received a \$50 honorarium for attending the focus group. Focus groups ranged from approximately 75 minutes to 2 hours in duration. All groups were held in centrally located focus group facilities, and conducted by experienced facilitators using a focus group guide developed for the evaluation.

- **Career Focus (CF)** – 35 participants across 4 groups
- **Skills Link (SL)** – 22 participants across 3 groups
- **Summer Work Experience (SWE)** – 32 participants across 3 groups

1.4.5 Surveys of Participants – 12 Departments and Agencies⁷

Three surveys of participants were developed for each of the three YES streams (i.e., CF, SL, SWE). The objective of the surveys was to collect quantitative information from representative samples of youth who had participated in YES programs between April 2003 and March 2006. The YES Horizontal Database prepared for the summative evaluation served as the survey frame for all three surveys. Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling procedure. Stratification of the sample for each of the three streams was according to year of participation, region and department/agency. All interviews were conducted using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. Interviews lasted on average 30 minutes.

⁷ Participants from 12 of the 13 YES departments and agencies were included in the survey. INAC participants were not included given the lack of available contact information.

Overall, interviews were conducted with 3,328 YES participants. This included interviews with 946 CF participants, 1,027 SL participants, and 1,355 SWE participants. Response rates ranged from 16% to 29% with the largest areas of non-response including outdated contact information and no response after a minimum of eight calls. The participant survey data was weighted to make some adjustments for differences between the sample achieved and the population, and to accommodate the over-sampling that occurred for some departments/agencies. Variables used for weighting included department/agency, region, year of participation, gender, education level and age.

Measurement of Employability Skills

Employability skills of YES participants were measured with the participant surveys using the Conference Board of Canada's (CBC) *Employability Skills 2000+* categories and descriptions. There are eleven major categories of skills that are defined by the CBC as, "the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work- whether you work on your own or as a part of a team". At the time of the interview, participants were asked to recall self-assessed changes in their skill levels pre and post program. It should be noted that one challenge with this approach is that the evaluation was not able to validate the self-assessments with objective measures of employability skill changes over time.

1.4.6 Site Visits with Aboriginal Communities – INAC Only

As there was no contact information available for INAC participants, site visits were conducted in 8 regions with 11 Aboriginal communities that participated in delivering YES programming under the INAC SWE and SL streams. Specific sites were selected from lists of communities provided by INAC regional program officers. For each selected community, INAC regional officers identified a main community contact.

Within each site, in-person key informant interviews, participant interviews and focus groups were conducted with participants. In total, 50 key informant interviews were conducted with two main groups of respondents: 1) employers who had worked with YES participants; and 2) sponsor/delivery/community organizations that deliver or oversee the YES programs within the communities. In total, 112 youth participants participated in focus groups and interviews. The 11 communities that hosted site visits included: Seabird Island Indian Band, BC; St. Mary's Indian Band, BC; Blood Tribe, AB; Lac La Ronge Indian Band, SK; Peguis First Nation, MB; Pic River First Nation, ON; Mistissini Cree Band, QC; Eskasoni First Nation, NS; Membertou First Nation, NS; Iqaluit, NT; and Kimmirut, NT. INAC results are integrated with the overall findings for the SL and SWE streams, but identified as specific to INAC given the differences in methods used for this department.

1.4.7 Pre-Post Analyses – 12 Departments and Agencies⁸

The pre-post YES participation analyses were conducted using the data provided by participants in the surveys of participants. Statistical tests to assess levels of statistical significance for differences pre-post participation were conducted⁹. These results were further corroborated using the qualitative information from focus groups and key informant interviews. The main participant outcomes analyzed for pre-post participation differences were: self-assessed employability skill levels; employment status; earnings; and educational status.

Participants were also asked to indicate their **perceptions** on the extent to which their participation in YES programs impacted on: getting their current job; developing a skill set required for their current job; decision to attend education or training program; and confirming the type of career to pursue.

1.4.8 Benchmarking

The challenge of pre and post analysis is attribution – whether the changes over time are due to the program or due to other factors occurring outside the program. Benchmarking is one approach that assists in assessing some of the other effects in addition to the YES program which could have produced positive changes over time. One of the main effects that influence outcomes for youth between the ages of 15 and 30 years is maturation. Maturation refers to the usual pattern observed among youth of increasing labour force attachment and earnings as they mature from 15 to 30 years. The focus of the benchmarking exercise for this evaluation involved accessing and analysing data that would demonstrate the maturation effect on employment and income that youth experience between the ages of 15 and 30. The four sources used for this benchmarking were the *Youth in Transition Survey (YITS)*, the *National Graduates Survey (NGS)* and *Follow-up of Graduates Survey (FOG)*, data from the *Labour Force Survey (LFS)* and the *Census*.

1.4.9 Net Impact Analyses – HRSDC only

Treasury Board granted permission to use Social Insurance Numbers (SINs) for evaluation purposes for HRSDC participants in CF and SL participants. Focusing on HRSDC participants who started their program in 2003, econometric analyses were conducted through the development of a comparison group using administrative data available from the HRSDC Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC) and Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) administrative files. This analysis made statistical comparisons between the YES participants and the comparison group of Canadian youth who had sought some

⁸ Participants from 12 of the 13 YES departments and agencies were included in these analyses of survey data. INAC participants were not included given the lack of available contact information for the survey.

⁹ Throughout the text, when the phrase “significance” is used, it is referring to statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level or lower.

type of minimal employment assistance (e.g., counseling, job search skills) at about the same time participants were starting their CF or SL program. This group was weighted on various factors such as age, education, gender, prior earnings, and EI use to most closely match the participant group. Comparisons were made on earned income, Employment Insurance (EI) use, and Social Assistance (SA) use. By selecting only participants in 2003 rather than more recent participants (e.g., 2004, 2005, 2006), there was a greater post-program period during which impacts could be observed¹⁰.

1.4.10 Evaluation Limitations and Challenges

As with any evaluation of this scope and magnitude, there were a number of limitations and challenges encountered while developing and implementing the various methods. The reader should review and consider these limitations and challenges when reading and interpreting the findings. The main limitations and challenges encountered include:

- ***Development of a YES participant horizontal database for the evaluation*** – During Phase One of the evaluation, a YES participant horizontal database was developed. This database was then used as the sample frame for participant surveys, focus groups, and source for participant profiles. The main sources for the database were the Data Collection System (DCS) for most departments and agencies, and the Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC) (HRSDC participants only). These two sources were supplemented with on-site data entry from hard copy files in some departments and agencies. Given the non-systematic nature of participant information collection across departments and agencies for these three years, there were a number of gaps and challenges with the database development process. The most notable challenges were missing contact information, fewer participant records than expected for a few departments/agencies, different data collection processes, and choice and definitions of variables across departments and agencies.
- ***Individual level participant contact information for INAC participants*** – INAC was not able to provide individual level participant records for the majority of YES participants in their programs. As a result, there were no INAC participants included in the participant surveys or focus groups conducted with participants in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Given the relatively large size of this component, the evaluation endeavored to collect some qualitative information on YES impacts in Aboriginal communities served by the INAC programs. Site visits were conducted in 11 communities in 8 regions. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with youth, program representatives, community representatives and employers. As a result, the present evaluation has limited qualitative information for the impacts of INAC programming under YES, compared to the more comprehensive quantitative and qualitative evidence collected for the other twelve departments and agencies.

¹⁰ It should be noted that 2003 was a transition year for the Strategy, and many of the new features of the realigned Strategy could not be implemented right away, particularly with SL. As a result the HRSDC participants from 2003 may not completely reflect all the new program design features.

- ***Diversity of programs and delivery models*** – The evaluation covers 31 programs delivered under three streams of programming. In addition, the delivery models used by the participating departments/agencies and program structures vary considerably. This diversity, while beneficial for tailoring interventions to youth in specific sectors, presented challenges for the evaluation. Evidence was analyzed according to the three main streams (i.e., CF, SL, SWE). This results in relatively heterogeneous groupings of programs, as the diversity within a specific stream (in particular CF) is substantial. As a result, findings and conclusions, while presented by stream, may not necessarily be indicative of all programs under each stream. Where possible, it was ensured that the findings presented herein would be representative of most programs under a specific stream.
- ***Lack of comparison groups for the pre and post analyses*** – With the exception of HRSDC, it was not possible to clearly define a comparison group against which potential participant impacts could be measured. Without the permitted use of participants' Social Insurance Numbers (SINs) to develop comparison groups of other Canadian youth from administrative data files, the evaluation is limited in its ability to derive findings of incremental impacts of YES programming for the 12 departments and agencies. As a result, change was assessed over time in key outcomes from a pre-post participation perspective. The analysis of pre-post findings is presented in this overview report, but should be interpreted with caution since it is uncertain the extent to which the pre-post outcomes measured are attributable to YES programs vs. other events including the normal maturation process of youth.
- ***Challenges with HRSDC net impact analyses*** – The evaluation implemented impact analyses for annual income using a comparison group consisting of youth who had minimal labour market services during the same period in which HRSDC participants were starting CF or SL programs. There were a few challenges encountered with this approach. The comparison groups were weighted on numerous variables (e.g., age, region, education, gender, income, etc.) to be as comparable to participants pre-program as possible. Despite this careful weighting process, there are a number of variables for which it was not possible to weight for comparability such as motivation for participation, graduation dates, skill levels, etc., that may have had an impact on the outcome of annual income. Another challenge identified was that the participant group for CF participants was relatively small. As a result, there should be some caution exercised in the interpretation of results, particularly with respect to segmented analyses (i.e., gender, age).
- ***Quality of contact information available, survey response rates and youth mobility*** – The surveys of participants encountered relatively low response rates (16%-29%) with a large portion of non-response attributable to outdated contact information. Given the general mobility of youth, this is a continued challenge in surveying youth using more traditional methods (phone surveys). Email addresses and mobile phone numbers did not appear to be consistently collected by program representatives, despite this being the preferred modes of communication among many youth. Multiple points of contact that were consistently updated would likely have improved the overall response rates achieved for the surveys. The challenge with low response rates is that it can

potentially introduce a bias into the survey findings, as the survey findings are based on a relatively small proportion of the sample that was randomly selected to participate in the survey. One usual solution is to conduct a non-response analysis to determine whether the pattern of non-response analysis has certain characteristics that would indicate biases in various directions. The challenge encountered in conducting a non-response analysis is that for many of the participant records, there was very little administrative information systematically collected by departments and agencies during youth participation in programs beyond contact information. This limits the utility of the non-response analysis for each of the streams. As a result, the low response rate has potentially introduced a bias into the findings, but the evaluation is unable to characterize or to determine the direction of the bias (e.g., overly-positive versus overly-negative impact on findings).

- ***Potential for Bias in Self-Reporting*** – There was very little information or data collected consistently from youth during their participation in YES programming. As a result, the evaluation has had to rely on the survey of participants to collect much of the information needed for the evaluation. The survey was conducted in spring-summer 2007 which means that participants had completed their programs one to three years prior to participating in the survey. While this approach is excellent for understanding post-program status and outcomes, it is more challenging when used to collect information about the activities, status and opinions while in the program or prior to the program. The gap in time can create the potential for recall bias. Given the potential nature of the bias, it is impossible to determine the direction of this potential bias for the group (e.g., overly-positive vs. overly negative). As well, given the reliance on self-reporting, there can be bias towards reporting “socially desirable” outcomes (e.g., improvements in skills due to program). The extent to which these biases have occurred are not possible to measure quantitatively.
- ***Limited cost-effectiveness analyses*** – Given the limited amount of net impact data available for the evaluation (for HRSDC 2003 participants only), and the limited post-program timeframe (only one or two years of post-program impacts), it was not feasible to proceed with a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing the programs to various alternatives.
- ***Short and recent time period covered by evaluation*** – The evaluation scope was a three year period ranging from 2003-04 to 2005-06. Such a short and recent time period means that the evaluation could only assess immediate outcomes of the Strategy. Similarly, the impact analyses focused on HRSDC participants from 2003-04 only. This presented two challenges: 1) the participants were in the transition year from the previous strategy; and 2) the post-program impacts could only be measured for a one to two year period for most participants given availability of required income data.

2. Evaluation Findings for Career Focus Stream

This section presents the evaluation findings for the CF Stream. Activities under the CF Stream provide youth with some advanced studies with career-related work experiences and learning opportunities, mentoring and coaching that will build advanced skills and encourage continuation of advanced studies. During the period covered by the evaluation, programs under the CF stream were delivered by 10 departments and agencies and had approximately 14,000 participants¹¹. Evaluation findings for the CF Stream are presented according to issues of relevance, success, and cost-effectiveness. Within these broad headings, the findings according to specific evaluation questions are presented.

2.1 Relevance of CF Stream

2.1.1 To what extent do CF-related activities continue to address Government of Canada and Departmental/Agency priorities?

Career Focus, while the smallest component of YES according to financial allocation and enrolment, is delivered by the greatest number of departments and agencies under the Strategy (10 departments and agencies)¹². According to the document review and most key informant interviews with departmental representatives, the programs under the CF stream continue to address various priorities of the Government of Canada overall, as well as specific priorities of the ten participating departments and agencies.

Almost all key informants¹³ reported that the stated objectives of CF are congruent with key priority areas of the federal government including the environment, science and technology, participation in the global economy, international development, and skill development. Examples of key documents identified that demonstrate the CF stream's congruence with current priorities include *Advantage Canada - Building a Strong Economy for Canadians* (2006), and *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage* (2007). Specifically, in *Advantage Canada* the Government of Canada

¹¹ Budget figures and participant numbers are derived from Treasury Board Secretariat's Horizontal Results Database for years 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06.

¹² Departments and agencies participating in the CF stream are: AAFC, CIDA, CFIA, DFAIT, EC, HRSDC, IC, NRC, NRCan, and PCH.

¹³ The following quantitative scale is used throughout the report to indicate the relative weight of the responses for qualitative responses within respondent groups.

- "All/almost all" – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the respondents;
- "Large majority" – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of the respondents;
- "Majority/most" – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of the respondents;
- "Some" – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of the respondents; and
- "A few" – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of respondents.

committed to creating the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible workforce in the world. As well, the Government of Canada is committed to increasing the participation of under-represented groups, such as youth, in the workforce, affirmed most recently in *Budget 2007: A Stronger, Safer, Better Canada*, tabled in March 2007. In addition, the large majority of key informants identified specific priorities of their departments/agencies that are being addressed through the CF program.

2.1.2 To what extent are CF programs and services relevant to current and evolving youth needs? Employer needs?

Meeting the needs of youth

Who are CF participants?

The profile of CF participants from the survey demonstrated that the majority of CF participants met the stream's targeted population of recent post-secondary graduates 30 years of age or younger. Overall, the median age of CF participants was 25, with very few participants aged 19 or younger (7%) and the majority 25 years or older (53%). Over three-quarters of surveyed participants indicated that they had completed a degree or diploma at the post-secondary level (77%) prior to their participation in CF programs. Nearly two-thirds of participants (63%) were university graduates indicating that they had a bachelor's degree or post-graduate degree at the time they started the CF program. Overall, the median number of months for CF participants between when they last attended school and when they started the CF program was 12 months. Approximately one-third of CF participants (32%) were very recent graduates having started their CF program within three months of last attending school.

Why did youth choose to participate in CF?

According to the participants' survey results, the reasons most frequently cited for participating in a CF program were good work experience (38%), needing a job (19%), or the job fit with career objectives (18%). Approximately three-quarters of respondents reported that the CF work experience was either "very related" (54%) or "somewhat related" (22%) to their fields of study. This finding was corroborated with the information from the focus groups with CF participants. Almost all CF focus group participants indicated that the main reason they had for participating in CF was that they needed work experience. The large majority of participants in focus groups had graduated just prior to their participation and they viewed the CF program as an opportunity to gain work experience in their field of study. In addition to work experience in general, participants identified additional reasons for participating as opportunities to:

- Travel internationally;
- Explore career direction through the internship; and

- Gain additional, practical training in their chosen occupation.

Surveyed CF participants described various barriers to employment they encountered when trying to find employment prior to the CF program. The main barriers identified included:

- Not having enough experience for available jobs (65%);
- A shortage of jobs (47%);
- Not knowing what type of job they wanted (30%);
- Not having enough education or training for available jobs (25%); and
- Not knowing where to look for work (24%).

The majority of CF participants (55%) indicated that it would have been *very unlikely* (23%) *or somewhat unlikely* (32%) to have found a full-time job prior to the program that would have provided them with similar opportunities to develop skills.

Activities of CF participants at the time of applying to the CF program were varied. Overall, at the time CF participants applied to the program, approximately one-quarter (25%) indicated that they were unemployed and looking for work; while another similar proportion (26%) reported that they were employed full-time at that point. Another one-quarter of participants (25%) reported that they were in school full-time at the time of applying to the CF program. The remaining proportion of participants reported that they were participating in a combination of part-time work, going to school part-time, and/or volunteering. Overall, 42% of CF participants that were working prior to the program felt that they were overqualified for the job they were doing at that time, indicating a relatively high level of underemployment among this group.

Did the CF program meet participants' needs?

On the survey and in focus groups, participants indicated high levels of satisfaction with the opportunities offered under the CF stream. With respect to the **quality of the work experience** offered under the CF stream, 93% of participants were within the satisfied range (58% - *very satisfied*; 35% - *satisfied*). A similar proportion (91%) was within the satisfied range with respect to the CF program offering them opportunities to **develop useful skills** (56% - *very satisfied*; 35% - *satisfied*). Overall, the vast majority of participants (93%) indicated that they were within the satisfied range when considering the overall program (61% - *very satisfied*; 32% - *satisfied*).

In focus groups, almost all CF participants also considered the CF program well designed and appropriate to meeting their needs. The main areas endorsed as relevant to needs included:

- Work experience related to their fields of study;
- Development of employability skills, particularly in the areas of communication, working with others, and thinking and problem solving skills;

- References and referrals for future employment opportunities in their fields of study; and
- Connections with their future employer.

Interviews with program representatives and employers and sponsors indicated that from their perspective, the CF program is meeting the needs of youth. The large majority of program representative respondents indicated that YES programming under the CF stream is addressing the needs of youth, particularly in the areas of getting an initial job in their area of study, making connections with employers within specific sectors, gaining international work experience, and developing relevant workplace skills. Most employers and sponsors interviewed indicated that the opportunities offered under CF programs addressed youth's needs for work experience that matched their fields of study and interests. Other needs addressed included understanding the professional world of work, and opportunities to learn about the sector.

Meeting the needs of employers

According to interviews with employers and sponsors, the main employers' needs that were satisfactorily addressed by CF programs included:

- Funding assistance to supplement youth intern wages to make positions more attractive to qualified youth (some employers and sponsors); and
- Opportunities to bring an inexperienced young person into their organization to verify over the course of the placement their capacity and interest as a potential longer term employee (some employers and sponsors).

The main employer needs identified included attracting the most qualified and appropriate youth given the level of wages available, finding internal financing to keep the youth in the position once the internship has finished, and finding youth who have the appropriate skills and attitude to work in specific environments. A common theme through some employers' responses was the challenge of dealing with the high expectations and inflated skill assessment that youth bring with them to their first work experience which can interfere with the learning and adjustment during the CF placement.

2.1.3 Do CF work experience opportunities continue to be offered in growth sectors of the economy?

According to the survey of participants, the largest proportion of work experiences (38%) was offered in the category of "*Occupations in Social Science, Education, Government Service and Religion*", with the second largest proportion being "*Natural and Applied Sciences and Related Occupations*" (23%). Smaller proportions of participants had work experiences classified as "*Business, Finance and Administrative Occupations*" (9%) or "*Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport*" (8%). According to HRSDC Job Futures system, the main areas of good job prospects both currently and forecasted to 2009 are primarily occupations in the areas of engineering and health. While approximately

one-quarter (23%) of CF work experiences were within the “*Natural and Applied Sciences*”, extremely few CF work experiences (less than 1 %) were offered in “*Health Occupations*”.

Within focus groups, most CF participants reported that the work opportunities provided to them were within sectors of the economy in which they were able to later find employment, although they were uncertain of the extent to which these were actually growth sectors of the economy.

Most employers and sponsors indicated that the opportunities they had offered under CF were in industrial sectors that were experiencing significant growth (e.g., environmental sector, research and development, engineering), or were predicting significant growth in the future (e.g., human rights, international development). Some employers and sponsors reported that while their sectors were not necessarily growth sectors from a “Gross Domestic Product” sense, they were sectors within which there were labour shortages currently or predicted in the very near future given retirements and the aging workforce (e.g., IT, agriculture, not-for-profit/voluntary sectors).

Among program representatives there were mixed opinions as to the extent to which CF programs offered opportunities within the growth sectors of the economy. While the majority of respondents identified some growth sectors within the CF programs (e.g., aerospace, oil and gas, mining, communications, construction trades), other representatives reported that they did not view the CF as being targeted to specific sectors.

2.1.4 To what extent are CF programs and services consistent with current research and thinking about youth employment needs?

The literature review conducted as one component of the evaluation revealed that the CF program is consistent with current research findings focused on youth making the school to work transition. The main areas of consistency include:

- Youth making the school to work transition need to be informed of the importance of softer skills such as managerial, teamwork, communications, critical thinking and people skills. These are in addition to having the basic foundation of education and literacy upon which to build a continuous process of lifelong learning and subsequent training and re-training.
- The economic returns to investments in education are lower when the education is not fully utilized in work opportunities, and the youth find themselves overqualified for the work which they are able to obtain. While such over-qualification tends to be prominent for youths, it tends to be temporary and dissipates as youths “shop around” and ultimately find a more appropriate match.
- Initial negative experiences in the school to work transition appear to have a legacy of long-lasting scarring effects.

- There is often little integration between the education system and the labour market, which would foster a smooth school-to-work transition.

2.2 Success of CF Stream

In addressing the success of the CF stream, there were two main sets of analyses conducted. The first set of analyses were “pre-post” analyses that captured the magnitude of change. This presents methodological challenges in assigning direct attribution to the CF programs for the shift. The pre-post analyses are also subject to potential recall and non-response bias given that they rely on survey data.

To provide context for the pre-post analyses, the results from three national surveys of youth¹⁴ and the Census (2001) demonstrate that the general labour market trends for Canadian youth as they enter and participate in the labour market consist of noticeable positive shifts in salary, earned income, participation and employment rates for most youth as they age and gain work experience. This is referred to as a maturation effect and must be taken into account as a backdrop upon which to examine the outcomes from the pre-post analyses. For example, reviewing the information collected from the National Graduates Survey and Follow-up of Graduates Survey, surveys that followed those who graduated from a university or college in 2000, there were increases in both full-time employment rates and median annual earnings. The full-time employment rate rose from 73.5% to 80.9% for university graduates and 77.6% to 82.6% for college graduates when compared two years post graduation and five years post graduation. Median annual income levels also rose across this time period from \$38,000 to \$46,000 for university graduates, and \$28,000 to \$33,000 for college graduates. This naturally occurring shift in labour market outcomes makes it challenging to determine the extent to which CF participants’ outcomes are the result of their participation, or the result of the natural maturation process.

The second set of analyses focused on HRSDC CF participants. The use of participants’ SINs allowed access to additional information on Employment Insurance (EI) use, Social Assistance (SA) use, and income tax data from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) files. After developing a comparison group of youth with similar characteristics (e.g., education, region, prior earnings), econometric techniques were used to determine net impacts of the CF program in the areas of annual earnings, EI use, and SA use for youth who participated in the HRSDC CF program in 2003. Unlike the pre-post analyses described previously, the net impact analyses using comparison groups reveal changes or differences that can be directly attributed to participation in the program.

¹⁴ Surveys examined included the *Labour Force Survey*, *Youth in Transition Survey*, and *National Graduates Survey*.

2.2.1 To what extent did CF programs assist youth in enhancing employability skills?

Findings from all lines of evidence indicate that employability skills were enhanced for participants as a result of their participation in the CF programs. As well, there were many instances cited of skill enhancement in technical and occupation specific skills in addition to the more general employability skills.

As illustrated in Figure 1, there were gains made in the enhancement of employability skills according to CF participants responding to the survey¹⁵. CF survey participants indicated statistically significant gains across all eleven employability skills for which they were asked to recall their self-assessed level prior to their participation in the CF program and then again after their participation.

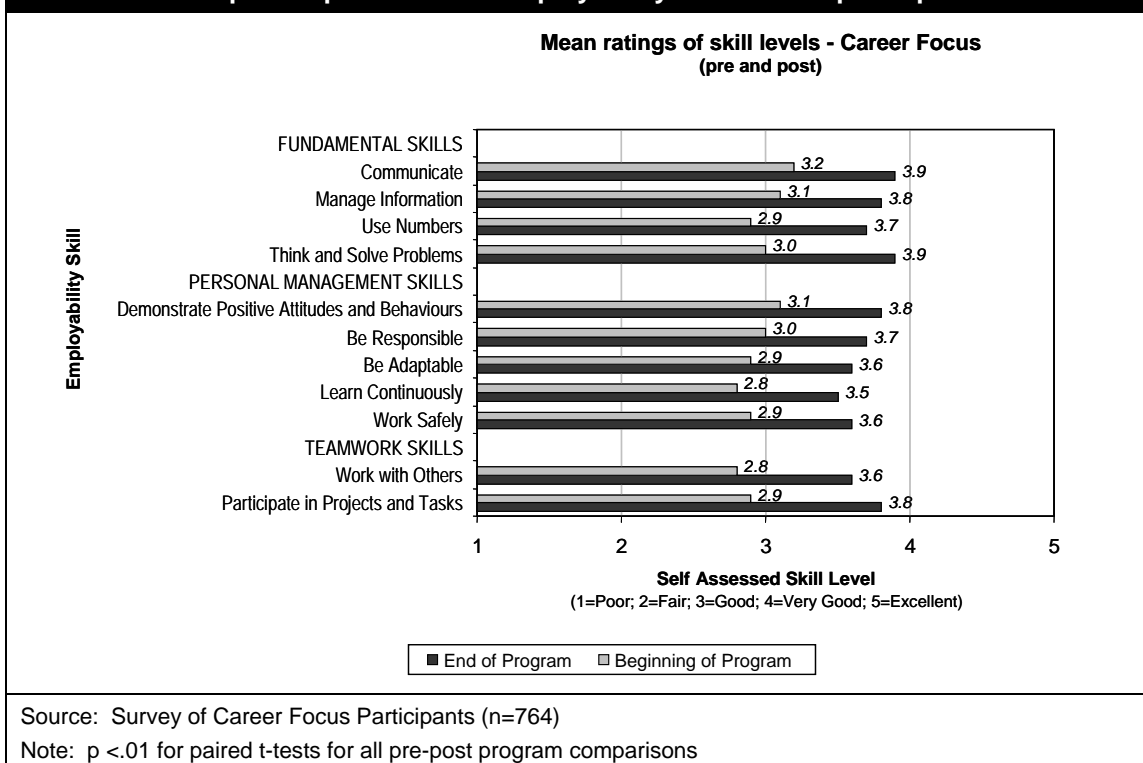
The survey findings also indicate that the greater the opportunity that participants had to practice a certain employability skill during CF, the greater was the increase in development of that employability skill. There were statistically significant correlations (0.35 to 0.49; $p < .01$) between the frequency with which a skill was practiced during the CF program and the self-assessed skill level post-program. Significant relationships were also found between frequency of skill practice and the incremental difference between pre-post self-assessments (0.20 to 0.33; $p < 0.01$).

The findings from the participant survey were further corroborated by the focus groups with CF participants. The large majority of CF participants indicated that they were satisfied with the various skills that they had developed during their CF participation. They attributed their skill development to the different types of work opportunities they were provided, mentors and coaching, and international travel/living. Key skills developed included:

- Communication skills (presenting, report/proposal writing, interpersonal communication);
- Adaptability and multi-tasking;
- Inter-cultural understanding;
- Project management and organizational skills;
- Working with others (conflict resolution, managing groups, negotiating); and
- Specific technical skills.

¹⁵ On the survey, participants were asked to recall their skill level prior to their participation in the program, and then again after they completed the program. Participants were asked to rate their skill level according to the following categories: *poor, fair, good, very good, or excellent*. It should be noted that self report measures do not possess the same level of rigour as objective skill testing, however, supplementary evidence from multiple lines of evidence (e.g., employers) adds credibility to self-report measures.

Figure 1
Pre-post improvement in employability skills for CF participants



From the perspective of almost all employers and sponsors, CF participants developed various skills during their work opportunities offered under the stream. The most frequently cited employability skills were communication skills, working with others, and thinking and problem solving skills. In addition to the specific employability skills cited above, the majority of respondents reported that CF participants had also developed technical and occupation specific skills.

2.2.2 As a positive effect of program participation, to what extent have CF participants decided to further their education?

Findings from the survey and focus groups with CF participants indicate that the CF experience has influenced some participants in deciding to return to school or obtain additional training. According to the survey results, nearly one-third (32%) of CF participants indicated that they had returned to school or training since completing the CF program. Slightly less than one half of these respondents indicated that the program had either a *large impact* (10%) or *some impact* (33%) on their decision to further their education. Overall, the majority of participants reported that the CF experience had either a *large impact* (14%) or *some impact* (41%) on determining or confirming the type of career to pursue.

The survey findings were echoed in the focus groups with CF participants. Some CF participants reported that their CF experience had assisted them in understanding that the occupations in the sectors in which they were interested often required a graduate degree. Some of the CF participants had gone on to enrol in graduate degrees as a result. Similarly, the interviews with the majority of CF employers and sponsors indicated that the CF experience has an impact on participants realizing they need a graduate degree or more specialization to work professionally in the field that they have chosen.

2.2.3 To what extent did participation in CF activities assist youth in obtaining employment? Improving income? Do impacts vary by target group?

Pre-Post Analyses – 10 Departments and Agencies¹⁶

CF participants experienced significant gains in both employment rates and income across the two time periods of pre-CF participation, and post-participation¹⁷. These findings were consistent across the various lines of evidence. Again, the reader should be aware that it is impossible to determine the extent to which these differences are attributable to the CF program versus part of the natural maturation process of youth, which leads to positive gains in employment and income independent of intervention.

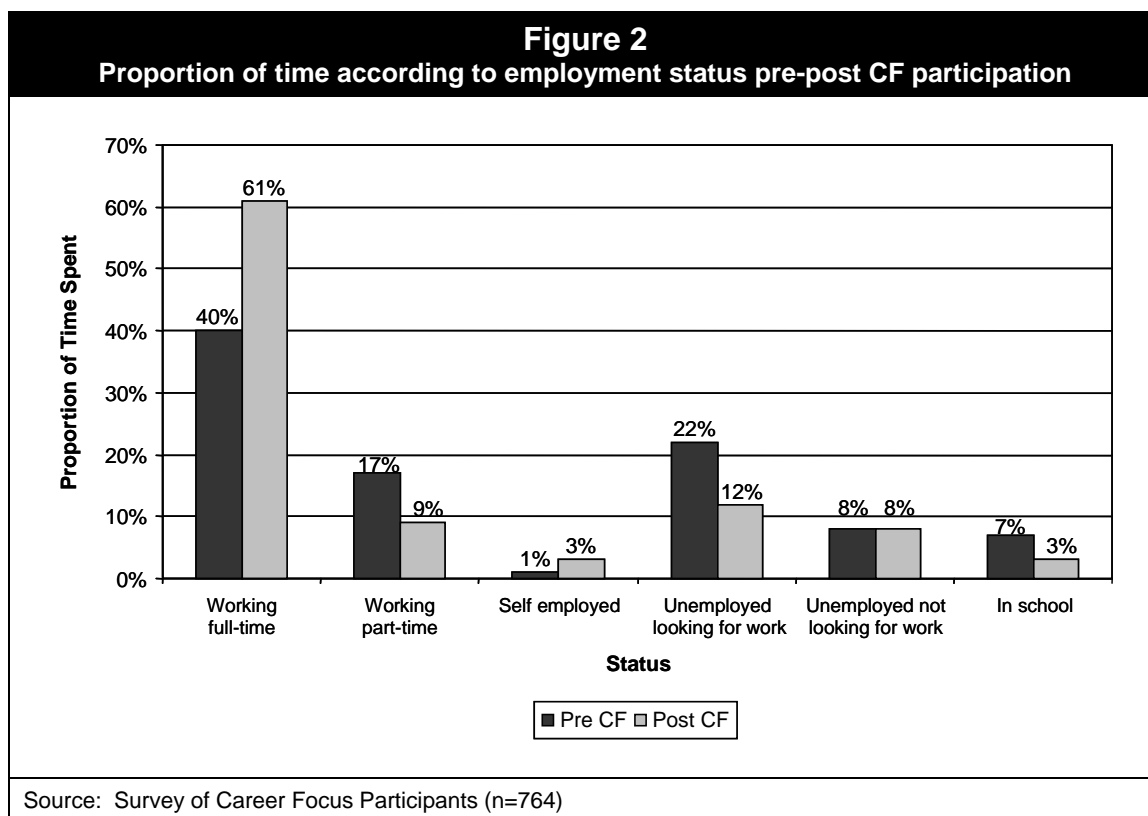
Obtaining employment

As illustrated in Figure 2, there was a 50% gain in the proportion of time spent working full-time among CF participants when compared pre-CF (40%) and post-CF (61%). These gains were a result of decreases across the two time periods in the amount of time CF participants spent unemployed and looking for work (decrease from 22% to 12%), and working part-time (decrease from 17% to 9%).

There was also a significant drop in the ratings of underemployment when compared pre-post CF participation. Prior to CF involvement, 42% of those working indicated that they perceived themselves as overqualified for their job. This proportion dropped down to 26% post-CF participation.

¹⁶ Departments and agencies included in these analyses are AAFC, CIDA, CFIA, DFAIT, EC, HRSDC, IC, NRC, NRCan, and PCH.

¹⁷ Period “pre” includes the time between when graduated or last attended school full-time and beginning of YES program. Period “post” includes the time since completion or leaving the YES program and time of interview.



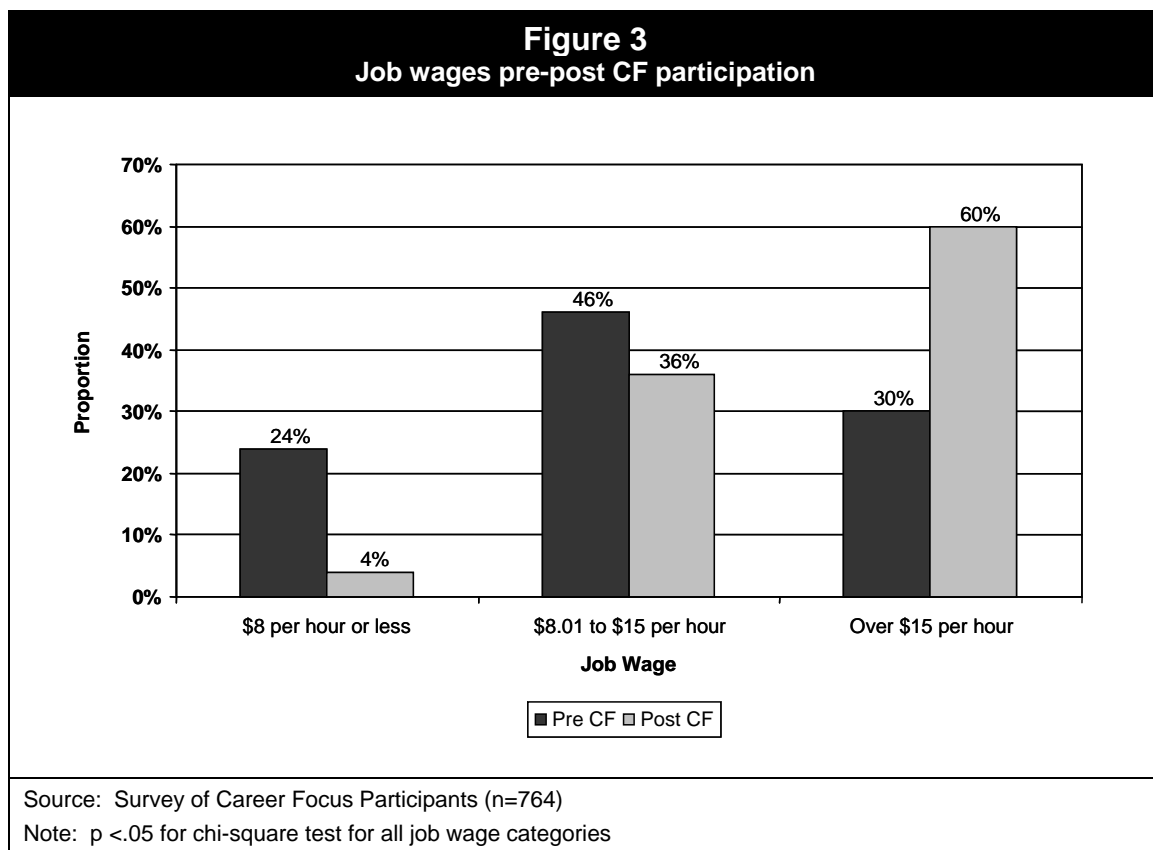
CF participants were asked to provide their perspectives on the extent to which the CF experience assisted them in finding relevant employment. Approximately two-thirds (68%) indicated that the program had either a *large impact* (43%) or *some impact* (25%) on them obtaining their current or most recent job. For those who required a specific set of skills for the current or most recent job, nearly three-quarters (73%) of participants indicated that there was *much development* (41%) or *some development* (32%) of this skill set through their CF experience. In addition, over three-quarters of participants (79%) reported that they frequently use the skills they developed in CF in their current jobs (*every day* – 55%; *few times per week* – 24%).

These findings were similar to those of the focus groups with CF participants. Of those who decided to obtain employment rather than return to school, the large majority of CF participants reported that their CF experience had directly assisted them in obtaining employment. In most cases, the assistance was due to them having relevant work experience on their résumés which future employers noticed.

The survey findings were supported through the interviews with employers and sponsors. The majority of CF employers interviewed indicated that they hired at least some of the CF participants following their CF placement.

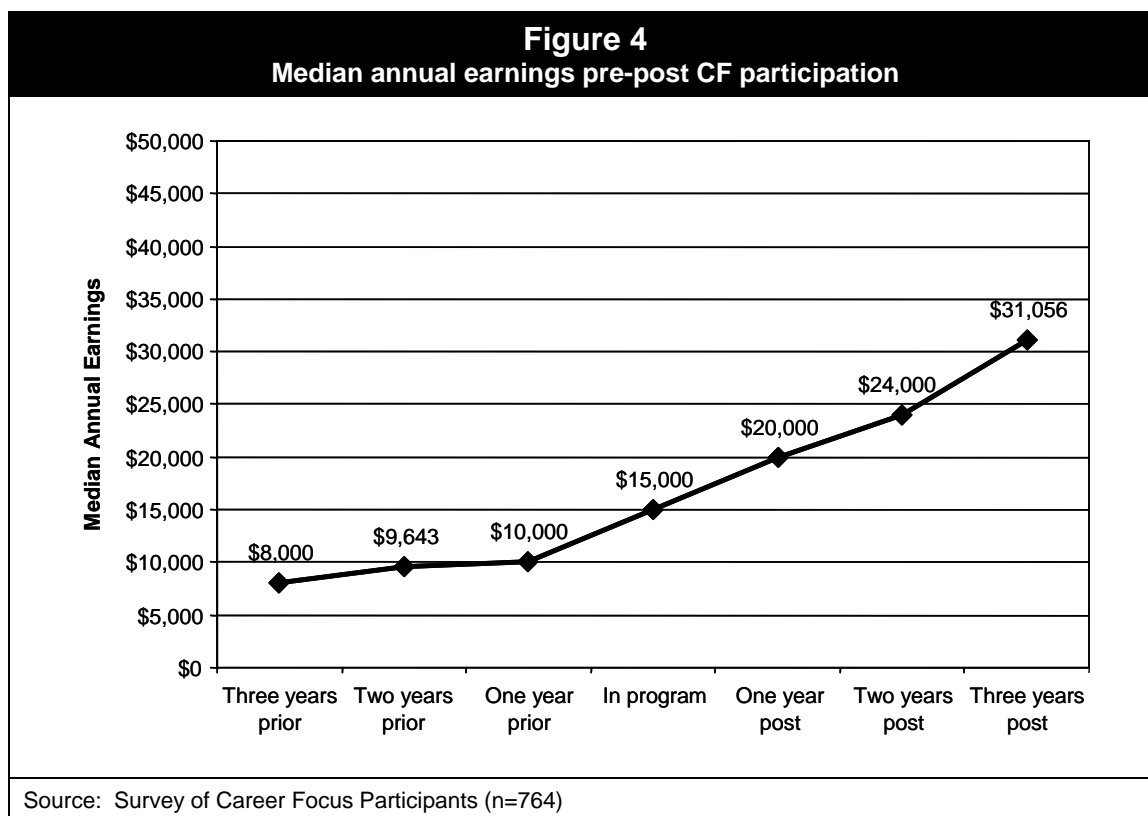
Improving income

According to survey results, significant improvements in both wages and overall annual earnings were found when CF participants were compared pre-post program. As illustrated in Figure 3, the two time periods saw a significant shift to higher wages when compared pre- and post-CF participation. The median wage pre-CF participation was \$12.00 per hour compared with \$17.28 per hour post-CF participation¹⁸. The proportion of CF participants earning \$8.00 per hour dropped from 24% prior to participation to 4% post-participation. As well, in the higher wage category of over \$15 per hour there was a 100% increase in proportion of participants doubling from 30% pre-CF participation to 60% post-CF participation.



In keeping with the findings in increased job wage, there was a significant increase in annual earnings among CF participants when examined pre-CF and post-CF participation (see Figure 4). In the three years prior to participation in CF (when many were still full-time students), the median annual earnings were \$10,000 or less. During the year of CF participation, the reported median earnings were \$15,000. Post-CF participation, median annual earnings increased to \$20,000 one year post, \$24,000 two years post, and \$31,056 for those participants who had been out of the program for 3 years at the time of survey interview.

¹⁸ It should be noted that all income and wage data referring to the periods prior to and during participation in the program are based on participants' recall during the participant survey which was conducted one to three years post program. As a result, the data presented in this section are subject to potential survey participant recall bias.



Net Impact Analyses - HRSDC Participants

The net impact analyses were conducted with 317 HRSDC CF participants who started their program in 2003. As illustrated in Figure 5, CF HRSDC participants demonstrated net impacts in earnings during and after their CF program. During the program (2003), CF participants were found to have significantly¹⁹ higher earnings on average when compared with the comparison group of youth who had requested minimal employment assistance services. The incremental impact was \$1,137 in additional earnings on average for the CF group. One year out of the program (2004)²⁰, the differences between average annual earnings were not significant, however, by two years (2005), the CF participant group was found to have a positive incremental impact on average earnings of \$2,057²¹.

When the findings were segmented by gender²², it was found that the significant impacts were found among men rather than women. CF male participants on average had earnings that were \$2,187 higher than the comparison group in 2003 (program year), and \$2,987 two years out of the program (2005). Similarly, when the findings were segmented by age,

¹⁹ Throughout the text, when the phrase “significance” is used, it is referring to statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level or lower.

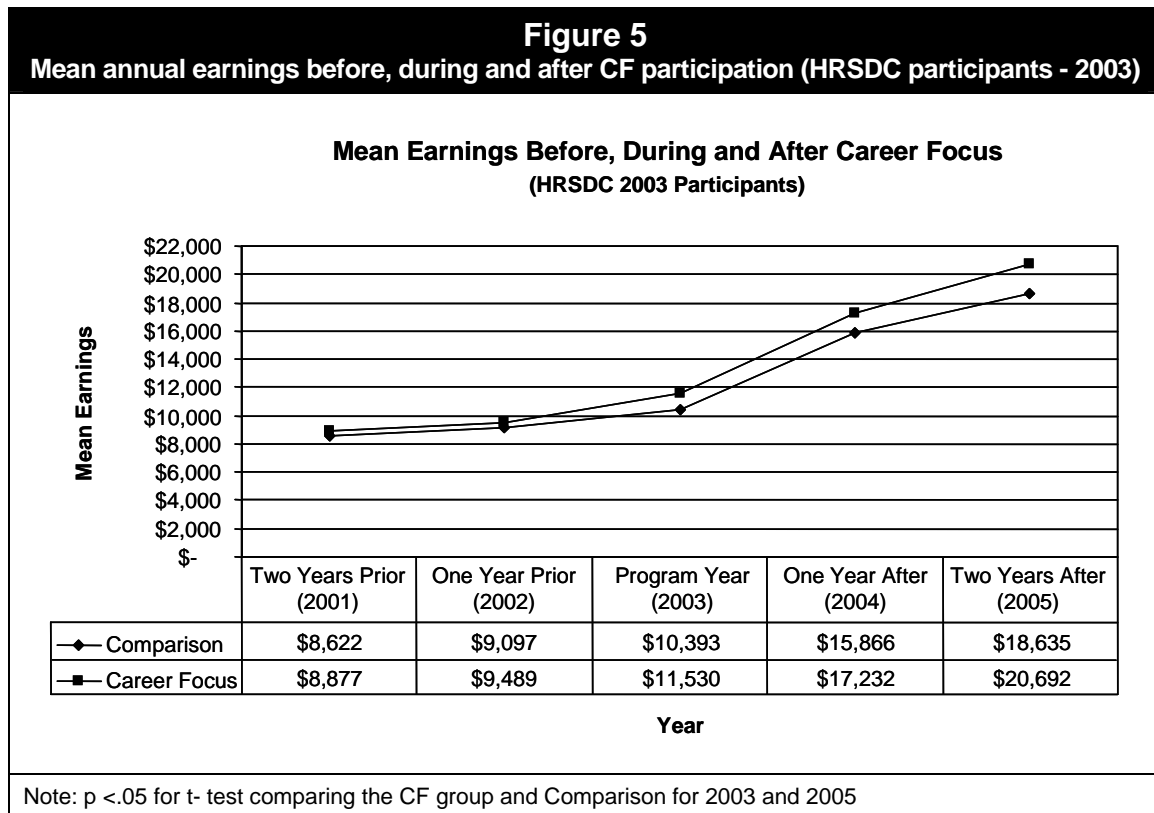
²⁰ It should be noted that in 2004, even though it is referred to as “post-program”, there may have been a number of participants that were still participating in the program for a portion of 2004.

²¹ These mean differences were further tested using regression models to predict earnings based on program participation and key characteristics. The findings from the modeling corroborated the findings from the weighting procedures outlined above.

²² It should be noted that the segmentation analyses were conducted with relatively smaller groups than the overall analyses.

younger CF participants were more likely to have significant impacts on earnings. Those CF participants in the 20-24 year old group had significantly higher earnings on average both during the program (+\$2,812) in 2003, and two years after the program (+\$4,176) in 2005.

There were no significant differences in EI earnings for the CF group when compared with the comparison group. For SA income, there was a significant finding of less SA income for CF participants of \$164 on average in 2004.



2.2.4 What unintended impacts have occurred as a result of CF activities?

Unintended impacts were collected qualitatively in interviews and focus groups. In interviews with CF employers and sponsors, most reported some unintended impacts of CF activities. These included:

- Better understanding and increased awareness of international development issues among participants and their families and friends;
- Increased self-confidence among youth to try new situations; and
- Increased/improved relationships/networks between NGOs, universities/colleges, and private sector employers.

Unintended impacts described by CF participants in focus groups included:

- Ongoing relationship/connection with organizations with which they worked during the CF program;
- Decision to significantly change career path as a result of participation; and
- Significant financial burden (spending savings, going into debt) in order to subsidize their international internship.

2.2.5 *To what extent did the assessment tools and action plans that were prepared assist in the decision-making process for CF youth?*

The interviews with CF employers and sponsors indicated that in the large majority of cases, assessment tools are not used to select participants or to develop an action plan. Despite not using assessment tools, the majority of CF employers and sponsors indicated that they developed some form of action plan (often referred to as a work plan) with the CF participant. From the descriptions, these appear to be focused primarily on the tasks and goals of the specific CF project, and not necessarily as individual action plans in the case management context. As well, the large majority of CF employers indicated that they conduct performance evaluations for CF participants, providing them with feedback on their learning and achievements.

In focus groups with participants, the majority of CF participants reported that they had received feedback on their performance. Those who were provided feedback found this process quite useful in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement.

2.2.6 *How accessible is employment-focused information produced for CF youth/employers?*

On the survey of CF participants, nearly one-third reported that at the time they applied to the CF program that they encountered challenges of *not knowing what type of job they wanted* (30%). Approximately one-quarter of CF respondents reported that they were challenged by *not knowing where to look for work* (24%). Within focus groups, CF participants reported a number of challenges with employment-focused information for youth, some specific to CF program information. These included:

- Gaps in information with promotion of specific occupations and fields but little connection to actual work opportunities;
- Incomplete job ads that result in failed job searches (search engine criteria);
- Federal government sites that continue to advertise YES positions for youth that are already filled; and
- Information on the CF individual programs that is quite general and not specific enough for youth to make decisions about the appropriateness of the opportunities.

2.3 Cost Effectiveness of CF Stream

2.3.1 Have CF programs and services operated within budget? What are the reasons for any variances?

According to the information provided in the Treasury Board Secretariat's Horizontal Results Database, the total planned budget for the years 2003-04 to 2005-06 inclusive was \$143.9M. The actual expenditures were \$134.4M for a variance of \$9.5M, or approximately 6.6%. The reasons for this variance provided within the TBS reporting was that during this time there was a reduction due to the government-wide reallocation exercise, particularly in 2003-04. Key informant interviews with program representatives across the various departments and agencies indicated that where there have been variances, they are relatively small both in proportion and in actual dollar amounts given the smaller levels of funding allocated to this component and the number of different departments and agencies participating.

2.3.2 Have CF programs managed to leverage funds from other sources?

According to key informant interviews with program representatives, there is considerable variability among the CF programs with respect to whether CF employers are required to "match" CF funding. As well, there is considerable variability in monitoring and reporting leveraged amounts from employers with respect to whether both in-kind and cash contributions are counted, or if leveraging amounts are monitored at all. As a result, it is not possible for the evaluation to determine the extent to which leveraging has occurred for the CF stream.

2.3.3 Are there more cost-effective alternatives to CF programs and services?

While this was a question posed to program representatives, no respondents were able to address this issue. One of the main challenges identified by the respondents was that there are no identical programs with which to compare costs and effectiveness. While there were some suggestions for alternative program delivery, these were not presented in a cost-effectiveness framework. Given the limited amount of net impact data available for the evaluation (for HRSDC 2003 participants only), and the limited post-program timeframe (only one or two years of post-program impacts), it was not feasible to proceed with a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing the HRSDC CF program to various alternatives.

3. Evaluation Findings for Skills Link Stream

This section presents the evaluation findings for the SL Stream. Activities under the SL Stream are designed to help youth overcome barriers to labour market participation through tailored interventions. These barriers could include, but are not limited to, challenges faced by recent immigrant youth, youth with disabilities, lone parent youth, youth who have not completed high school, Aboriginal youth, and those youth living in rural or remote areas. During the period covered by the evaluation, programs under the SL stream were delivered by three departments and agencies, and had approximately 91,000 participants²³. Evaluation findings for the SL Stream are presented according to issues of relevance, success, and cost-effectiveness. Within these broad headings, the findings according to specific evaluation questions are presented.

3.1 Relevance of SL Stream

3.1.1 To what extent do SL related activities continue to address Government of Canada and Departmental/Agency priorities?

Skills Link is viewed by program representatives from the three departments and agencies²⁴ delivering programs under this stream as directly addressing Government of Canada priorities as well as specific departmental /agency priorities. Key priorities identified include congruence with the federal government priority of *building a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive and rewarding lives, and to improve Canadians' quality of life* and meeting departmental/agency strategic outcomes and objectives of:

- Enhanced Canadian productivity and participation through efficient and inclusive labour markets, competitive workplaces and access to learning (HRSDC);
- Strengthened individual and family well-being for First Nations, Inuit and Northerners (INAC); and
- Canadians from all walks of life to access quality, affordable homes – one aspect of which is to fund supply and renovations for Aboriginal Canadians both on- and off-reserve (CMHC). The YES program provides work experience and on-the-job training for First Nations and Inuit youth to assist them in pursuing long-term employment in the housing industry.

²³ Budget figures and participant numbers derived from Treasury Board Secretariat's Horizontal Results Database for years 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06.

²⁴ Departments and agencies participating in the SL stream include CMHC, HRSDC, and INAC.

Specifically, in *Advantage Canada* the Government of Canada committed to creating the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible workforce in the world. As well, as affirmed most recently in *Budget 2007: A Stronger, Safer, Better Canada*, tabled in March 2007, the Government of Canada is committed to increasing the participation of under-represented groups, such as youth, in the workforce. Other key priorities cited by interview respondents as being congruent with the goals and objectives of SL included youth justice, development of Aboriginal communities, and addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups.

3.1.2 To what extent are SL programs and services relevant to current and evolving youth needs? Employer needs?

Who are SL participants?

According to the survey, the profile of SL participants indicates that the program is meeting the stream's targeted population of youth with significant labour market barriers. Approximately one-third (35%) had not graduated from high school, with another similar proportion (36%) having graduated from high school but with no post-secondary experience. The median age of participants was 22 years. The median time since they had last attended school prior to their SL participation was 24 months, with a significant proportion (29%) having been out of school for three years or more. Approximately one in six (17%) reported that they had a long-term disability. This is higher than the approximately 4% of youth who reported in 2001 they had a disability²⁵. In addition, approximately one in five participants (19%) indicated that they are parents with dependents. Qualitative findings on INAC Aboriginal participants indicate that INAC SL programs would have a similar profile to that found in the survey.

Why did youth choose to participate in SL?

On the survey, SL participants reported most frequently that the reasons they had for deciding to participate in the SL program included:

- Needing a job (36%);
- Offered good work experience (28%); and
- Fit with their career objectives (14%).

²⁵ 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) – Statistics Canada Catalogue #89-577-XWE. According to PALS, a person with a disability was defined as having difficulties with daily living activities or indicated that a physical, mental condition or health problem reduced the kind or amount of activities they could do. On the survey of SL participants, they were asked a slightly different question of “Do you have any long-term disabilities or handicaps, that is, ones that have lasted or are expected to last six months or more?”

These findings were similar to those from the focus groups with SL participants. The large majority²⁶ of SL participants indicated that they were looking for a job and came across the SL opportunities. A few were referred to the SL program through another service (e.g., half-way house, employment centre, social worker). Most focus group participants indicated that the reason they decided to participate was to get work experience. Within the INAC site visits, the large majority of SL participants reported that they decided to participate because they needed work experience.

As would be expected, surveyed SL participants described various barriers to employment they encountered when trying to find employment prior to the SL program. The main barriers identified included:

- Not having enough experience for available jobs (70%);
- Not having enough education or training for available jobs (59%);
- Not knowing what type of job they wanted (48%);
- A shortage of jobs (46%); and
- Not knowing where to look for work (38%).

The majority of SL participants (60%) reported that, at the time that they applied to the program, it would have been either *very unlikely* (33%) or *somewhat unlikely* (27%) that they would have been able to find a full-time job that would have provided them with similar opportunities to develop skills. These findings were supported with the qualitative findings on INAC participants who explained that there were very limited opportunities for youth to develop skills on-reserve.

At the time that SL participants applied to the SL program, slightly over half (53%) reported being unemployed and looking for work. An additional 13% indicated that they were working part-time. Other activities at the time of application included unemployed but not looking for work (10%), working full-time (8%) and in school full-time (8%). Of the small proportion of participants who were employed, 45% reported that they believed that they were overqualified for their job.

Did the SL program meet participants' needs?

Overall, the SL participants reported on the survey that they were satisfied with the SL program. With respect to the **quality of the work experience** offered under the SL stream, 81% of participants were within the satisfied range (46% - *very satisfied*; 35% - *satisfied*).

²⁶ The following quantitative scale is used throughout the report to indicate the relative weight of the responses for qualitative responses within respondent groups.

- “All/almost all” – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the respondents;
- “Large majority” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of the respondents;
- “Majority/most” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of the respondents;
- “Some” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of the respondents; and
- “A few” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of respondents.

A higher proportion (91%) was within the satisfied range with respect to the SL program offering them opportunities to **develop useful skills** (51% - *very satisfied*; 40% - *satisfied*). Overall, the vast majority of participants (92%) indicated that they were within the satisfied range when considering the overall program (59% - *very satisfied*; 33% - *satisfied*).

The majority of SL participants in focus groups reported that the SL met their needs at the time they decided to participate. Key needs addressed by the SL program which were identified by focus group participants included:

- Connecting participants with employment opportunities;
- Opportunities for personal growth;
- References for other jobs;
- Subsidies for tools, clothing, lunches, gas vouchers, etc.;
- Learning about labour rights and knowledge of the Canadian economy (new immigrants); and
- Learning how to do job searches, interviews, or write résumés.

Program representatives were also asked to provide their perspectives on the extent to which the SL program addressed the needs of youth participants. The large majority of respondents reported that SL programs address some of the needs of participants. A caveat raised by respondents was that the needs for SL participants are numerous and often require services in addition to SL interventions (e.g., drug/addiction issues, parenting issues, legal issues, housing needs, emotional/mental health issues). The main needs identified by respondents that SL addresses are life skills and employability skills. Some respondents indicated that the flexibility within the SL stream combined with a case management approach assists in developing specific projects that are tailored to the needs of the SL participants at the local level.

Findings from the interviews with SL employers and sponsors corroborated those findings from program representatives with almost all SL employers and sponsors reporting that participants often have multiple challenges or barriers. The needs and issues identified by employers and sponsors include:

- Mental health, physical health, addiction issues;
- Poverty, homelessness;
- Threats of violence, gang involvement, involved with justice system, “street entrenched”;
- Parenting issues, day care requirements;
- Low education levels, low literacy/numeracy skills;
- Lack of self-confidence or self-esteem;
- Low motivation;
- Lack of work experience;
- Low levels of employability skills and life skills.

According to the large majority of SL employers and sponsors, the SL programs work directly on addressing many of these issues, particularly in the areas of education levels, life and employability skills, motivation, self-confidence, and work experience. Most employers and sponsors indicated that these in turn directly impact on some of the other issues (e.g., poverty, parenting issues, health).

Meeting the needs of employers

In interviews with employers, most indicated that some of their largest challenges in hiring youth overall are dealing with motivation issues (e.g., punctuality, attendance), the additional work required from regular staff to coach/mentor youth, and limited skills. SL was viewed by most SL employers as assisting somewhat in meeting these needs, but there is the acknowledgement that SL participants have greater barriers than most youth, so will require additional effort to integrate into the workplace.

3.1.3 Do SL work experience opportunities continue to be offered in growth sectors of the economy?

According to the survey of participants, the largest proportions of work experiences were in *Sales and Service Occupations* (25%), *Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators and Related Occupations* (19%), and *Business, Finance and Administrative Occupations* (14%). According to growth sector analyses, these sectors continue to be in a growth phase and are predicted to have increasing labour demands as the population ages.

During interviews, most program representatives indicated that while SL projects are not necessarily focused specifically on growth sectors, work experiences within projects are selected according to the likelihood of SL participants being able to transfer basic skills learned with an employer to potential other employment situations. Interviews with SL employers and sponsors indicated that the large majority of SL employers and sponsors offered work opportunities in the services sector (e.g., food services, customer service, administration/clerical) with a few opportunities in construction and trades²⁷.

²⁷ However, it should be noted that one SL program (CMHC – *Housing Internship Initiative for First Nations Inuit Youth*) provides on the job training to assist youth pursuing employment in the housing industry (e.g., construction, renovation, maintenance and administration). This is a small program, representing less than 1% of SL participants.

3.1.4 To what extent are SL programs and services consistent with current research and thinking about youth employment needs?

The literature review conducted as one component of the evaluation revealed that the SL program is consistent with current research findings focused on youth facing significant barriers to employment. The main area of consistency includes the research findings that the consequences of dropping-out are substantial, both in the short term (e.g., low employability, self confidence) and in the longer-term (e.g., use of Social Assistance, low employment, lack of career choice). Assisting in the mitigation of the impact of dropping-out are the activities under SL program that result in a return to school outcome for many participants.

3.2 Success of SL Stream

In addressing the success of the SL stream, there were two main sets of analyses conducted. The first set of analyses were “pre-post” analyses that captured the magnitude of change. This presents methodological challenges in assigning direct attribution to the SL programs for the shift. The pre-post analyses are also subject to potential recall and non-response bias given that they rely on survey data.

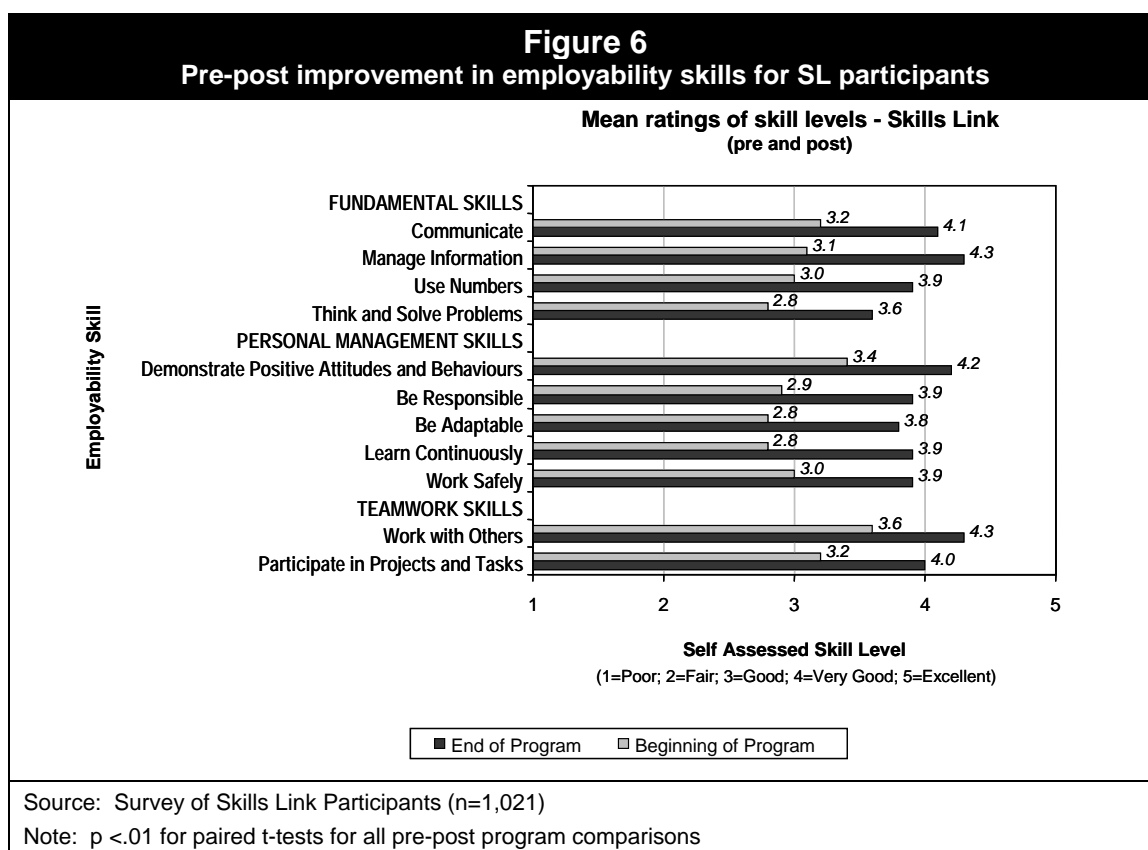
As previously indicated, the results from three national surveys of youth²⁸ and the Census (2001) demonstrate that the general labour market trends for Canadian youth as they enter and participate in the labour market are noticeable positive shifts in salary, earned income, participation and employment rates for most youth as they age and gain work experience. This is referred to as a maturation effect and must be taken into account as a backdrop upon which to examine the outcomes from the pre-post analyses. For example, the Youth in Transition Survey followed a survey cohort of youth between the ages of 18 and 20 years over a four year time span. During this four year period, the proportion of youth in school dropped from 58% to 31%, while employment (full-time and part-time combined) rose from 21% to 45%. This naturally occurring shift in labour market outcomes makes it challenging to determine the extent to which SL participants’ outcomes are the result of their participation, or the result of the natural maturation process.

The second set of analyses focused on HRSDC SL participants. The use of participants’ SINS allowed access to additional information on Employment Insurance (EI) use, Social Assistance (SA) use, and income tax data from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) files. After developing a comparison group of youth with similar characteristics (e.g., education, region, prior earnings), econometric techniques were used to determine net impacts of the SL program in the areas of annual earnings, EI use, and SA use for youth who participated in the HRSDC SL program in 2003. Unlike the pre-post analyses described previously, the net impact analyses using comparison groups reveal changes or differences that can be directly attributed to participation in the program.

²⁸ Surveys examined included the *Labour Force Survey*, *Youth in Transition Survey*, and *National Graduates Survey*.

3.2.1 To what extent did SL programs assist youth in enhancing employability skills?

As illustrated in Figure 6, there were gains made in the enhancement of employability skills according to SL participants responding to the survey²⁹. SL survey participants indicated statistically significant gains across all eleven employability skills for which they were asked to recall their self-assessed level prior to their participation in the SL program, and then again after their participation.



The survey findings also indicate that the greater the opportunity that participants had to practice a certain skill in their SL placements, the greater was the increase in development of that skill. There were statistically significant correlations between the frequency with which a skill was practiced during the SL placements and the self-assessed skill level post-program (0.18 to 0.40; $p < 0.01$). For eight of the eleven skills, there were significant relationships also between frequency of skill practice and the incremental difference between pre-post self-assessments (0.08 to 0.28; $p < 0.05$).

²⁹ On the survey, participants were asked to recall their skill level prior to their participation in the program, and then again after they completed the program. Participants were asked to rate their skill level according to the following categories: *poor, fair, good, very good, or excellent*. It should be noted that self report measures do not possess the same level of rigour as objective skill testing, however, supplementary evidence from multiple lines of evidence (e.g., employers) adds credibility to self-report measures.

Findings from focus groups with SL participants echoed those from the survey. Almost all SL participants reported that they were satisfied with the employability skills that they had developed during the SL program. Some indicated that the skills that they had developed during the program were being used in their current jobs. The main skills reportedly developed included:

- Communication skills (assertion/anger management, public speaking, getting over shyness, interpersonal communication);
- Time management, acquiring a work ethic and respecting deadlines;
- Working with others (self-confidence, trusting others, team work); and
- Job specific skills.

Qualitative findings on INAC participants showed that the SL participants were also increasing their employability skills in specific areas relevant to employment opportunities on-reserve. Most of the employers and sponsors described skill enhancement in the areas of communication, working with others particularly in the area of self confidence, and understanding the basic requirements of finding and maintaining employment.

Similar evidence on employability skill development was collected during interviews with SL employers and sponsors. The most frequently cited area of skill enhancement was learning how to work with others. Other frequently cited skills included communication skills, being responsible, thinking and problem solving, and learning continuously. The majority of respondents also reported that SL participants developed employability skills in the areas of demonstrating positive behaviors, being adaptable, working safely, using and working with numbers, participating in project and tasks, and technical or occupation specific skills.

3.2.2 As a positive effect of program participation, to what extent have SL participants decided to further their education?

Findings from the survey and focus groups with SL participants indicate that participation in SL influenced participants' decision to return to school or receive training. According to the survey results, 40% of participants had returned to school or training post-SL participation. Of these, nearly two thirds (65%) reported that their participation in SL had either a *large impact* (43%) or *some impact* (22%) on their decision to further their education. Overall, the majority of participants reported that their SL experience had either a *large impact* (32%) or *some impact* (31%) on determining or confirming the type of career to pursue.

These survey findings were reflected in the information provided in focus groups with SL participants. The majority of SL participants indicated that they had participated in some education program post-SL. In most cases, the decision to further their education had been impacted by their participation in the SL program. Some participants reported that

their experience in SL had provided them with information, direction and experience that assisted them in choosing the type of training they would pursue.

Survey findings were also reflected in interviews with SL employers and sponsors. The large majority of SL sponsors indicated that the SL program had a positive impact on participants' decisions to return to school. The reported SL factors related to this impact included:

- Increased self-confidence and success in learning;
- Understanding the educational requirements of the world of work and various occupations;
- Encouragement received while in the program to return to school;
- Experience of getting back into a routine (more conducive to studying); and
- Understanding the difference between a career and a job and the educational requirements of each.

3.2.3 To what extent did participation in SL activities assist youth in obtaining employment? Improving income? Do impacts vary by target group?

Pre-Post SL Participation Analyses – Two Departments and Agencies³⁰

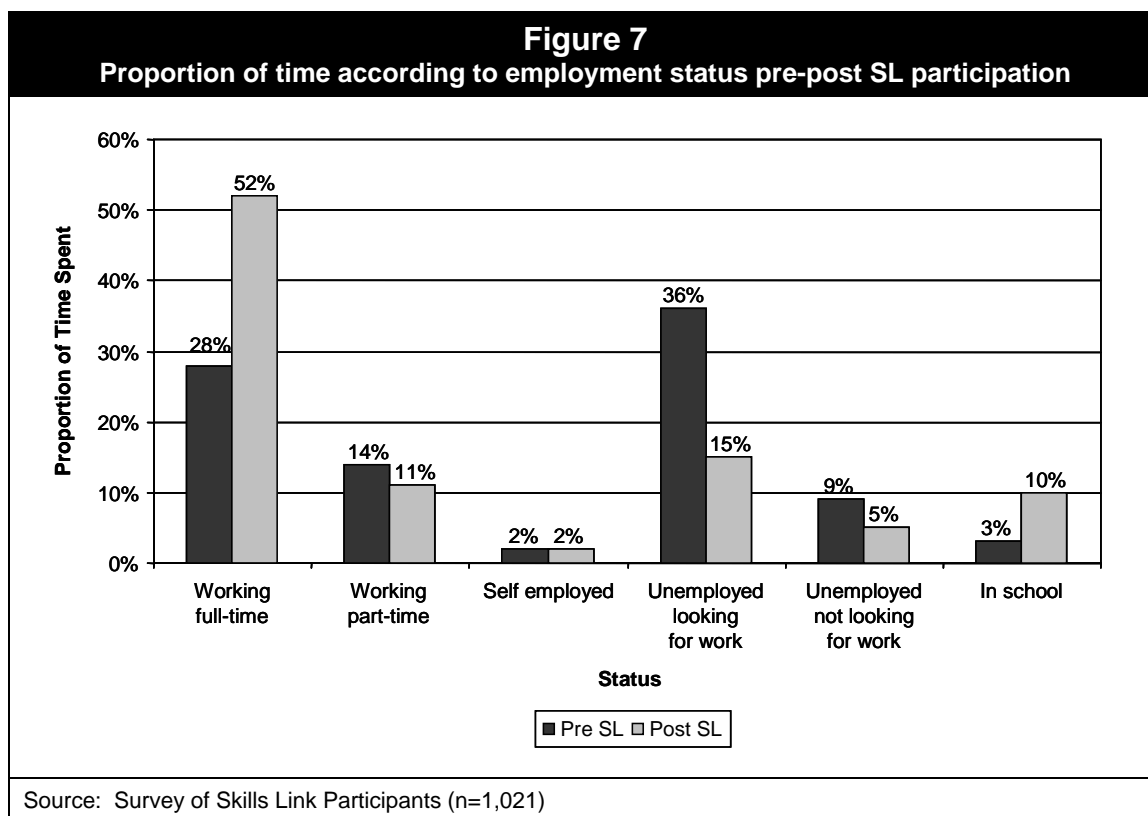
SL participants experienced significant gains in both employment rates and income across the two time periods of pre-SL participation, and post-participation³¹. These findings were consistent across the various lines of evidence.

Obtaining employment

As illustrated in Figure 7, there was nearly a doubling in the proportion of time spent working full-time among SL participants when comparing pre-SL to post-SL participation (movement from 28% to 52%). Similarly, the proportion of time spent in school tripled, rising from 3% to 10% over the period pre-post SL participation. In keeping with these findings, the proportion of time spent unemployed dropped from 36% to 15%.

³⁰ The pre-post analyses were conducted with survey data collected from participants in HRSDC and CMHC SL programs.

³¹ Period “pre” includes the time between when graduated or last attended school full-time and beginning of YES program. Period “post” includes the time since completion or leaving the YES program and time of interview.



SL participants were asked on the survey to provide their perspectives on the extent to which their employment gains were attributable to the SL participation. Over one half of participants (59%) indicated that the program had either a *large impact* (33%) or *some impact* (26%) on them getting their current or most recent job. For those who required a specific set of skills for the current or most recent job, over two-thirds (70%) of participants indicated that there was *much development* (35%) or *some development* (35%) of this skill set while participating in SL. In addition, nearly three quarters of participants (71%) reported that they frequently use the skills they developed in SL in their current jobs (*every day* - 53%; *few times per week* - 18%).

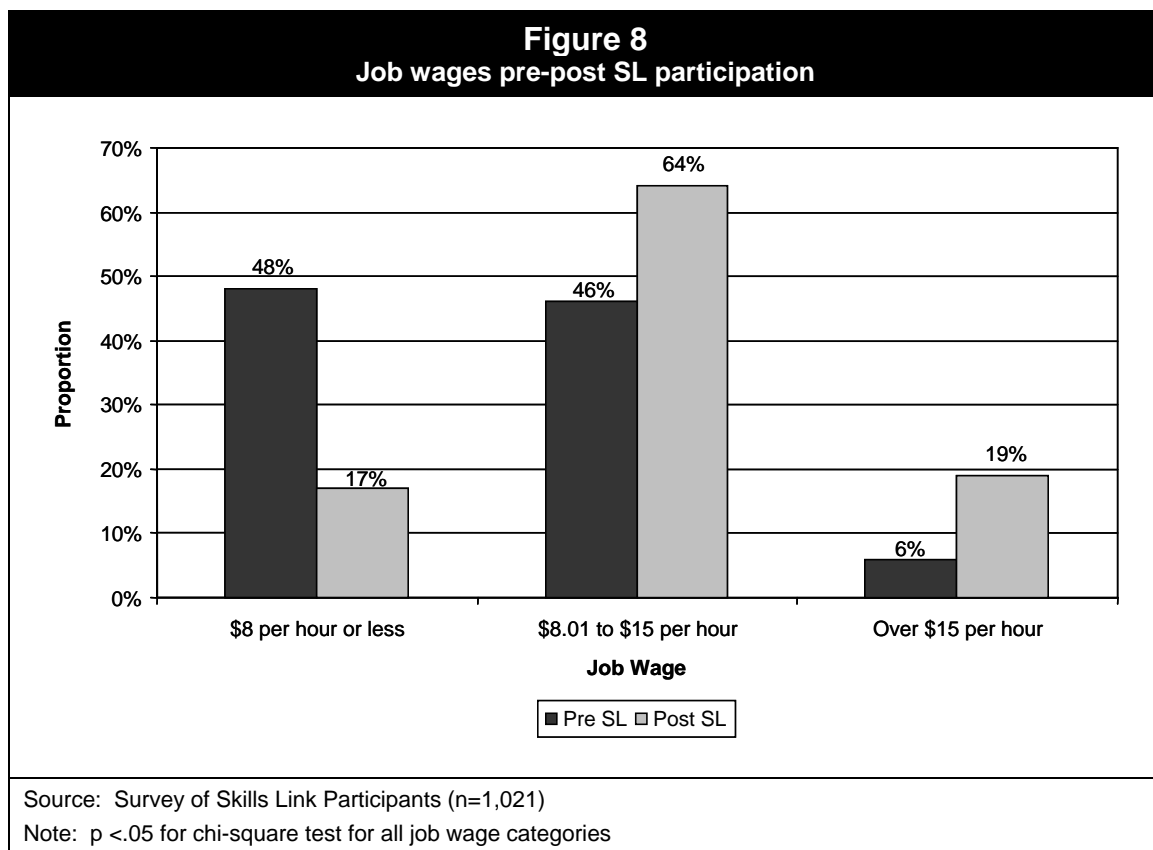
These findings were similar to the opinions express in the focus groups with SL participants. The large majority of participants indicated that their SL experience had assisted them in obtaining employment. They cited work experience to list on their résumés as the main contributing factor in obtaining employment. Some additional factors cited included:

- Getting motivated and interested in the labour market;
- Increased confidence; and
- Learning how to prepare a résumé, search for jobs, and perform in interviews.

Similarly, interviews with SL employers and sponsors supported the findings that SL participants experienced improvements in their employment status as a result of their participation in SL programs. Among the SL employers who provided work placements for SL participants, almost all retained some of the participants as employees after their placement.

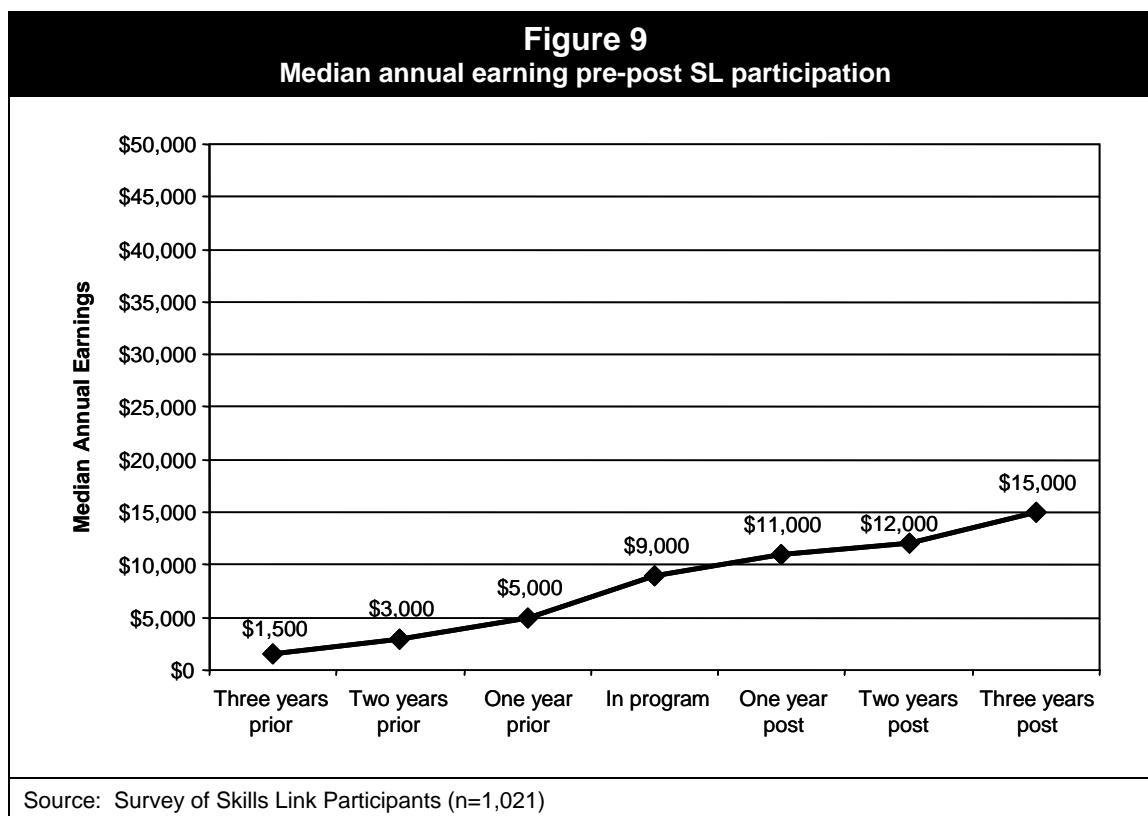
Improving income

Significant improvements in both wages and overall annual earnings were found when participants were compared pre-post SL participation according to survey results. As illustrated in Figure 8, the two time periods saw a significant shift in higher wages. The median wage pre-SL participation was \$8.43 per hour compared with \$10.00 per hour post-SL participation³². The proportion of SL participants earning \$8.00 per hour dropped from 48% prior to participation to 17% post-participation. As well, in the higher wage category of over \$15 per hour there was a tripling in proportion of participants going from 6% pre-SL participation to 19% post-SL participation.



In keeping with the findings in increased job wages, SL participants also experienced a significant increase in reported annual earnings when examined pre-SL and post-SL participation, as illustrated in Figure 9. In the three years prior to participation in SL, the reported median annual earnings were \$5,000 or less. During the year in which SL participation took place, the reported median earnings were \$9,000. Post SL participation, median annual earnings increased to \$11,000 one year post program, \$12,000 two years post, and \$15,000 for those participants who had been out of the program for a 3 year period at the time of the survey interview.

³² It should be noted that all income and wage data referring to the periods prior to and during participation in the program are based on participants' recall during the participant survey which was conducted one to three years post program. As a result, the data presented in this section are subject to potential survey participant recall bias.



As indicated previously, it is important to note that, given the methods used in the evaluation and the challenges in developing an adequate comparison group, it is impossible to determine the extent to which these differences are attributable to the SL program versus part of the natural maturation process of youth.

Net Impact Analyses for HRSDC Participants

As previously indicated, the net impact analyses were conducted for HRSDC SL participants (8,012 participants) who started their program in 2003. As illustrated in Figure 10, SL HRSDC participants demonstrated net impacts in earnings during and after their SL program. During the program (2003), SL participants were found to have significantly higher earnings on average when compared with the comparison group of youth who had requested minimal employment assistance services. The incremental impact was on average \$706 in additional earnings for the SL group. One year out of the program (2004)³³, the differences between annual earnings were approximately \$1,142 on average, and by two years (2005), the SL participant group was found to have a positive incremental impact on earnings of on average \$383³⁴.

³³ It should be noted that in 2004, even though it is referred to as “post-program”, there may have been a number of participants that were still participating in the program for a portion of 2004.

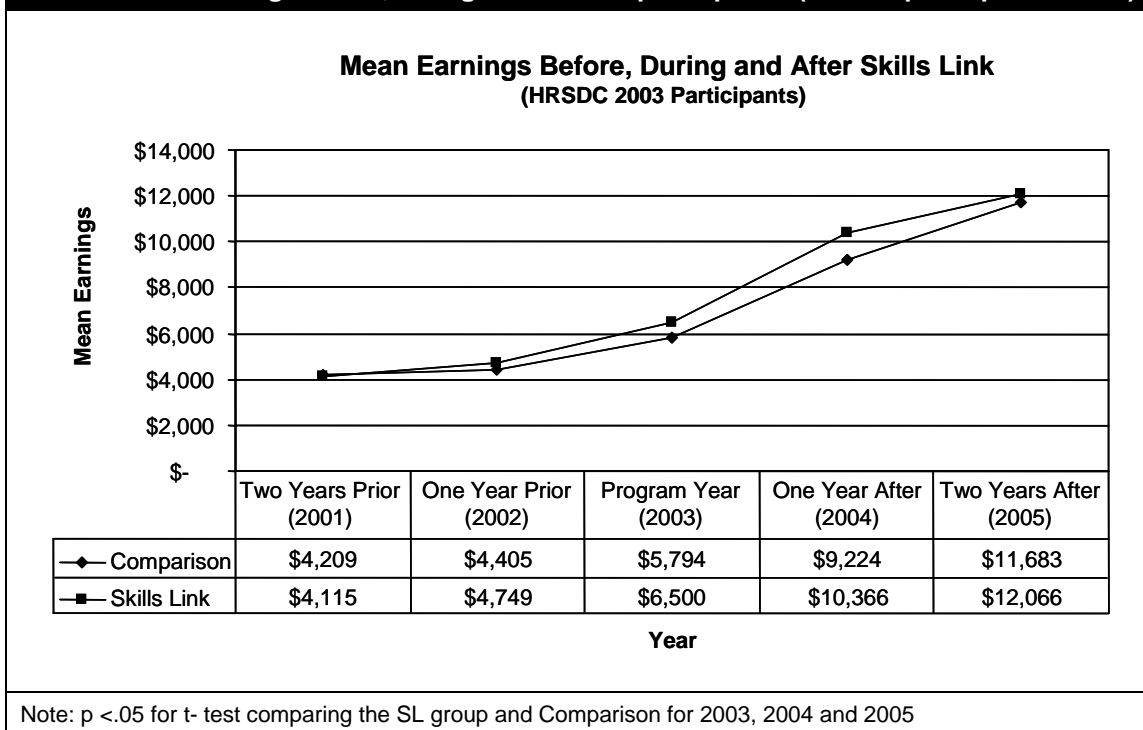
³⁴ These mean differences were further tested using regression models to predict earnings based on program participation and key characteristics. The findings from the modeling corroborated the findings from the weighting procedures outlined above.

When the findings were segmented by gender, it appeared that the significant positive impacts on earnings were found among men, rather than women. SL male participants, on average, had earnings that were \$1,623 higher than the comparison group in 2003 (program year), \$2,188 higher one year post-program (2004), and \$1,769 higher two years out of the program (2005). Conversely, female SL participants had significantly lower earnings (-\$807) two years post-program (2005), when compared with the female comparison group.

When the findings were segmented by age, the 20-24 year old age group and the 25-30 year old age groups were more likely to have larger impacts on earnings when compared with the youngest participants (under 20 years old). Those SL participants in the 20-24 year old group had significantly higher earnings on average during the program (+\$548) in 2003, one year post-program (+\$1,175) in 2004, and two years after the program (+\$778) in 2005. The older group of 25-30 year old had significantly higher earnings during the program (+\$1,534) in 2003, and one year out of the program (\$1,140) in 2004. Finally, the youngest group of 15-19 year olds saw a significant increase in earnings one-year post program (+\$395), and then a negative impact on earnings two years post-program (-\$780).

Segmented analyses by education level indicated that the largest positive impacts on earnings were occurring among those SL participants who had some post-secondary education. Those with some college had significantly higher earnings on average in program (+2,687) and one year post-program (\$2,581). Those with some university had significantly higher earnings on average while in program (+\$3,394), one year post-program (\$3,515) and two years post-program (+\$3,925).

Figure 10
Mean annual earnings before, during and after SL participation (HRSDC participants - 2003)



There were significant differences in EI earnings for the SL group when compared with the comparison group. One year post program (2004) SL participants had significantly higher EI earnings of \$166, and \$369 two years post-program (2005).

For SA income, SL participants had significantly less SA earnings in program and two years post-program. During the program (2003), SL participants had \$327 less SA earnings than the comparison group. By one year post-program (2004), SL participants had \$448 less, and then \$366 less two years post-program.

3.2.4 What, if any, unintended impacts have occurred as a result of SL activities?

The large majority of SL sponsors described unintended impacts of SL activities. These included:

- Improved relationships between the participant and his/her families, children, friends; families reunited; parenting skills improved;
- Personal networks expanded – new sets of friends established;
- Recommendations and referrals to the SL program from former participants;
- Decreased involvement with the justice system – legal issues;

- Decrease in violence, and participation in abusive relationships;
- Increased self-worth, self-confidence, and/or self-esteem; and
- Increased collaboration and networking between community organizations.

3.2.5 To what extent did the assessment tools and action plans that were prepared assist in the decision-making process for SL youth?

In focus groups, the large majority of SL participants reported that they had developed action plans with employment officers during the first few weeks of the program. Most participants also reported receiving evaluations at the conclusion of their participation. Some found this process useful in assisting them with referrals for future employers.

The large majority of SL sponsors described the needs assessment and action planning process that is undertaken with SL participants. Needs assessments that were described involved components such as personal interviews, literacy testing, educational assessments, assessment of living situations, and health/addiction issues. Action planning was described by the large majority of SL sponsors as being completed based on the findings from the needs assessment and working with the participant to define their personal goals, career/employment/education goals, and potential support required. Most SL sponsors indicated that the needs assessment assists them as sponsors to adapt the project to meet the needs of participants, and to ensure that potential participants are ready and appropriate for the project. The majority of sponsors reported that the action planning process was beneficial for the participants to identify goals (various types) in a structured process and to identify the path or methods through which they could achieve goals.

3.2.6 How accessible is employment-focused information produced for SL youth/employers?

On the survey of SL participants, nearly one-half of participants reported that at the time they applied to the SL program, they had the challenge of *not knowing what type of job they wanted* (48%). Over one-third reported that they were challenged by *not knowing where to look for work* (38%).

In interviews with SL sponsors, the large majority described different types of employment-focused information that they use and distribute to SL participants. The majority of SL sponsors described using sources such as Service Canada, HRSDC, and provincial employment-focused information, and then adapting it to make it appropriate for the SL participants. Some SL sponsors reported that SL participants tend not to be aware of information available beyond the electronic job bank.

3.3 Cost Effectiveness of SL Stream

3.3.1 *Have SL programs and services operated within budget? What are the reasons for any variances?*

According to the financial information provided in the Treasury Board Secretariat's Horizontal Results Database, the total planned SL budget for the years 2003-04 to 2005-06 inclusive was \$483.3M. The actual expenditures were \$364.3M for a variance of \$119.0M, or approximately 24.6%. The reasons for this variance provided within the TBS reporting was that during this time there was a reallocation for youth programs delivered through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy (AHRDS), HRSDC internal priorities, and the government wide reallocation exercise, particularly in 2003-04. According to the 2004-05 Departmental Performance Report (DPR) for HRSDC, variances in YES funds were due to a number of factors including delays in project approvals, the level of delegation of authority and the introduction of Internal Review Committees. The DPR explained that steps have since been taken to increase the delegation of authority and to simplify the Internal Review Committee process in order to maximize budget expenditure. Key informant interviews with program representatives indicated that variances are in part due to the nature of the clientele and delivery process. The number of participants who drop-out or are asked to leave can vary considerably from project to project. Depending on the timing within the fiscal year, it can be challenging for the project sponsors to find replacements, or for program representatives to reallocate funding to other projects.

3.3.2 *Have SL programs managed to leverage funds from other sources?*

According to program representatives for SL, there are different approaches to tracking and identifying leveraged funds across regions. In a few regions, program representatives indicated that the SL funds are leveraged with the province who cost-share aspects of the program. Most indicated that specific amounts leveraged are not tracked in a systematic manner.

3.3.3 *Are there more cost-effective alternatives to SL programs and services?*

While this was a question posed to program representatives, no respondents were able to address this issue. According to the respondents there are no identical programs with which to compare costs and effectiveness. Some suggestions for alternative program delivery were provided but not in terms of program cost-effectiveness. Given the limited amount of net impact data available from the administrative data analysis, it was not feasible to proceed with a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing the HRSDC SL program to various alternatives.

4. Evaluation Findings for Summer Work Experience Stream

This section presents the evaluation findings for the SWE Stream. Activities under the SWE Stream are designed to provide secondary and post-secondary school students with opportunities to build a range of employability skills through short term, career-related work experience for students returning to full-time schooling in the upcoming academic year. During the period covered by the evaluation, programs under the SWE stream were delivered by five departments and agencies, received \$373M in funding, and had approximately 236,000 participants³⁵. Evaluation findings for the SWE Stream are presented according to issues of relevance, success, and cost-effectiveness. Within these broad headings, the findings according to specific evaluation questions are presented.

4.1 Relevance of SWE Stream

4.1.1 To what extent do SWE related activities continue to address Government of Canada and Departmental/Agency priorities?

The objectives of the SWE are viewed by most key informants as congruent with government priorities in the areas of skills enhancement, supporting post-secondary education, and youth participation in key areas of the Canadian economy including the voluntary sector, cultural industries, environment and parks, and information technology. Specifically, in *Advantage Canada* the Government of Canada committed to creating the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible workforce in the world. As well, the Government of Canada is committed to increasing the participation of under-represented groups, such as youth, in the workforce, affirmed most recently in *Budget 2007: A Stronger, Safer, Better Canada*, tabled in March 2007. Most program representatives indicate that specific departmental and agency priorities are also addressed through the various programs under the SWE³⁶.

³⁵ Budget figures and participant numbers derived from Treasury Board Secretariat's Horizontal Results Database for years 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06.

³⁶ Departments and agencies participating under the SWE stream include HRSDC, IC, INAC, Parks Canada, and PCH.

4.1.2 To what extent are SWE programs and services relevant to current and evolving youth needs? Employer needs?

Who are SWE participants?

According to the survey, less than one-half (41%) of the SWE participants did not yet have any postsecondary experience, either having just graduated from high school (31%), or had not yet completed high school (10%). A similar proportion (41%) indicated that they did have some post-secondary experience, but at the time of starting the SWE job had not yet received a post-secondary diploma or degree. The remaining proportion (18%) had various post-secondary diplomas and degrees. The median age of participants was 20 years old. Over one third (39%) were 19 years or younger. Approximately one in twenty (5%) reported that they had a long-term disability. At the time that SWE participants applied to the SWE program, approximately three quarters (76%) reported being in school or training full time. An additional 8% indicated that they were unemployed and looking for work. Other activities at the time of application included unemployed but not looking for work (4%), working full-time (3%) and working part time (3%). SWE participants would likely be younger given that the SWE programs tend to focus on high school students and summer camps for students of various ages.

Why did youth choose to participate in SWE?

On the survey, SWE participants reported most frequently that the reasons they had for deciding to participate in the SWE program included:

- Needing a job (34%);
- Offered good work experience (22%); and
- Fit with their career objectives (12%).

These findings were similar to those from the focus groups with SWE participants. All SWE focus group participants³⁷ indicated that they were students at the time of their participation in the program who were looking for summer employment to help pay for their education costs. The majority also indicated that they were looking for summer job opportunities related to what they were studying in school. The majority learned about the SWE program from the employer; a few after they had been already hired.

³⁷ The following quantitative scale is used throughout the report to indicate the relative weight of the responses for qualitative responses within respondent groups.

- “All/almost all” – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the respondents;
- “Large majority” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of the respondents;
- “Majority/most” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of the respondents;
- “Some” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of the respondents; and
- “A few” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of respondents.

On the survey, participants described various barriers to employment they encountered when trying to find employment at the time they applied for their SWE jobs. The main barriers identified included:

- Not having enough experience for available jobs (43%);
- A shortage of jobs (32%);
- Not having enough education or training for available jobs (27%);
- Not knowing what type of job they wanted (25%); and
- Not knowing where to look for work (19%).

One half of SWE participants (50%) reported in the survey that it would have been either *very unlikely* (23%) or *somewhat unlikely* (27%) that they would have been able to find a full-time job at the time that they applied to the program that would have provided them with similar opportunities to develop skills.

These findings were supported with the qualitative findings on INAC Aboriginal participants. Within focus groups and interviews with Aboriginal participants, almost all participants reported that they were very unlikely to have found a summer job if they had not received the SWE job. Some of the challenges in finding summer work within the communities visited were the limited number of student employment opportunities for youth on-reserve. Some Aboriginal program representatives described how demand for the positions in many communities far outweigh the funding they receive so they provide very short-term jobs (a few weeks in length) to ensure that a greater proportion of youth on-reserve have the opportunity to benefit from the program, albeit for a brief period of time.

A large majority of INAC participants indicated that the availability of employment opportunities related to their interests, especially academic, was a motivating factor for participation in the SWE programming. Most participants noted that gaining employment experience was a motivator for participating, as gaining employment experience led to better future salaries and employment opportunities both on and off-reserve.

Did the SWE program meet participants' needs?

Overall, the SWE participants reported on the survey that they were very satisfied with the SWE program. With respect to the **quality of the work experience** offered under the SWE stream, 97% of participants were within the satisfied range (65% - *very satisfied*; 32% - *satisfied*). A similar proportion (93%) was within the satisfied range with respect to the SWE program offering them opportunities to **develop useful skills** (54% - *very satisfied*; 39% - *satisfied*). Overall, the vast majority of participants (97%) indicated that they were within the satisfied range when considering the overall program (60% - *very satisfied*; 37% - *satisfied*).

During the focus groups, SWE participants identified a number of their needs that were addressed by the SWE program. Some of these included:

- Enhancing their second language skills;
- Work experience in their field of study;
- Work experience that was not directly in their field of study but provided participants with important transferable skills (e.g., communication skills, organizational skills); and
- Opportunity to confirm career choices.

From a different perspective but with similar findings, the large majority of SWE employers indicated that the main needs of SWE participants were to make money during the summer to help pay for their education costs, and to gain work experience before they graduate. The SWE programs were viewed by employers as addressing both these needs.

Almost all participants in focus groups and interviews during the Aboriginal site visits indicated that they were very satisfied with their SWE job. By participating in SWE programs, the majority of Aboriginal participants explained that they were provided with the opportunity to obtain their first work experience, an important achievement from their perspective considering the future implications for both education and employment decisions. The main area consistently identified by many participants for improvement was the limited length of the job available (often only a few weeks).

During INAC site visits, the SWE participants described various challenges and barriers to finding jobs that they encountered as youth. Many of these challenges and barriers were also identified by program and community representatives, as well as employers. The main challenges identified for youth included:

- Lack of employment opportunities within the community, with many of the opportunities being presented by word-of-mouth which is challenging for youth not connected directly into community networks;
- Lack of life skills and pre-employment skills necessary for employment such as job search strategies, interview skills and résumé and cover letters;
- Issues with transportation which directly limits accessibility to off-reserve employment for many participants;
- Lack of childcare for youth who are young parents and cannot access or afford childcare; and
- For some youth drug and alcohol issues need to be addressed prior to employment being an option.

Meeting the needs of employers

According to interviews with program representatives, the needs of employers that the SWE identified as addressing included extra assistance during busy times of the year, technical skills that employers' organizations lack, and advancing projects tailored for summer student input.

In interviews with SWE employers, almost all employers providing opportunities under the SWE indicated that the funding assisted them significantly in being able to provide opportunities to students. Students were identified as meaningfully contributing to the organization over the summer providing assistance during vacation periods, assisting with projects, and having responsibility for key tasks within a program or organization. In some instances, a few employers from non-profit or voluntary sectors reported that the SWE participants were able to provide significant community services in areas such as assisting children and youth, seniors, recreation, environment, and arts and culture.

4.1.3 Do SWE work experience opportunities continue to be offered in growth sectors of the economy?

The survey of participants showed that the largest proportions of summer work experiences were in occupations classified within *Social Sciences, Education, Government Service and Religion* (22%), *Business, Finance and Administrative Occupations* (19%), *Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport* (19%), or *Sales and Service Occupations* (11%). According to growth sector analyses, most of these sectors identified above continue to be in a growth phase and are predicted to have increasing labour demands as the population ages. The work experiences available under the SWE programs cross a wide range of sectors. Many of the opportunities are offered within public and voluntary organizations. Focus group discussions with SWE participants indicated that the SWE focused on appropriate sectors. Some participants reported that they believed that the program should remain broad and not overly targeted to specific sectors so that the SWE could offer many different opportunities to students during the summer.

In interviews with SWE employers, most described a wide variety of work opportunities offered to youth. The large majority of employers reported that the opportunities offered were in areas of the economy that they foresaw as growing in the future. Some employers indicated the future employment opportunities would be available to youth given the growth that specific sectors were experiencing, while some others reported that future employment opportunities would be available to youth not necessarily due to sector growth, but rather, due to the large proportion of retirements expected within the next few years.

Qualitative findings on INAC Aboriginal participants were similar to those found in the general survey and interviews with other departments offering SWE. INAC participants described a wide variety of work opportunities that varied significantly across reserves and communities. The majority of participants were employed within the services sector (e.g., administration/clerical, daycare and public works), with a few employed within the

tourism sector (e.g., hotels, casinos, golf courses). The vast majority of on-reserve youth were employed by the local Band participating in various service occupations.

4.1.4 To what extent are SWE programs and services consistent with current research and thinking about youth employment needs?

According to the literature review conducted as one component of the evaluation, there is very little existing research on the importance of summer work for secondary or post-secondary students. There are suggestions from the research that summer work that fosters the subsequent school-to-work transition would likely be beneficial given the fact that the links between education and the labour market are currently weak.

4.2 Success of SWE Stream

In addressing the success of the SWE stream, “pre-post” analyses were conducted to capture the magnitude of change. The pre-post analyses are also subject to potential recall and non-response bias given that they rely on survey data.

As previously indicated, the results from three national surveys of youth³⁸ and the Census (2001) demonstrate that the general labour market trends for Canadian youth as they enter and participate in the labour market are noticeable shifts in salary, earned income, participation and employment rates for most youth as they age and gain work experience. This is referred to as a maturation effect and must be taken into account as a backdrop upon which to examine the outcomes from the pre-post analyses. For example, the Youth in Transition Survey followed a survey cohort of youth between the ages of 18 and 20 years over a four year time span. During this four year period, the proportion of youth in school dropped from 58% to 31%, while employment (full-time and part-time combined) rose from 21% to 45%. This naturally occurring shift in labour market outcomes makes it challenging to determine the extent to which SWE participants’ outcomes are the result of their participation, or the result of the natural maturation process.

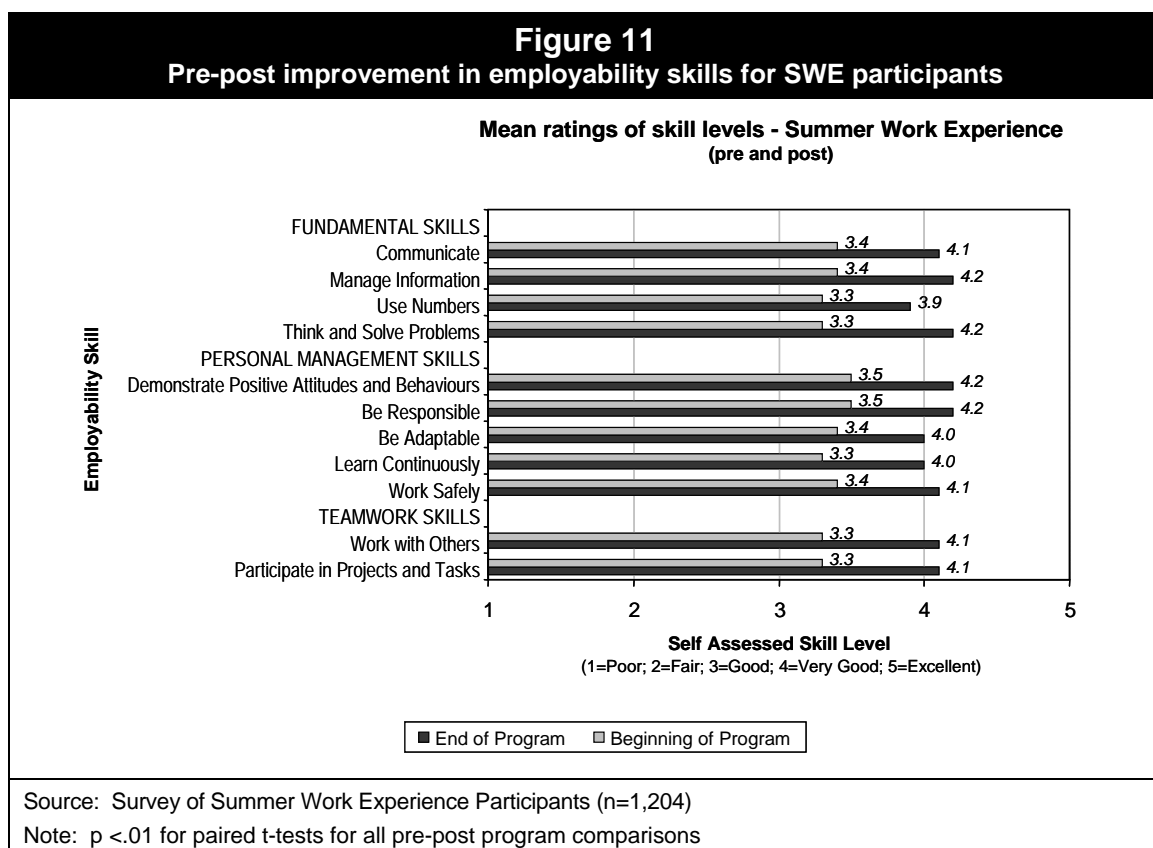
Given that the SWE programs target youth who were students prior to their participation and the requirement is that they are planning to return to studies post-participation, a quantitative pre-post analysis of employment status and earnings is misleading, as the majority of the respondents are in school for a large portion of the post program period.

³⁸ Surveys examined included the *Labour Force Survey*, *Youth in Transition Survey*, and *National Graduates Survey*.

4.2.1 To what extent did SWE programs assist youth in enhancing employability skills?

Findings from all lines of evidence indicate that enhancement of employability skills was a primary outcome for participants as a result of their participation in the SWE programs. As well, there were many instances cited of skill enhancement in technical and occupation specific skills in addition to the more general employability skills.

As illustrated in Figure 11, there were gains made in the enhancement of employability skills according to SWE participants responding to the survey³⁹. SWE survey participants indicated statistically significant gains across all eleven employability skills for which they were asked to recall their self-assessed level prior to their participation in the SWE program and then again after their participation.



The survey findings also indicate that the greater the opportunity that participants had to practice a certain skill during their SWE job, the greater was the increase in development of that employability skill. There were statistically significant correlations between the frequency with which a skill was practiced during the internship and the self-assessed

³⁹ On the survey, participants were asked to recall their skill level prior to their participation in the program, and then again after they completed the program. Participants were asked to rate their skill level according to the following categories: *poor*, *fair*, *good*, *very good*, or *excellent*. It should be noted that self report measures do not possess the same level of rigour as objective skill testing, however, supplementary evidence from multiple lines of evidence (e.g., employers) adds credibility to self-report measures.

skill level post-program (0.31 to 0.49; $p < .01$). Significant relationships were also found between frequency of skill practice and the incremental difference between pre-post self-assessments (0.10 to 0.27; $p < .01$).

The findings from focus groups with SWE participants were quite similar to those from the participant survey. Almost all SWE participants indicated that they were satisfied with the opportunities the SWE provided them to develop skills. Key skills developed by SWE participants included:

- Being responsible, self-sufficient;
- Problem solving;
- Second language skills;
- Project management and time management;
- Learning to care for others (children and seniors);
- Communication skills (interpersonal); and
- Marketing skills.

The findings from the interviews with SWE employers supported these findings. All SWE employers indicated that participants had developed employability skills as a result of their participation in the program. The skill sets that were most frequently cited by employers included communication skills, being adaptable, working with others, and being responsible. Some respondents indicated that students had developed technical or occupational skills as a result of their work experience.

Qualitative findings on INAC Aboriginal participants were similar to those found among other participants and employers. Almost all INAC participants reported they were satisfied with the skills they developed during their involvement within SWE programming. Some indicated that as a result of participating in SWE programs they acquired transferable skills for future employment. The main skills INAC participants developed as a result of their participation in SWE experiences included:

- Communication skills as a result of interacting with the public and their employers;
- Working with others which also assisted in increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem;
- Responsibility including learning about time management, developing a work ethic, and having responsibility for others (e.g., children, other students they supervise);
- Problem solving;
- Management skills; and
- Work safety.

Employers and youth organization respondents interviewed during the INAC site visits also indicated that SWE work opportunities had helped participants develop skills. All employers indicated that participants had enhanced their employability skills. The most frequently cited employability skills were communication skills and being responsible. The majority of respondents also indicated that skills in working with others, managing information, thinking and problem solving, demonstrating positive attitudes and behaviours and participating in projects and tasks were developed by participants. In addition to the specific employability skills cited above, some respondents reported that participants had also developed specific technical and occupational skills.

4.2.2 *To what extent did participation in SWE activities assist youth in obtaining employment? Improving income? Do impacts vary by target group?*

At the time of the survey interview for the evaluation, 81% of SWE participants reported that they were working at a job or business. Of these, approximately two-thirds (65%) indicated that the work they were doing at the time of the interview was *closely related* (33%) or *somewhat related* (32%) to the work that they were doing in the SWE program. Of those who were employed at the time of the interview, the SWE job was viewed by the majority (53%) as having had a *large impact* (26%) or *some impact* (27%) on them getting their current job. Similarly, nearly three-quarters (71%) of those who were working at job indicated that the skills required for their current jobs had received *much development* (34%) or *some development* (37%) during their SWE experience.

As it would be expected with a group that were in school prior to their SWE job and planned to return to school after their job finishes, SWE participants reported that they spent approximately one-half of their time (46%) post SWE job in school, with the bulk of the remaining time either employed full-time (38%) or working part-time while not in school (7%). Only a very small portion of their time was spent unemployed and looking for work (2%).

Qualitative findings from focus groups with SWE participants indicated that some SWE employers reported that they have hired SWE participants on a part-time basis during the year, and then hired them permanently upon their graduation. Of those SWE participants who had completed their education and had looked for jobs, the large majority reported that the SWE work experience had assisted them in finding full-time employment post-graduation. The two main areas of assistance included work experience on the résumés related to their fields of study and desired occupations, and connections with potential employers established during the program.

These findings are reflected in those obtained from the Aboriginal site visits. During interviews and focus groups with SWE participants, almost all youth who at the time of the interview were not enrolled in school were employed either full time or part time. A large majority of employed youth indicated that their employment was related to their work experience during SWE placements.

4.2.3 As a positive effect of program participation, to what extent did the funds earned through SWE enable youth to return to school?

According to the survey of SWE participants, the median length of SWE job was three months or 12 weeks. The vast majority of participants (97%) reported working full-time with a median wage of \$9.00 per hour⁴⁰. This would indicate that on average, SWE participants earned approximately \$4,000 from their SWE job⁴¹. In focus groups, the majority of participants reported that the money earned through their SWE job assisted with their tuition and education costs. Some indicated that they had trouble finding a summer job and SWE had helped. Some others reported that they would have likely found a summer job without SWE, but not necessarily as closely related to their field of study as their SWE job.

From the site visits with Aboriginal communities, some SWE participants reported that funding provided for post-secondary education from INAC does not necessarily cover all educational costs, and thus the funds earned through their SWE summer employment significantly assisted with covering such costs. In addition, a large majority of participants explained that funding for post-secondary education is not always guaranteed, and earned funds provide contingency monies. The majority of SWE participants indicated that income gained during the summer months assisted with educational costs during the academic year and expenses during the summer.

4.2.4 What, if any, unintended impacts have occurred as a result of SWE activities?

The main unintended impact mentioned by some SWE participants in focus groups was clarification of career choice. For some participants, their career choice was confirmed as a result of their SWE job. For a few SWE participants, they reported their career choice had changed as a result of their participation in the program. They realized through their SWE job that they were not suited for the occupation that they had previously chosen, and as a result explored other options and changed their area of study at school. In a few cases, students reported being placed in SWE jobs that were not related to their field of study, but realized they enjoyed the area of their work and switched their fields of study. This finding was mirrored on the survey of SWE participants in which approximately one-half of participants (49%) reported that the SWE job had a *large impact* (20%) or *some impact* (29%) on determining or confirming the type of career to pursue.

⁴⁰ It should be noted that all income and wage data referring to the periods prior to and during participation in the program are based on participants' recall during the participant survey which was conducted one to three years post program. As a result, the data presented in this section are subject to potential survey participant recall bias.

⁴¹ This is based on the calculation of: Total Earnings = (12 weeks) * (37.5 hours/week) * (\$9.00 per hour) = \$4,050.

4.2.5 *To what extent did the assessment tools and action plans that were prepared assist in the decision-making process for SWE youth?*

Given the relatively short nature of the work experience and the objectives of the SWE stream, needs assessments and action plans from a case management perspective are not developed for SWE participants. A majority of SWE employers indicated that they do conduct performance evaluations for SWE participants to provide them with feedback on their job performance.

4.2.6 *How accessible is employment-focused information produced for SWE youth/employers?*

According to the survey of SWE participants, one-quarter of SWE participants indicated that at the time that they applied to the SWE job, they were challenged with *not knowing what type of job they wanted* (25%). Approximately one in five (19%) reported that they were challenged with *not knowing where to look for work*. Very few additional comments were received from participants, employers or program representatives for this question.

4.3 Cost Effectiveness of SWE Stream

4.3.1 *Have SWE programs and services operated within budget? What are the reasons for any variances?*

According to the financial information provided in the Treasury Board Secretariat's Horizontal Results Database, the total planned SWE budget for the years 2003-04 to 2005-06 inclusive was \$372.6M. The actual expenditures were \$367.0M for a variance of \$5.6M, or approximately 1.5%. Key informant interviews with program representatives indicated the various programs under the SWE stream have operated during the period of the evaluation with reasonable variances. Where there were variances, these were attributed to the short duration of the summer work period. When students left their positions, employers reported that it was difficult to replace the students in a short period of time.

4.3.2 Have SWE programs managed to leverage funds from other sources?

According to key informant interviews with program representatives, there is considerable variability among the SWE programs with respect to whether SWE employers are required to “match” SWE funding. As well, there is considerable variability in monitoring and reporting leveraged amounts from employers with respect to whether both in-kind and cash contributions are counted, or if leveraging amounts are monitored at all. As a result, it is not possible for the evaluation to determine the extent to which leveraging has occurred for the SWE stream.

4.3.3 Are there more cost-effective alternatives to SWE programs and services?

While this was a question posed to program representatives, no respondents were able to address this issue. One of the main challenges identified by the respondents was that there are not identical programs with which to compare costs and effectiveness. While there were some suggestions for alternative program delivery, these were not presented in a cost-effectiveness framework.

5. Conclusions and Future Considerations

This final section contains the conclusions and considerations derived directly from the evaluation findings presented in the previous sections. Conclusions are presented according to stream and main evaluation issue (i.e., rationale and relevance; success; cost-effectiveness).

5.1 Career Focus Stream Conclusions

5.1.1 Rationale and Relevance of Career Focus Stream

The programs delivered under the CF Stream remain relevant to Government of Canada priorities in addition to the specific priorities of the various departments and agencies delivering CF programs. Priorities that are congruent with the CF programming include environment, development of science and technology, participation in the global economy, international development and skill development of Canadians.

The expressed needs of youth are being addressed by the CF programming. Key needs identified as being met included developing relevant work experience, employability skills and making the school to work transition. Two-thirds of CF participants reported that the main barrier to employment they faced prior to starting the CF program was not having enough work experience for available jobs. At the time of the survey the vast majority of participants⁴² were satisfied with the quality of the work experience provided by the CF programs.

According to key informant interviews, most employers indicated that some of their needs are being satisfactorily met with the CF programs. Employers indicated that the key need addressed in part by the CF programs is the funding which makes entry level positions more attractive to youth. The CF programs also reduced the risks in bringing a young, inexperienced person into their organizations to determine their capacity and interest as potential longer term employees.

Work experiences offered under CF programs were primarily in the social science/education and natural and applied sciences. Both employers and youth indicated that their work experiences were in areas in which employment was available due to either sector growth or an aging workforce.

⁴² The following quantitative scale is used throughout the report to indicate the relative weight of the responses for qualitative responses within respondent groups.

- “All/almost all” – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the respondents;
- “Large majority” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of the respondents;
- “Majority/most” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of the respondents;
- “Some” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of the respondents; and
- “A few” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of respondents.

5.1.2 Career Focus Stream Success

CF programs had considerable success in assisting youth participants in developing employability skills and technical and occupation-specific skills. Skill development was identified as a strong success of the program across all lines of evidence (e.g., participants, employers). Participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the opportunities for skill development offered by the CF programming. Employers also concurred with participants that the CF program assisted considerably in enhancing important employability skills.

Significant gains in both employment and annual earnings were experienced by CF participants consulted for the evaluation. However, these findings cannot be directly attributed to the program as a comparison group of similar non-participants was not available for the evaluation which would have controlled for other causal explanations. CF participants tended to attribute these gains to their participation in the program.

Results of the comparison group analysis with HRSDC CF participants from 2003 indicated significant positive net impacts in annual earnings while in the program and two-years post-program. The significant positive net impacts were found for male participants, and for those in the younger age group (20-24 years old). Given the type of analysis performed, these net impacts are attributable to the program.

According to the literature review, the school-to-work transition can be challenging for youth given the lack of integration between the education system and the labour market in many instances. Based on current findings, the CF programs have experienced some success in assisting youth in making this transition. CF participants made significant gains in the amount of time spent working full-time and experienced significant decreases in the amount of time spent unemployed and looking for work when compared pre- and post-CF participation.

5.1.3 Career Focus Stream Cost-Effectiveness

The CF programs operated within budget with moderate variances. The variances associated with the CF programs averaged approximately 6.6% over the three-year period from 2003-04 to 2005-06 inclusive. There is a process that assists in a mid-year reallocation of funds across the various departments and agencies participating in the CF stream that would potentially assist in ensuring that variances are kept to a minimum.

The impact that CF is having on leveraging funds from other sources is not able to be measured given the lack of consistent monitoring and reporting across departments and agencies.

The limited amount of net impact data available for the evaluation combined with the limited post-program timeframe made it unfeasible to proceed with a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing the CF program to various alternatives.

5.2 Skills Link Stream Conclusions

5.2.1 *Rationale and Relevance of Skills Link Stream*

Focusing on youth experiencing significant challenges and barriers to successful integration into the labour market, the SL stream remains relevant to the overall Government of Canada priority of *building a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive and rewarding lives, and to improve Canadians' quality of life*. In addition, the SL programming is congruent with the strategic outcomes of the participating departments and agencies.

The SL programming during the period covered by the evaluation had considerable success in providing opportunities to youth who demonstrated significant challenges and barriers to successfully integrating into the labour market. Nearly three-quarters of SL participants surveyed had no post-secondary education experience. One-third had not graduated from high school, despite the median age being 22 years old. Approximately one in six indicated that they had a long-term disability, a rate four times that of Canadian youth and in keeping with the target population for the SL stream. Barriers identified by youth included not having enough experience for available jobs and not having enough education or training for available jobs. INAC Aboriginal youth also identified the barrier of limited opportunities for employment on-reserve.

The SL program is meeting some of the needs of youth participants. It should be noted that the needs of this profile of youth are diverse and extensive including poverty, homelessness, mental health, addictions issues, threats of violence, physical health, self-confidence and self-esteem, and general life skills. The SL programs are addressing key needs such as employability skills, self-confidence, and work experience which in turn are impacting on some of the other diverse needs.

According to the literature review, the consequences of dropping-out of school are substantial. This would suggest that there is a justification for programs such as SL that assist in mitigating the impact of dropping-out by expanding accessibility to skill development, offering alternative education opportunities, providing alternative pathways to the labour market, and early targeting of such groups for counseling. Considerations from the literature that may be warranted in the design and evaluation of youth programming similar to SL is that the net benefits of such programs are often small for training disadvantaged youths. Subsequent training appears to require a foundation of basic education and literacy – training is not a substitute for basic education. However, it should be noted that even if the net benefits are non-existent, such interventions could still be merited for equity reasons. As well, some groups such as single parents and disadvantaged youths, have been found to benefit from intensive, longer-duration training, although it can be quite expensive.

Opportunities for work experiences under SL are being offered in sectors in which SL participants are finding employment post-program. The majority of opportunities are being offered in sales and service, trades, transport and equipment operators and administrative occupations. All of these sectors continue to be in a growth phase and are predicted to have increasing entry level labour demands as the population ages.

5.2.2 Skills Link Stream Success

The SL programs were successful in assisting participants in developing employability skills in addition to technical and occupation-specific skills. A diverse range of employability skills were consistently rated by both participants and employers as having improved as a result of participation in SL programs.

With the caveat that it is challenging to make attributions to the SL programs without a comparison group to control for other factors that could have caused the changes, SL participants experienced gains in both the time spent employed and time spent in school when comparing pre- and post-participation in SL.

Based on the comparison group analysis conducted for HRSDC SL participants from 2003, significant positive net impacts were observed in annual earnings while in the program, one year post-program, and two-years post-program. The significant positive net impacts were found for male participants, and for those in the older age groups (20-24 years old; 25-30 years old). Positive net impacts were also more likely to be found among participants who had some form of post-secondary education. Given the type of analysis performed, these net impacts are attributable to the program.

As indicated in the literature review, basic education is a necessary component of success for integration into the labour market. The SL program has assisted in instilling this concept among a proportion of the SL participants. Over one-third of SL participants indicated that they had returned to school during the period between when they had completed the SL program and the time of the survey interview. Two-thirds of those who had returned to school reported that the SL program had an impact on their decision to return. The SL program assisted in this decision by providing them with information, direction, and self-confidence.

5.2.3 Skills Link Stream Cost-Effectiveness

The programs under SL were within budgeted amounts, but overall had substantial variances across the time period. The variances incurred by the SL stream across the three-year period of 2003-04 to 2005-06 were 24.6%. Reasons for the variance were varied including reallocation of funds to other employment strategies, shifts in priorities, and challenges with delivery considering the clientele for SL programs.

Similar to the CF stream, the impact that SL is having on leveraging funds from other sources is not able to be measured given the lack of consistent monitoring and reporting across departments and agencies.

The limited amount of net impact data available for the evaluation combined with the limited post-program timeframe made it unfeasible to proceed with a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing the SL program to various alternatives.

5.3 Summer Work Experience Stream Conclusions

5.3.1 *Rationale and Relevance of Summer Work Experience Stream*

The SWE programming is congruent with various government and departmental/agency priorities including skills enhancement, supporting post-secondary education, and youth participation in key areas of the economy including the voluntary sector, cultural industries, environment and parks, and information technology.

SWE programs are meeting the needs of students requiring summer employment to assist in funding their studies and to obtain relevant experience related to their fields of study. Students participating in SWE indicated that the main barriers they faced in obtaining summer employment were not having enough experience for available jobs, and a shortage of jobs. Almost all participants indicated satisfaction with the SWE experience and the quality of the work experience offered.

The SWE programming under INAC provides opportunities that would not exist in the absence of the program. By offering primarily opportunities on-reserve and within Aboriginal communities, the SWE programs are often proving the only opportunities for student summer employment that Aboriginal students can access in these communities.

SWE programming is also addressing the needs of employers. Key needs being addressed are the ability to access extra assistance during busy times of the year, access to technical skills that employers' organizations lack (often in the area of IT or second-language skills), and advancement of projects tailored for summer student input.

5.3.2 *Summer Work Experience Success*

The SWE programming has been successful in assisting students develop employability skills, as well as technical and occupation-specific skills. Both students and employers indicate that the success in this area has been substantial. In addition to the self-assessed rated gains in specific skill areas, another indicator of success is the large proportion of participants (93%) who report being satisfied with the SWE job providing them with opportunities to develop useful skills.

SWE jobs have provided students with funds that could be used to assist in financing a return to school. According to the survey results, the median hourly wage was \$9.00, and SWE jobs lasted on average 12 weeks. This results in approximately \$4,000 in earnings on average.

Clarification of career choices is an interesting unintended impact of the SWE programs. For some participants the SWE job assisted in confirming their career choice. For others, the reported SWE impact was to clarify that their initial career choice was not appropriate either due to an experience within their chosen field that made them realize they were not suited for that career path, or due to an experience in a field different from their chosen career that then seemed better suited to them.

5.3.3 Summer Work Experience Stream Cost-Effectiveness

The programs under the SWE stream were within budget overall with relatively small variances. The variances associated with the SWE stream over the three period of 2003-04 to 2005-06 inclusive were minimal at 1.5% overall. Considering the large number of contracts and the very short time period with which to execute the contracts, this low level of variance demonstrates that the delivery system is effectively maximizing budget expenditures. As with the other two streams, the impact that the SWE program is having on leveraging funds from other sources cannot be measured with the present system of monitoring and reporting.

5.4 Future Considerations

Findings and conclusions from the evaluation point to a number of considerations for future development and adjustments of YES programs. These are summarized below.

1. ***Modification of data sharing agreements to include participants' Social Insurance Numbers*** - As illustrated with the current evaluation, to effectively evaluate net impacts of YES programming, impact evaluation methods require the development of comparison groups of youth who have not participated in YES programs. To develop these comparison groups, access to significant amounts of relevant administrative data is required which requires SINs. The current evaluation was only able to do this more rigorous analysis with HRSDC participants.
2. ***Continue to track net impacts of HRSDC participants for SL and CF*** - Given the timing of the evaluation, the net impacts of HRSDC participants for SL and CF could only be tracked for up to two years post-program as the availability of CRA data was only up to 2005. As subsequent years of CRA data become available, the longer term net impacts of the HRSDC programming could continue to be calculated. This would provide a better tracking of impact trends for these two groups of participants. In addition, a cost-effectiveness analysis could be added as one component of these analyses.
3. ***Further investigation of differential impacts of programming according to gender*** - According to the findings from the net impact analyses conducted with HRSDC participants for CF and SL programs, there were differential impacts according to gender. Male participants were more likely to experience significant impacts on earned income for both streams when compared with female participants. This likely

warrants additional investigation to determine the extent to which this finding is representative of other department and agencies' CF and SL programs. If the finding is representative of other programs, then it would be important to determine the causes for this difference and to investigate how programming may be adapted to ensure that impacts on income are experienced by female participants in addition to those experienced by male participants. This could include examining the return to school outcomes for females compared to males.

4. ***Development and implementation of employability skills measures*** – Given the importance of employability skills in the overall goals for YES⁴³, the Strategy would benefit from the development and implementation of rigorous employability skills measures for participants. The current evaluation attempted to measure employability skills with surveys of participants through self assessments one to three years post-participation. This was not an ideal methodological approach as it was subjective with no external validation, open to recall bias, and lacking a comparison group. In addition, it was not able to cover all skill sub-categories given the restrictions on interview length. Measures of employability skills that would include either objective measure of skill change over time or self-assessments validated by rigorous external assessments which are administered at key points in participation would assist in improving the quality of this information available for performance measurement and evaluation. These measures would need to be implemented in a standardized process across programs to be most effective. Considerations would also need to be made as to the potential of implementing employability skill measures with potential comparison groups.
5. ***Consider inclusion of CF opportunities within growth sectors of the economy*** – Under CF, demand side of the labour market is an important consideration. As such, it would be important to review economic sectors to determine potential growth sectors for targeting future CF opportunities.
6. ***Collecting and updating participant contact information*** – The surveys of participants experienced low response rates in large part due to the proportion of participants for whom there was not accurate contact information. This, combined with the large gaps in contact information for INAC programs that did not allow INAC participants to be included in the surveys, compromises the quality of information that can be collected for the evaluation. A consideration would be that multiple contacts be collected for each participant including phone numbers of friends, parents or other relatives, cell phone numbers, email addresses, etc.

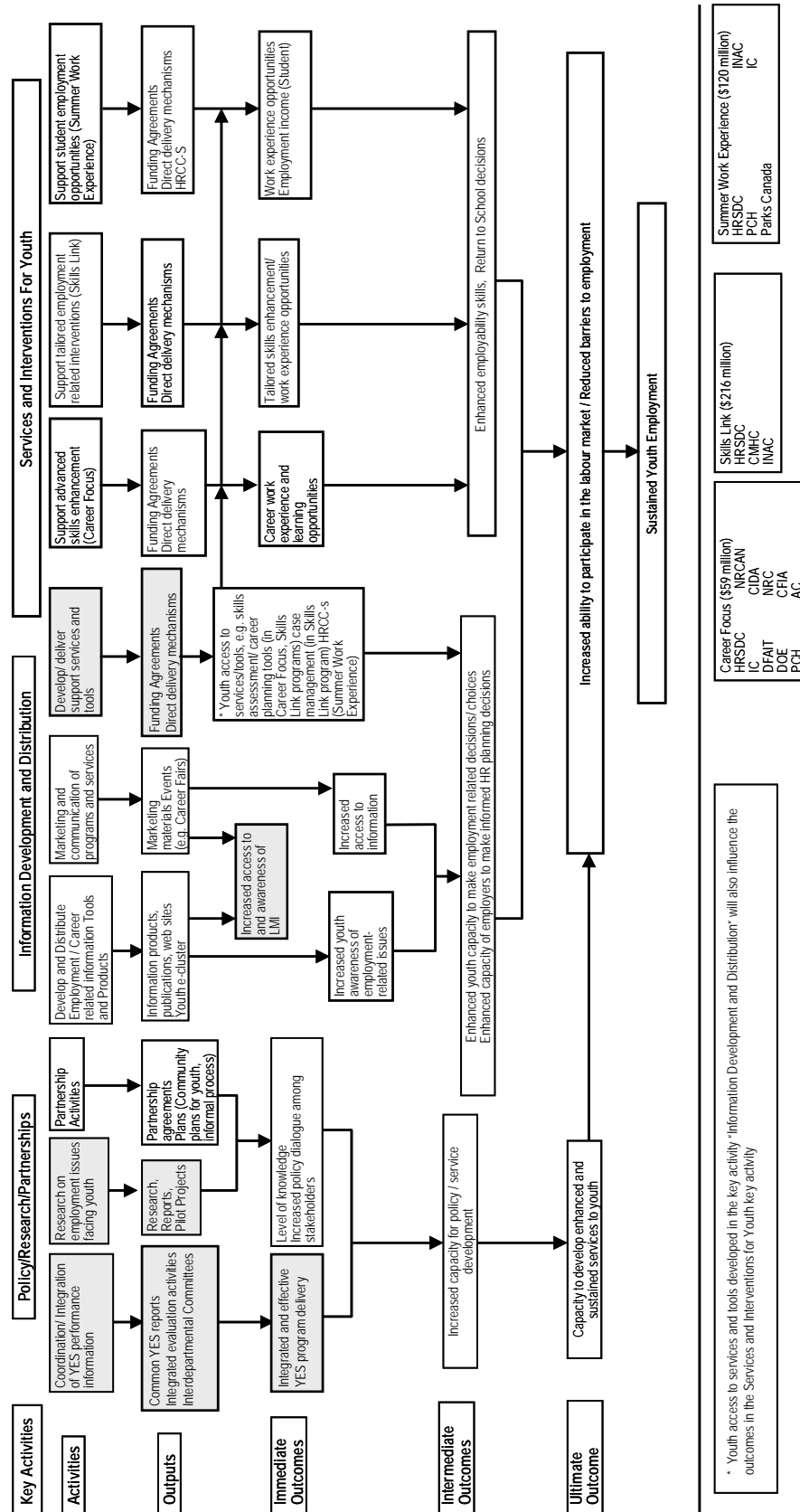
⁴³ The overall common goal of the Strategy is to assist youth in enhancing their employability skills while increasing the number of skilled young Canadians in the workforce.

7. ***Develop and implement an ongoing overall performance monitoring system for YES programs*** – If an overall performance monitoring system had been implemented for YES, then it would have provided results and performance information that the summative evaluation could have analysed at the stream level and confirmed with other lines of evidence. The umbrella RMAF called for the development of follow-up surveys with both participants and employers which a few departments and agencies implemented. Given the gaps in results information at the stream level, the current evaluation was required to collect results information using participant surveys. This required considerable recall burden for participants, and likely created biases and a lower quality of data than that which would have been achieved with an overall results monitoring system.
8. ***Tracking of leveraging impacts*** – If leveraging contributions from other sources remains an important aspect of the YES programming, there will need to be a more consistent effort in tracking and measuring leveraging results. Considerations will need to be made with respect to calculating and tracking of both in-kind and cash contributions.
9. ***Tracking of disability types*** – Consideration could be given in tracking the various types of disabilities that YES participants self-report. Given the relatively high proportion of people with disabilities in the SL stream, it would be useful to consider monitoring this characteristic on an ongoing basis to ensure that the YES programs are responding to the various needs of participants. Potentially the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) from Statistics Canada could provide categories and definitions to be included on application or personal information forms.

Appendix A – YES Logic Model

Youth Employment Strategy Umbrella Logic Model

Objective: To assist youth in enhancing employability skills required to make successful transitions into the labour market, thereby resulting in increased employment



Appendix B – Evaluation Questions, Indicators and Data Sources

Issues	Questions	Indicator	Data Source/ Collection Method
Relevance <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q1. To what extent do YES related activities continue to address Government of Canada and Departmental and Agency priorities?	1a) Level of consistency between YES objectives and activities, and priorities of the Government of Canada. 1b) Level of consistency between YES objectives and activities, and priorities of the participating YES Departments and Agencies	(1) Environmental scan (4) Interviews with representatives of YES dept/agencies (8) Review of YES dept/agencies documentation
Relevance <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q2. To what extent are YES programs and services relevant to current and evolving youth needs? Employer needs from various sectors?	2a) Level of congruence between the identified needs of youth and employers, and the objectives and activities of YES programs <i>(including the sustainable development of various sectors e.g., not-for-profit, private, etc.)</i> 2b) Level of consistency between YES objectives and activities, and findings from current research/trends	(1) Environmental scan (2) Literature Review (3) Surveys with youth (4) Interviews with representatives of YES dept/agencies (5) Interviews with Youth, Employers, Youth Serving Organizations/ Business Associations (6) Focus groups (8) Review of YES dept/agencies documentation
Relevance <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q3. Do work experience opportunities continue to be offered in any of the following sectors of the economy: Growth sectors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectors experiencing deficits of skilled workers? • Sectors in need of workers for non-standard employment opportunities (e.g., seasonal, contractual, etc.)? • Sectors that have a high ratio of volunteer to paid employment (e.g., not-for-profit)? • Sectors that correspond to governmental priorities? 	3a) Level of congruence between identified sectors of the economy, and areas of work opportunities offered by YES programs	(1) Environmental scan (2) Literature Review (3) Surveys with youth (4) Interviews with representatives of YES dept/agencies (5) Interviews with Youth, Employers, Youth Serving Organizations/ Business Associations (6) Focus groups (7) Administrative Files (8) Review of YES dept/agencies documentation

Issues	Questions	Indicator	Data Source/ Collection Method
Relevance <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q4. To what extent are YES programs and services consistent with current research and thinking about youth employment needs?	4a) Match between YES design and latest research trends	(2) Literature Review (4) Interviews with representatives of YES dept/agencies (8) Review of YES dept/agencies documentation
Cost effectiveness <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q5. Have YES programs and services operated within budget? What are the reasons for any variances?	5a) Financial performance 5b) Factors explaining financial performance (including timing of funding received)	(4) Interviews with representatives of YES dept/agencies (8) Review of YES dept/agencies documentation
Cost effectiveness <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q6. Have YES programs managed to leverage funds from other sources?	6a) Level of funding leveraged from other sources (financial and in-kind) (e.g., Sector Councils, employers)	(4) Interviews with representatives of YES dept/agencies (8) Review of YES dept/agencies documentation
Cost effectiveness <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q7. Are there more cost-effective alternatives to YES programs and services? <i>[Note: Need to ensure that the programs being compared are very similar to YES]</i>	7a) Cost-Effectiveness analysis 7b) Comparison to other federal programs that provide similar/identical employment services to Youth 7c) Comparison to similar/identical programs in other jurisdictions 7d) Identification of current YES procedures and processes that could be changed to enhance cost-effectiveness	Information obtained from all sources
Success <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Impact on Employability Q8. To what extent did Youth Employment Strategy programs assist youth in enhancing employability skills (hard and soft)? Q8a) As a positive effect of participation, to what extent do YES alumni experience improved employability?	8a) Participants self-reported perceptions of skill gains using Conference Board of Canada defined <i>Employability Skills</i> and potentially other defined skills (e.g., <i>Essential Skills</i>) – to be compared pre/post intervention and potentially with comparison group 8b) Employers perceptions of skill gains	(3) Surveys with youth (5) Interviews with Youth, Employers, Youth Serving Organizations/ Business Associations (6) Focus groups (10) Benchmarking exercise (11) YES dept/agencies youth needs assessments and exit surveys (12) Case studies

Issues	Questions	Indicator	Data Source/ Collection Method
		<p>8c) Alumni's post participation experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income levels • Employment experience characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment status ○ FT, PT duration ○ Number of jobs held ○ Occupation details ○ Match with skills obtained ○ Match with education ○ Underemployment (to be defined) <p>8d) Profile of YES interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #, profile of work opportunities (e.g. international work experience, mentors provided, learning/training plans etc.) • #, profile of learning opportunities (e.g. field of study, level of schooling) • extent of consistency between field of study/level and YES intervention <p>8e) Level of Youth satisfaction with impact of interventions on employability overall and employability skills in particular</p> <p>8f) Level of Employer satisfaction with youth progression re. skills enhancement</p> <p>8g) Level of youth Case Manager/Counselor satisfaction with Youth progression re. employability skills enhancement</p>	

Issues	Questions	Indicator	Data Source/ Collection Method
Success <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Impact on Employment Status 9. To what extent did participation in YES activities assist youth in obtaining employment? Improving income?	9a) # / % of previously unemployed or under-employed (<i>to be defined</i>) YES participants who find employment post-intervention 9b) # / % of previously unemployed or under-employed (<i>to be defined</i>) YES participants who find career-related employment post-intervention 9c) Average earned income of YES clients who find employment 9d) YES participants' post participation experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income levels • Employment experience characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment status ○ FT, PT duration ○ Number of jobs held ○ Occupation details ○ Match with skills obtained ○ Match with education ○ Underemployment (to be defined) 9e) Differences between profiles of participant and non participant employment experience (e.g. average duration of employment/average number of weeks employed compared to non participants)	(3) Surveys with youth (5) Interviews with Youth, Employers, Youth Serving Organizations/ Business Associations (6) Focus groups (10) Benchmarking exercise (11) YES dept/agencies youth needs assessments and exit surveys (12) Case studies

Issues	Questions	Indicator	Data Source/ Collection Method
Success <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Impact on Schooling Decision Q10. As a positive effect of program participation, to what extent have participants decided to further their education?	10a) Greater recognition by YES participants of benefits of education for labour market participation and impact of YES on this recognition 10b) # / % participants returning to school (after participation in program) 10c) #//% of participants finishing high school or returning to post-secondary, advanced studies, programs or certifications 10d) Fields of study YES clients returned to and impact of YES experience on this decision 10e) Differences between return to school rates of participants and non participants	(3) Surveys with youth (5) Interviews with Youth, Employers, Youth Serving Organizations/ Business Associations (6) Focus groups (10) Benchmarking exercise (11) YES dept/agencies youth needs assessments and exit surveys (12) Case studies
Success <i>[Note: To be asked only for SWE stream]</i>	Impact on Financial Capacity to Return to School Q11. As a positive effect of program participation, to what extent did the funds earned through <i>Summer Work Experience</i> enable youth to return to school?	11a) \$ paid to Youth through SWE 11b) duration of interventions 11c) # / % of Summer Work Experience clients who indicate income from SWE job helped pay for education (post participation)	(3) Surveys with youth (5) Interviews with Youth, Employers, Youth Serving Organizations/ Business Associations (6) Focus groups (8) Review of YES dept/agencies documentation (10) Benchmarking exercise (11) YES dept/agencies youth needs assessments and exit surveys (12) Case studies

Issues	Questions	Indicator	Data Source/ Collection Method
Success <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Possible Factors Impacting on Success Q12. To what extent did the assessment tools and action plans that were prepared assist in the decision-making process for youth?	12a) # / % of YES clients who were assessed and developed an Action Plan before participating in a program 12b) Extent to which the assessment and action planning process helped the YES client make a decision as to which program to participate in 12c) Extent to which program objectives and activities correspond to the main employability/employment barriers identified in client assessments 12d) Extent to which the assessment and action planning process helped the YES client make a post-participation decision regarding employment or schooling	(3) Surveys with youth (5) Interviews with Youth, Employers, Youth Serving Organizations/ Business Associations (6) Focus groups (8) Review of YES dept/agencies documentation (12) Case studies
Success <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q13. What, if any, unintended impacts (positive or negative) have occurred as a result of youth employment strategy activities?	13a) Impact analysis for each of the three streams.	All sources
Success <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q14. Do impacts, intended or unintended, vary by region or target group? What are the reasons for any variances noted?	14a) Observed variations among YES clients according to key factors (e.g. region, field of study, field of work experience, age, gender, ethnic origin, disability status, prior work experience, pay level, enjoyment of work/work environment, relationship between field of study and work experience)	All sources

Issues	Questions	Indicator	Data Source/ Collection Method
Success <i>[Note: Each question under this issue will be asked for each of the three streams]</i>	Q15. How accessible is employment-focused information produced for youth/ employers? What other means might be used to make information more accessible in the future? To what extent does the information provided assist youth in making career-related decision/employers in making HR related decisions?	15a) Level of youth knowledge and use of available information products 15b) Level of employer knowledge and use of available employment-related information products 15c) Level of Youth Case Manager/Counselor knowledge and use of available employment-related information products 15d) Assessment of usefulness/value of material, tools and information (available and accessed information), by Youth, by Youth Case Managers/Counselors, by Employers 15e) Identification of additional means to circulate employment-related information products	(3) Surveys with youth (5) Interviews with Youth, Employers, Youth Serving Organizations/ Business Associations (6) Focus groups (12) Case studies