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Summative Evaluation of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership Program

Final Report
February 2013

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Final report

***Evaluation Directorate
Strategic Policy and Research Branch
Employment and Social Development Canada***

February 2013

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Alberta
ASEP	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership
AHRDA	Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement
ASETS	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy
ASTSIF	Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund
BC	British Columbia
EAS	Employment Assistance Services
EBs	Employment Benefits
EI	Employment Insurance
HRSDC*	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
LMDA	Labour Market Development Agreement
MB	Manitoba
NB	New Brunswick
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador
NWT	Northwest Territories
NS	Nova Scotia
NU	Nunavut
ON	Ontario
QC	Quebec
SK	Saskatchewan
SPF	Skills and Partnership Fund
YK	Yukon

* As of July 2013, the official names of the minister and department are the Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, and the Department of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

The name of the previous department, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), is used in this report in a historical context only.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings and conclusions for the Summative Evaluation of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) program.

1. Background

ASEP was a nationally managed, opportunity-driven (i.e., focused on identified job opportunities), targeted Aboriginal skills development program designed to maximize employment for Aboriginal people in major economic development projects in industries such as mining, construction, fisheries, tourism, oil and gas, forestry, hydro and public infrastructure projects across Canada through a collaborative partnership approach.

The program was launched in 2003 with an initial investment of \$85M over five years (i.e., from 2003 to 2008). Subsequently, the terms and conditions were extended for an additional year to 2009. Nine projects were supported from this initial phase which lasted from 2003 to 2009. As part of Budget 2007, the program was expanded by \$105M and extended to March 31, 2012 with updated terms and conditions. Sixteen new projects were funded as a result of this investment which covered the period 2007 to 2012. Under *Canada's Economic Action Plan*, ASEP received an additional \$100M over three years (2009–2012) in order to help Aboriginal people to participate in the workforce and receive the training they needed to make the most of employment opportunities during the economic downturn. An additional 20 projects were implemented as a result of this funding. The total funding invested in the program since its inception in 2003 was \$290M, supporting a total of 45 projects. The ASEP program ended on March 31, 2012. It was managed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

2. Evaluation Scope and Methodology

This evaluation was based on two components. The first consisted of an assessment of outcomes and incremental impacts for participants in the nine ASEP projects funded in 2003, as well as a cost-benefits analysis of these same projects. The second component includes an examination of program relevance, success, costs as well as a follow-up on findings from the previous formative and summative evaluations and a data assessment. The assessment of success and costs as well as the data assessment focused on the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects. The examination of program relevance and the follow-up on findings from previous formative and summative evaluations cover projects from 2003, 2007 and 2009.

The summative evaluation was conducted using the following quantitative and qualitative methods:

- Evaluation component 1: Outcome and incremental impact analysis for 2003 ASEP Projects:
 - A statistical analysis of key labour market outcomes and incremental impacts for participants who received Employment Benefits (EBs) under the nine ASEP projects funded in 2003 and who ended their participation by December 31, 2007; and
 - A limited cost-benefit analysis of the 2003 ASEP projects.
- Evaluation Component 2: Examination of other evaluation issues with a focus on success, cost analysis and data assessment for the 2007 and 2009 projects:
 - Document review;
 - 96 key informant interviews including 20 ASEP project representatives, 17 Aboriginal partners, 20 industry partners, 18 training partners, 11 other stakeholders, 5 HRSDC program representatives, and 5 Aboriginal partners from closed out projects funded in 2003;
 - An assessment of the participant case management data from 21 projects funded in 2007 and 2009 which included 15 site visits and a comparison of project's case management data with data uploaded to HRSDC;
 - A survey with 769 participants from the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects; and
 - A statistical analysis of the pre-, in- and early post-program labour market experience of participants in the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects.

The evaluation strengths included the use of state-of-the-art methods to estimate the net impacts for the participation in the first nine ASEP projects. The purpose of the net impact analysis is to determine what difference participating in ASEP programs made compared to non-participation or to receiving low intensity employment services. In conducting the analysis, significant efforts were devoted to examining multiple comparison/reference group options in order to test the sensitivity of the estimates to the selection of the reference group, which provided greater confidence in the results. Relying on administrative data to conduct the quantitative analyses required for the evaluation improved the evaluation team's ability to obtain good matches between participants and comparison cases and greatly enhanced the statistical power of the incremental impact estimation methodology.

The evaluation, however, faced some challenges and attempted to reduce the risk associated with these challenges. For example, the key informant interviews were conducted shortly after the ASEP partners were informed of the program termination. During the interviews, a significant number of key informants expressed their dismay at the termination of ASEP and commented that it was an exceptionally effective Aboriginal employment program model. It is clear that the timing of the interviews influenced the largely positive opinions of these key informants regarding the ASEP program.

In addition, the survey response rate was low at 22%, which compounded the risk associated with the recall errors (i.e. capacity of survey respondents to answer questions that refer to events or conditions in the past). However, the use of administrative data when available helped to support the survey results.

The net impact analysis covered participants who ended their participation between 2004 and 2007 and relied on data covering a period ending in December 2009. Therefore, net impacts could have been assessed over up to five years post-program. However, the number of participants for which four or five years of post-program data was available was too small to be representative of the overall sample covered by the analysis. As a result, net impacts were measured over only three years following the program start year.

3. ASEP Relevance

Continued need for the program

There is an ongoing need for Aboriginal labour market programming, similar to ASEP, which helps to address systematic barriers impeding the full participation of Aboriginal people in the labour market, particularly in major economic development projects. The documentation reviewed confirmed that Aboriginal people have the potential to be an important supply of workers for the labour market in Canada. However, Aboriginal individuals face significant labour market barriers and programs that aim to address these barriers can contribute to facilitate their participation in the Canadian labour market. Barriers faced by Aboriginal individuals include: higher unemployment rates (14.8% compared to 6.3% for the general population),¹ lower individual incomes, and lower levels of education than the general population.² In this respect, 58% of ASEP participants in the 2007 and 2009 projects earned less than \$10,000 in the one year before the participation start year.

Consistency with federal government Aboriginal policy

ASEP reflected broad federal government Aboriginal Policy. The Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF) established under the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy has the provisions to support ASEP-like projects that will continue to support federal government Aboriginal policy directions in the future.

The consistency of ASEP with the federal government Aboriginal policy is confirmed in various policy documents which articulate the federal government's commitment to enhance the well-being of Aboriginal Canadians through measures designed to enable them to participate in the labour market. These documents include *Advantage Canada* (2006), the *Speech from the Throne* from 2006 to 2008, as well as the *Budget* from 2007 to 2012.

¹ Statistics Canada, Census 2006.

² Ibid.

Although the ASEP program terminated on March 31, 2012, its particular approach influenced the design of other employment programs delivered by HRSDC. Specifically, the SPF has a similar objective to ASEP of encouraging innovation and partnerships to increase Aboriginal skills development and participation in the labour market. Also, the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), which succeeded the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs), has similarities with ASEP as it requires funded organizations to form partnerships with employers to deliver demand-driven skills training programs.

4. Success

Evaluation component 1: Impact from participating in 2003 projects

Incremental impacts from participating in the 2003 ASEP projects

Results from the incremental impact analysis show that ASEP was effective at increasing the employment earnings of participants over the four year period following the start of their participation³. The cumulative incremental gains in employment earnings were in the \$3,600 to \$5,200 range. These incremental earning gains were higher for participants in projects with a site/industrial project focus (e.g. ASEP projects focusing on a specific industrial development such as a mine) than for participants in projects with a broader industry focus (e.g. ASEP projects focusing on an industry such as construction or forestry). The cumulative incremental gain for ASEP projects with strong focus on a specific industrial development project was \$8,500 compared to a statistically non-significant cumulative net gain of \$700 for projects with a focus on a broader industry.

ASEP also had positive impacts on the incidence of employment of participants. Annual increases of 4.0, 3.0, and 2.5 percentage points were respectively found in the three years following the participation start year.

ASEP participants increased their use of EI benefits by \$647 in the third year following the participation start year. Estimates for all other years were statistically non-significant. Similarly, none of the impacts on use of Social Assistance were statistically significant.

Incremental impacts from participating in the 2003 ASEP projects relative to the AHRDA EBs reference group

Incremental impacts of receiving EBs under the 2003 ASEP projects were also assessed using a reference group composed of Aboriginal individuals who received EBs under AHRDAs. The purpose of this analysis was to test if the particular focus of ASEP on industry, more direct involvement of the private sector in the programming, and matching of program delivery to the labour market produced better outcomes than the delivery model used by AHRDAs, which is less demand driven.

³ Net impacts were assessed over the four years that followed the beginning of participation (i.e., the year the participation started and the three following years).

Relative to the AHRDA EB reference group, ASEP EB participants had a statistically significant cumulative gain in employment earnings of \$2,939 over the four year period following the start of participation. Participation in ASEP projects produced better earning outcomes than participation in employment benefits delivered under the AHRDAs. In regard to the incidence of employment, ASEP participants had a statistically significant decrease of -2.4 percentage points in the participation start year and -2.9 percentage points in the third year following the beginning of participation compared to AHRDA participants. Estimates for the other years were statistically non-significant. A statistically significant impact on the mean EI benefits collected was only found in the program start year (-\$380). None of the estimates pertaining to the use of Social Assistance benefits were statistically significant. These results provide indications that the ASEP approach was not more effective than the AHRDA approach at increasing the number of participants employed after participation. However, these results provide indications that the ASEP approach was more effective than the AHRDA approach at helping the participants who worked after participation to improve their employment income by either getting jobs with better pay or by working more hours than before their participation.

Evaluation component 2: Outcomes from participating in the 2007 and 2009 projects

Overall, ASEP participants in the 2007 and 2009 projects were young (63% under age 35) single (68%) and male (76%). Sixty-six percent were registered Status Indians. The highest level of education of the majority of respondents (67%) was high school or less. Programs and services offered by ASEP projects were mainly Skills Development and Employment Assistance Services (respectively received by 63% and 57% of participants). The majority of participants (74%) received at least one Employment Benefits and their Action Plan Equivalent⁴ had an average duration of 2.6 months.

Most of the survey respondents (80%) were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the quality of employment services and programs received from ASEP projects. In addition, the majority of the survey respondents (78%) indicated that programs and services received from ASEP projects were either quite useful or very useful in providing them with specific job-related skills and/or in providing them with skills they could use for jobs in the industry targeted by the ASEP project they received programs and services from. Similarly, most respondents (62% to 73%) indicated that ASEP programs and services were quite useful or very useful in helping them to find employment as well as to improve their career planning, their ability to participate in the community, and various quality of life indicators.

A statistical analysis of administrative data for a sample of 406 participants from the 2007 projects showed that their employment earnings rose from \$16,729 in the year prior to participation to \$19,872 in the year following the participation start year which represents a gain of \$3,143. The incidence of employment of these same participants decreased slightly between the year preceding participation (83%) and the year following participation (81%).

⁴ Action Plan Equivalents include all programs and services taken by an individual within a 6 month interval of each other.

From one year preceding participation to one year preceding the survey interview, the ASEP survey respondents reduced the amount of time spent unemployed by -0.7 months and the amount of time spent on Social Assistance by -0.3 months. They also increased their average number of hours employed per week from 42 hours to 47 hours; their hourly wage from \$18.44 to \$21.33, and their annual average employment income from \$20,107 to \$24,668.

Eighty-five percent of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the longest job they held in the 12 month period before the survey. Approximately half of the respondents (49%) rated the employment services and programs provided to them by ASEP projects as being either very important or quite important in helping them to obtain their longest job.

Employment in the major economic development projects

The evidence from key informant interviews shows that ASEP projects had positive impacts on the employment of participants in major economic development projects in terms of entry to employment, moving to better jobs, job retention, and advancement.

After the end of their participation in ASEP, half (50%) of the survey respondents worked at some point in the industry targeted by the ASEP project from which they had received programs and services. On average, respondents had 12 months of full time work (i.e. more than 30 hours per week) and 3 months of part time work (i.e. less than 30 hours per week) in the targeted industry between the end of their participation and the survey. Fifty-eight percent of respondents said they needed to have some specific educational certificates for the job they were hired for in the targeted industry. Among these, 69% indicated they obtained these educational certificates from ASEP. Similarly, 58% of the respondents said they needed specific skills (other than formal educational certificates) for the job they were hired for in the targeted industry and 65% of these respondents identified having obtained some of these skills from ASEP. Overall, 47% of respondents thought the programs and services they received from ASEP projects were very important in obtaining employment in the targeted industry.

Sixty-four percent of the respondents who were still working in the targeted industry at the time of the survey said they had not applied for a higher paying job in their industry since the first job accepted after the program. However, 86% of the respondents believed they will have an opportunity to do so in the future.

Impact of ASEP collaborative approach and sustainability of partnership

Most of the key informants interviewed reported that ASEP funding increased the partner's ability to address employment barriers Aboriginal individuals are facing. Key informants also cited various examples of best practices and innovations put in place by partners in terms of human resources development, skills development and training initiatives. These were related to the collaboration of partners in ensuring that both the industry's and the participant's needs were well understood and were applied to client assessment and to the design of training and supports. Other best practices identified pertain to the service delivery

approach used in ASEP projects (e.g. job coaches, community-based training, or training approaches that followed a progression, such as from pre-employment to classroom to on-the-job training).

Overall, the majority of key informants felt the partners worked well together in developing training and employment plans linked to job opportunities. They also believed that ASEP contributed to meeting employers' needs. In addition, ASEP was seen as having positively impacted the workplace of industry partners. Examples of changes induced by ASEP and cited by the key informants included improved integration of Aboriginal individuals in jobs offered by the industry. Finally, most key informants also believed that the partnership formed under ASEP contributed to increasing the partner's understanding of the targeted industry.

In the context of ASEP termination, key informants were asked whether they thought the partnership formed under ASEP would continue after the end of the funding period. Many felt the partnership would continue at least on an informal basis. However, the vast majority indicated that the continuation of the partnership, either formally or informally, was contingent on obtaining funding from other sources. At the time of the interviews, all project representative key informants had efforts underway to seek post-ASEP funding from either SPF or other provincial/territorial governments.

Influence of ASEP on other labour market programs for Aboriginal individuals

HRSDC program representatives interviewed confirmed that ASEP influenced various programs, such as SPF, ASETS, and the Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development. These key informants also identified lessons learned and features from ASEP that can apply to the design and delivery of other programs. Examples cited included the centralized delivery and streamlined delivery approach of ASEP; the requirement for incorporated partnerships that led to effective relationships and partnerships; the requirement for a 50% contribution from partners, which helped to establish commitments in terms of sustaining the projects; tying each ASEP project to one industry, which created risks for projects when there were delays in start-up or a reduction in the workforce due to the economy and markets; and the national approach, which helped to create synergy and connections among ASEP projects.

5. Cost-Effectiveness

Evaluation component 1: Cost-benefit analysis for 2003 ASEP projects

A limited cost-benefit analysis was conducted for the 2003 ASEP projects based on the incremental impact results. This analysis included two different components. The first was an assessment of the benefits of participating in EBs under the 2003 ASEP projects in

comparison to the average cost of delivering these projects. The second component was an examination of the relative benefits of participating in ASEP EBs compared to participating in AHRDA EBs and the incremental cost of delivering ASEP relative to AHRDAs.

Both components of the cost-benefit analysis were conducted from a broader social perspective and from a government perspective for a period of four years following the start of participation. The social perspective took into account the total costs of delivering ASEP, which included both HRSDC and the partner's contribution, while the government perspective covered only the costs incurred by HRSDC.

Component 1: From the broad social perspective, the total average cost of delivering the 2003 ASEP projects was \$16,484 per participant. From the government perspective, this average cost was \$9,705 per participant. The benefit of participating in ASEP EBs measured over the four year period totaled \$3,120, which did not exceed the costs from either the social or the government perspective.

Component 2: The average cost of delivering AHRDA/ASETS was \$6,382. As a result, the incremental or additional cost of delivering ASEP relative to AHRDA/ASETS was \$10,102 per participant from the social perspective and \$3,232 per participant from the government perspective. In comparison, participation in ASEP EBs, relative to participation in AHRDA EBs, led to a total incremental benefit of \$2,833 over the four year period. From the social perspective, the incremental benefit of ASEP relative to AHRDA did not exceed the incremental cost of delivering ASEP. From a government perspective, the incremental cost of \$3,323 is almost neutral compared to the incremental benefit of \$2,833.

While, in most cases, the benefits of participating in ASEP did not exceed the costs of delivering the program, a longer timeframe would be required to evaluate the cost-benefit ratio of this type of programming, especially since a program like ASEP is expected to generate longer term benefits that may last as long as the industry project it is targeting (e.g. a mine).

Evaluation component 2: Cost analysis for 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects

Conducting a cost-benefit analysis for the 2007 and 2009 projects was not possible because at the time of the evaluation, for most participants and especially those from the 2009 projects, the period of time that elapsed since the end of participation was not sufficiently long to observe net impacts. As well, the administrative data available did not cover a sufficiently long period of time to allow assessing net impacts for the participants from the 2007 projects. An analysis of the cost of delivering the projects per participant was, however, carried out. When looking only at the contribution made by HRSDC, the average total cost was \$8,011 per participant. However, the cost varied greatly across ASEP projects (from \$2,406 to \$20,489 per participant). When considering the total project's expenditures (HRSDC and partner's contributions combined), the average total cost was \$13,894 per participant. There were also important variations in the costs across projects, which ranged from \$3,458 to \$24,879 per participant.

6. Other Evaluation Questions

Leveraging of funds

Partners under the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects had to contribute at least 50% of the total project funding. As of March 31, 2011, the actual partners' contributions represented 41% of the total project funding received. However, partners had until the end of the program funding period to make their contribution.

Overlap and duplication

According to documentation reviewed and key informants interviewed, ASEP was complementary to other federal programs for Aboriginal individuals, such as ASETS, SPF, LMDAs, and the Post-secondary Education funding for First Nations offered by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Both the documents reviewed and the key informants interviewed also confirmed that various mechanisms were put in place at the program and project levels to avoid duplication with other programs.

7. Follow-Up on Issues Identified in the Previous Formative and Summative Evaluations

Case management and financial data

Overall, the assessment of participants' administrative data from the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects showed that the quality of the case management and financial data significantly improved since the previous formative and summative evaluations. However, some aspects of the case management data at the project level still required improvements. These relate to ensuring consistency in information collected on the application form; collecting alternate phone numbers and updating contact information; recording the end date and results of action plans; and linking financial information to individual participants and their interventions.

The ASEP administrative data held by HRSDC in the Standard Data File also improved significantly. In response to the ASEP formative evaluation findings, two resources within the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate were dedicated to monitoring administrative data. According to key informants interviewed and documents reviewed as part of the data assessment, some challenges remained. These included a lack of clarity in the contribution agreements around the accountability processes applied to the data at HRSDC and a lack of timeliness in providing feedback to projects with respect to employed results and in uploading the data transferred by the projects to the Standard Data File (i.e. there was frequently a lag of 3 months or more between the time data were uploaded to HRSDC and transferred to the Standard Data File and the availability of employed results).

Other issues

The evaluation also examined the improvements made in addressing the following three issues identified in the previous formative or summative evaluations:

- 1. ASEP projects could not accommodate some issues such as providing services for those who had very low education levels who requested training, and some contextual issues such as participants having to leave the community to find work until the large projects are underway.**

The vast majority of key informants felt that this was still a significant issue. However, most key informants interviewed indicated that ASEP projects addressed this – at least to some extent – by referring participants with low levels of education to ASETS for academic upgrading. Most projects provided some financial assistance to clients who had to leave their communities for work and linked them with other supports.

- 2. Challenges were identified with respect to reaching the targeted communities.**

Key informants interviewed indicated that communicating with communities was no longer a challenge for most projects; however there were still challenges in reaching remote communities.

- 3. There were a few examples provided during the evaluation that demonstrated how new knowledge generated from ASEP projects was beginning to be transferred and potentially incorporated into other related services.**

Evidence was found through document review and key informant interviews that the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate has put in place a communication strategy to create knowledge transfer among ASEP projects on effective practices and with other government entities and industry groups.

8. Lessons Learned

The findings from this evaluation include lessons learned and best practices in terms of design, delivery and accountability. Although the ASEP program terminated on March 31, 2012, such lessons learned are applicable to other labour market programming delivered by HRSDC and especially to SPF and ASETS.

In light of the results from the incremental impact analysis, three key lessons can be identified about the ASEP approach. First, these results showed that ASEP was effective at increasing the employment earnings and the incidence of employment of participants. Second, participants in ASEP projects focused on a specific industrial development project achieved better results than those who participated in projects with a focus on a broader industry. Third, the ASEP approach was found to be more effective at increasing the earnings of participants than the AHRDA delivery approach.

Also, various examples of best practices and innovations put in place by partners in terms of human resources development, skills development and training initiatives were identified by the key informants. These were related to the collaboration of partners in ensuring that both the industry's and the participants' needs were well understood and were applied to client assessment and to the design of training and supports. Other best practices identified pertain to the service delivery approach used in ASEP projects (e.g. job coaches, community-based training or training approaches that followed a progression, such as pre-employment, classroom and then on-the-job trainings). Finally, among the best practices identified in terms of sustaining partnerships, the key informants mentioned communications with partners to share resources and information about the project as one important factor. Other best practices reported by key informants include establishing relationships up front with clear expectations; having good governance structure with documented policies and director having clear authorities and having partners work collaboratively.

9. Lessons Learned for Current and Future Programs

In light of the evaluation findings, it is recommended that the following lessons learned be applied to the design and delivery of current and future programs delivered by HRSDC:

- Programs and services currently delivered under ASETS should continue to place a high priority on targeted programming toward occupations in demand (i.e. meeting the needs of the demand side of the labour market). Through consultations and partnership building, the approach for planning and delivery should take into consideration the current and emergent needs of the local labour market in general and employers in particular.
- Where relevant, funding granted by future and current programs, and especially SPF, should favor projects focusing on specific industrial development rather than projects with a focus on a broader industry.
- The following improvements should be made in the data collection for Aboriginal programming:
 - Standard intake and exit forms for participants should be used by all service delivery organizations. These forms should also clearly define what information is requested (mandatory) from both participants and the delivery organization.
 - Alternate phone numbers or alternate contact information should be collected in a consistent way from the participants, particularly through exit forms.
 - Only individuals who received programs and services should be recorded as participants in the electronic case management system. Individuals who were applicants but were not accepted in the program or those who chose not to participate should not be captured as participants in the system.
 - Processes should be in place to ensure that interventions, results and start and end dates are consistently recorded.
 - Financial data should be linked to individual participants and interventions.
 - Clear roles and responsibilities should be assigned to contribution agreement signatories and to HRSDC regarding the quality and integrity of data.

- A specific unit should be tasked with the responsibility to ensure that program data are complete, accurate and capable of supporting monitoring and evaluation activities.
- HRSDC should maintain internal capacity to provide direct support to contribution agreement signatories on data collection, data systems and to address issues associated with data upload.
- The timeliness of the process for reviewing data transferred by service delivery offices to HRSDC and for transferring these data to HRSDC databases (e.g. the Standard Data File) should be improved in order to allow for timely monitoring of the programs.

Management response

For over 20 years, the Government of Canada has been involved in supporting labour market programming to help Aboriginal people more fully participate in the Canadian economy. Aboriginal labour market programming was introduced in 1991, with Pathways to Success. Aboriginal responsibility and control for Aboriginal programming became the main pillar of this labour market initiative and all those thereafter. After Pathways, Regional Bilateral agreements were signed with 54 organizations for three years. From 1999 to 2010, the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) served as the program vehicle for Aboriginal labour market programming in Canada and was launched in response to Gathering Strength and the Royal Commission. Currently, the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) supports a network of over 80 Aboriginal service providers across Canada, delivering labour marketing programming to Aboriginal Canadians.

Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership Program (ASEP) was launched in 2003 and renewed in 2007. ASEP was designed to promote maximum employment for Aboriginal people on major economic developments by directly linking training to jobs. It was designed to complement AHRDS and ASETS by responding to the training demands of large economic projects which went beyond the capacity of local Aboriginal labour market service providers. ASEP used a collaborative approach by promoting formalized partnerships between Aboriginal organizations and communities with the private sector, provincial and territorial governments, learning institutions, sector councils, and a range of federal departments and agencies. The success of the partnership approach would become a key component of more recent Aboriginal programming such as the Aboriginal Strategic Training and Skills Investment Fund, the Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF), and ASETS.

The ASEP program was a nationally-managed training-to-employment program designed to promote maximum employment for Aboriginal people on major economic opportunities. A distinguishing feature of the program was the formalized partnerships involving the private sector, Aboriginal communities and organisations and others, such as provincial/territorial governments and training institutions. The partners created a governance model to manage and oversee the activities of the project and developed multi-year training plans leading to targeted jobs. This model promoted collaborative effort and the sharing of risk among key stakeholders.

Another notable feature of ASEP was the requirement for project partners to make a significant financial contribution; for the initial nine projects, the required contribution from non-federal partners was 25% of the total cost of each project. With the renewal of the program in 2007, the required investment was raised to 50%, reflecting a more balanced cost-sharing. Also mandatory was upfront written commitment from employers for a minimum of 50 long-term jobs. This was a new requirement to ensure participation of private sector partners with large scale projects and to train Aboriginal people for the identified jobs thereby ensuring greater potential for the placement in more immediate and long-term jobs that were in demand.

Ongoing Relevance Confirmed

HRSDC agrees with the results of this evaluation regarding the ongoing need for Aboriginal labour market programming similar to ASEP. Despite gains that have been made by Aboriginal people in the Canadian labour market, persistent barriers to employment, such as low education levels and/or the lack of access to transportation or permanent childcare, are preventing many Aboriginal people from taking advantage of current and emerging opportunities. As a result, their labour market performance continues to lag that of the non-Aboriginal workforce. Given this context, and the skilled labour shortages being highlighted in sectors such as mining and oil and gas, there clearly is continuing need for programs that promote and enable greater employment participation by Aboriginal people, and in particular, those programs focused on matching training initiatives to labour market demand.

While ASEP was terminated in March 2012, HRSDC is using lessons learned from ASEP's successes to strengthen current and future program initiatives. For example, the approach for the third intake of SPF was informed by both, HRSDC's experience with ASEP and available labour market information. More specifically, HRSDC used the ASEP experience to determine the right level of partnership contribution (i.e. 50% was achievable). Current labour market information indicated that the number of natural resource development projects on or near Aboriginal communities would result in strong demand for Aboriginal labour as these projects rolled out.

Beyond the Numbers – The Effectiveness of ASEP

HRSDC is pleased to see that the evaluation demonstrated the effectiveness of ASEP in creating employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in major economic development projects across Canada. In addition to key accomplishments presented in this evaluation and the gains achieved by individual participants, HRSDC also recognizes the broader significance of ASEP in enabling over 31,000 Aboriginal people, since the program was initiated, to participate in training and work experience related programs to help improve their employability, and assisting 12,462 of them to transition into jobs in major sectors such as mining, energy, forestry and construction. It is noteworthy that the target of 11,713 individuals employed was exceeded by 6.4 %.

In addition to demonstrating positive outcomes for clients, this evaluation also identifies key lessons learned that HRSDC will consider in its design and management of existing and future labour market programming. Specifically, the following lessons were noted.

- **Focus on a Specific Site or Industry – Specific Projects over Broader Industry Projects.** This is particularly important for training-to-employment projects under SPF, but could also be relevant to Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) organizations, as they develop closer links to industry in their ASETS delivery. This lesson learned will be shared with current ASETS agreement holders through an upcoming Aboriginal Labour Market Bulletin, which will share broadly the lessons learned from ASEP, and a soon to be released Partnership Handbook for ASETS agreement holders.

Should additional intake processes for SPF take place in the future, this lesson learned will also be taken into consideration in the development of the criteria of selection and or focus of the call for proposals/concepts.

- **Support a Demand-Driven Approach that Focuses on Industry Needs** – As noted in this evaluation, the ASEP approach has already influenced HRSDC’s Aboriginal labour market programming. As of October 2012, over 60 SPF projects have been funded with nearly one third (18 projects) in current high demand occupations and sectors in trades, mining and energy. SPF is also responding to projected growth in the health and technology sectors by funding nine projects in these sectors, comprising 14% of all investments. With respect to ASETS, one of its key pillars is a demand driven skills development which strives to better match the development of Aboriginal labour supply to employer demands and industry skills shortages. In addition, further investigation through the upcoming ASETS evaluation may lead us to a deeper understanding of how the nature and scope of partnerships with the private sector influence labour market outcomes, as well as how integration of current and emerging needs of industry into an organization’s strategic planning can be advantageous. These areas will be explored as part of program renewal activities with ASETS agreement holders and other key stakeholders. Already, HRSDC requests that ASETS funding recipients prepare strategic business plans, which include an analysis of labour market demands in the region and demonstrate how programs and services will respond to these needs. HRSDC also publishes a semi-annual Aboriginal Labour Market Bulletin to assist in making strategic labour market programming choices. In addition, regional staff have been trained on interpreting labour market information in order to better assist ASETS agreement holders with this work.
- **Ensure Relevant Training and Effective Supports Designed with Aboriginal Clients in Mind** – The lessons learned in this area cannot be emphasized enough. Relevant training combined with effective supports, tailored to the needs of Aboriginal workers, are essential to achieving employment outcomes. Training linked to actual positions (including on-the-job training), preparing participants for what to expect in the workplace, using approaches that boost confidence, as well as providing such job maintenance supports as job coaches and regular and frequent follow-up were recognized as “best practices” by key informants whom were involved in ASEP projects. Such successful practices will be promoted to HRSDC’s Aboriginal labour market program funding recipients through HRSDC’s Aboriginal Labour Market Bulletin as well as incorporated into training materials for current and future programs.
- **Support Client-focused, Multi-intervention Models** – Within its remaining Aboriginal labour market programs, HRSD continues to encourage practices proven effective in addressing the employment barriers faced by Aboriginal participants. These include meaningful partner collaboration and contribution, as well as the use of flexible, client-focused approaches that offer a range of interventions responding to varying needs, build participant confidence, incorporate Aboriginal cultural practices, and ultimately build community capacity.

- **Partnerships Benefit from Strong Governance, Effective Communications and Shared Goals** – Partnerships grounded in a shared vision with strong governance structures and clear accountabilities and effective communication practices are those that achieve the best outcomes. It was demonstrated that ASEP project holders also recognized value in establishing the partnership relationship up front (e.g. getting to know all the partners, formalizing roles/policies/practices, and agreeing in advance on expectations of outcomes), sharing a focus on participant success, respecting industry needs and standards, and communicating broadly among the factors enabling successful project collaborations. These elements of effective partnering continue to be promoted in SPF and ASETS projects. The Aboriginal Labour Market Bulletin will showcase many of the lessons learned in the near future.
- **Direct Data Management Support to Projects Holders Increases the Quality of Data Available for Accountability Purposes** – In response to past ASEP evaluation findings, HRSDC developed a more comprehensive client data management model that included 1:1 support to agreement holders. The support provided to ASEP projects is being shared within HRSDC as a “best practice” in client data management support. As a result, ASETS and SPF results are now being monitored monthly for errors and follow-up is conducted accordingly; data systems have been modified to establish internal business rules so that only complete client records are (re)submitted to HRSDC and user friendly error messages for incomplete client records are provided. Also the lag time of three months or more to view employed results has been reduced to one month. The evaluation findings speak to the benefit of providing ongoing, direct support for data tracking and reporting. Therefore, HRSDC will use this information to inform ongoing improvements in client data management under ASETS and SPF.

Ensuring Cost-Effectiveness – A Long-Term Commitment

The evaluation has concluded that the benefits of ASEP did not exceed the associated contributions/costs of HRSDC alone or the combined contributions of HRSDC and project partners over a four year period (2003 to 2007). HRSDC agrees that a longer timeframe would enable a more insightful cost-benefit analysis of this type of programming. HRSDC also acknowledges that the analysis did not account for all the cost and benefits from the broader social perspective. In particular, there may have been other social benefits from the program that were not taken into account in the analysis since these cannot be quantified as a dollar value; for example, increased individual self-confidence, crime reduction within communities, family well-being, and improved health status of participants. In addition, the analysis did not account for the displacement effects (ASEP participants occupying jobs that could have been filled by qualified non-participants) and that displaced and unemployed non-participants may experience social disadvantages when compared to the social benefits of employed ASEP participants. The benefits of ongoing partnerships among ASEP partner organizations and ongoing hiring of Aboriginal people by ASEP partner organizations should also not be ignored.

Conclusion

Since 2003, HRSDC has had the privilege of supporting 45 unique ASEP projects and working with a wide range of project partners including numerous Aboriginal communities, industry representatives, educational institutions and all levels of government. We have learned a great deal from the experience; ASEP's successes and challenges have directly impacted the focus and direction of our current programs and will continue to influence future programming.

A notable legacy of ASEP is the results, both tangible and intangible, of the partnerships developed and the enduring positive relations for all those involved. Enhanced collaboration was witnessed at the Aboriginal community level where we saw groups that had not traditionally worked together striving toward a common goal. This was also true at the Aboriginal community level, where private sector players were actively seeking the input, advice and support of local people and Aboriginal communities were in turn actively engaging industry partners. There was also an enhanced, and in some instances, a new role for unions, educational institutions, provincial and territorial governments within the Aboriginal communities. Often, the ASEP model created a forum for discussion, engagement and shared interest that had previously eluded the various parties. The role of HRSDC officials in facilitating, supporting and providing a safe environment for engagement and honest interaction was also instrumental to the program's success.

As part of the management response to the evaluation of the original nine (9) ASEP projects, the department developed a dedicated, professional, accountable team to work with the projects and all partners to ensure the results were achieved and to assist in the development of positive relations amongst all parties. The ASEP team provided an approach to program delivery that was cohesive and coordinated, yet also responsive to the specific unique qualities of each of the projects, communities and partners.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings and conclusions for the Summative Evaluation of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) Program. The report is organized as follows:

- The introductory section presents an overview of the ASEP program;
- Section 2 provides a summary of the evaluation methodology;
- Section 3 presents the main findings for each of the evaluation questions; and
- Section 4 provides an overview of the conclusions
- Section 5 presents the lessons learned from this evaluation.

1.1 Overview of the Program

Overview of ASEP program

ASEP was a nationally managed, opportunity-driven (i.e. focused on identified job opportunities), targeted Aboriginal skills development program designed to maximize employment for Aboriginal people in major economic development projects. ASEP projects targeted industries such as mining, construction, fisheries, tourism, oil and gas, forestry, hydro and public infrastructure across Canada through a collaborative partnership approach.

The program was launched in 2003 with an initial investment of \$85M over five years (i.e., from 2003 to 2008). Subsequently, the terms and conditions were extended for an additional year to 2009. Nine projects were supported from this initial phase which lasted from 2003 to 2009. As part of Budget 2007, the program was expanded by \$105M and extended to March 31, 2012 with updated terms and conditions. Sixteen new projects were funded as a result of this investment which covered the period 2007 to 2012. Under *Canada's Economic Action Plan*, ASEP received an additional \$100M over three years (2009–2012) in order to help Aboriginal people to participate in the workforce and receive the training they needed to make the most of employment opportunities during the economic downturn. An additional 20 projects were implemented as a result of this funding. The total funding invested in the program since its inception in 2003 was \$290M, supporting a total of 45 projects. The ASEP program ended on March 31, 2012.

Partners in ASEP projects and role of partnership

The ASEP program supported multi-year training to employment strategies that were developed and managed by formalized partnerships to train individuals for targeted jobs in specific industries. Partners involved in ASEP projects generally included Aboriginal organizations, the private sector (i.e. employers), training institutions, and other type of partners, such as provincial/territorial governments and, sometimes, other federal departments.

Together the partners were responsible for jointly developing and managing comprehensive, multi-year training-to-employment plans leading directly to targeted jobs. Those plans had to include a commitment from one or more employer partners to provide at least 50 long-term jobs to Aboriginal individuals. Partners also had to make a significant financial contribution to the training plan. Specifically, partners in projects funded in 2007 and 2009 had to contribute 50% of the total project's budget.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) delivered the program. The department was not part of the partnership or a partner. Its role consisted in negotiating the multi-year contribution agreement and overseeing the implementation of the training to employment plan. Once the project was launched, HRSDC maintained a collaborative relationship with the partnership and participated as an ex-officio (non-voting) member of the ASEP organization's Board of Directors.

Activities delivered under ASEP

Activities funded to achieve the objectives of ASEP included:

- Skills development programs for employment, ranging from basic to advanced skills;
- Wage subsidies to encourage employers to hire Aboriginal individuals for jobs;
- Assistance to become self-employed and find employment;
- Opportunities to gain work experience leading to on-going employment;
- Personal supports and special employment assistance for Aboriginal individuals with disabilities to help them obtain employment;
- Employment services to help obtain employment such as awareness of skills requirements and career options for employment opportunities, counselling, testing and assessment (including prior learning assessment, job finding clubs and job search strategies);
- Programs to support employers, employees or employer associations, community groups and communities in developing and implementing strategies for dealing with labour force adjustments and meeting human resource requirements; and
- Other activities that, in the opinion of the Minister (HRSDC), promoted the objectives of the ASEP program.

1.2 ASEP Program Intended Objectives and Outcomes

ASEP's ultimate, long term and immediate intended objectives and outcomes, as defined in the 2003 and 2007 Results-based Management and Accountability Framework, are as follows:

Program intended objectives

Immediate objectives

- Foster collaboration, partnerships, alliances and networks between government, the private sector, non-government agencies and Aboriginal groups to maximize the employment opportunities available to Aboriginal people in areas of major economic opportunities by leveraging investment of resources, in-kind and financial, from ASEP project partners;
- Build the capacity of communities to address human resources development needs related to economic opportunities; and
- To increase the quantity of employment-related skills training available to Aboriginal people in areas of major economic opportunities beyond the level possible by reliance solely on funding from the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs).⁵

Long term objectives

- Increase the number of Aboriginal people in the Canadian labour market;
- Reduce the barriers to employment for Aboriginal people such as low educational attainment and lack of opportunity; and
- Address a broad spectrum of skills and learning needs and provide access to jobs.

Ultimate objective

- To promote maximum employment for Aboriginal people on major economic opportunities through a collaborative approach.

Program expected outcomes

Immediate outcome

- Assessment and initial placement in training or employment: Initial screening through assessment processes laid out in the Training and Employment Plan will determine potential Aboriginal participants in the project, assess the intervention requirements (for example, placement in literacy or essential skill training or placement in trades and apprenticeship training) and make the initial placement into training or employment.

⁵ Since April 1, 2010 Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements are known as ASETS Holders, where ASETS refers to the 2010–2015 Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy which succeeded the AHRDS.

- Tailored skills enhancement plans developed/work experience opportunities: the human resource plan developed by the partnership will identify the necessary interventions to support Aboriginal skills development associated with the major economic development projects occurring with ASEP partners' industries. This plan will indicate the skills necessary for long term employment during the operations phase of the major economic development project and the programs and services the partnership will implement to help ensure that Aboriginal people obtain the necessary skills and training for these jobs. These programs and services could include off-site training; on-site training; actual work experience assignments; literacy training/upgrading; retention counselling and so forth. The plan will be tailored to meet the needs of the targeted Aboriginal population. The contribution agreement will off-set the incremental costs of the programs and services that the partnership develops and implements, to help ensure that Aboriginal people have the skills and training necessary for the short term and long term jobs associated with the major economic development project.

Intermediate outcome

- Increased level of skills among Aboriginal participants: The contribution agreement will provide funding for the partnership to ensure Aboriginal people are aware of the opportunities that exist during the construction (if applicable) and operations phase of the major economic opportunity. The partnership will implement both on-site and off-site skills development and training program for Aboriginal people. As Aboriginal people obtain the skills and training necessary for employment with the major economic opportunity, there will be an increase in the participation rate of Aboriginal people in the direct short-term and the long-term employment opportunities.

Longer Term outcome

- Increased employability of Aboriginal participants: As a result of the activity identified for the ASEP program, there will be an increase in the skills levels of the Aboriginal program participants. The tailored programs and services will lead to improved education and skills levels of program participants, and a more diversified workforce within the communities involved, which will result in increased Aboriginal participation in the local labour market.
- Enhanced employment situation of Aboriginal participants: as a result of the activities for the ASEP program, there will be an increase in the skills levels of the Aboriginal program participants. The tailored programs and services will lead to improved education and skills levels of program participants, and a more diversified workforce within the communities involved, which will result in increased Aboriginal participation in the local labour markets.

Ultimate outcome

- Long term sustainable employment for Aboriginal people on major economic opportunities.

1.3 HRSDC Employment Programs for Aboriginal Individuals

ASEP complemented the suite of other programs delivered by HRSDC that aimed at fostering greater labour market participation for Aboriginal people. These programs included the Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF), the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) and its predecessor, the AHRDAs, and the Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund (ASTSIF).

All of these programs were designed to promote employment of Aboriginal people but with a different focus and partnership requirements. These differences are highlighted in Table 1:

Table 1: HRSDC Employment Programs for Aboriginal Individuals			
Program	Employment focus	Partnerships	Duration
AHRDAs	Funded Aboriginal organizations to deliver community-based employment services to meet the communities' unique human resource development needs and priorities.	Organizations were encouraged to develop partnerships with multiple stakeholders.	Funded from 1999 to 2010.
ASETS	As successor to AHRDS, ASETS funds Aboriginal organizations to deliver demand driven skills development services and training programs.	Fosters partnerships with the private sector and provinces/territories.	Funded for five years (2010–2015).
SPF	Funds Aboriginal organizations for projects that put forward previously untested approaches or approaches that improve ways to help Aboriginal people prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment. SPF is a catalyst for innovations that can then be implemented through the ASETS funded organizations.	At least one partner is required with employers and/or provincial/territorial governments.	Funded for five years (2010–2015).
ASTIF	Funded Aboriginal organizations to establish partnerships with small and medium-size employers to lead to concrete jobs for Aboriginal people. The ASTSIF supported projects to test innovative approaches to Aboriginal labour market programming, as well as projects that were national in scope.	Partnerships required.	Two-year funding as part of Canada's Economic Action Plan (2008–2010).

Table 1: HRSDC Employment Programs for Aboriginal Individuals			
Program	Employment focus	Partnerships	Duration
ASEP	Funded services and training for existing and anticipated skill needs of major resource development projects in specific sectors.	The organizations funded under ASEP included members that reflected the major interests within the geographical area of the economic development opportunities, including equitable representatives of all the local Aboriginal communities and the private sector. The incorporated organizations could have included, as appropriate, representatives of provincial or territorial government(s), labour, local and regional educational institutions, other federal departments and sector councils, as well as others.	2003–2012

1.4 Projects Covered by the Evaluation

The summative evaluation covered 31 out of the 45 projects funded by ASEP since its creation in 2003. These 31 projects were sponsored by 27 organizations in total, as four organisations received funding for two projects each. Covered projects included the nine projects funded from 2003 to 2009, 15 projects funded under the 2007 Budget and a sample of 7 projects funded under the 2009 *Economic Action Plan*. The selection of the 22 projects funded in 2007 and 2009 was based on the following two criteria:

- Projects selected had to have participants with completed interventions/action plans by January 31, 2011 in order to ensure that participants had sufficient time to have labour market experience between the end of their participation and the participant survey.
- Some projects were excluded because they had no data uploaded in the HRSDC Standard Data File on March 20, 2011 when the data required for the evaluation were extracted from the database.

Table 2 lists the projects included in the evaluation, with their start and end dates, location, sector targeted and funding.

Table 2: ASEP Projects Covered by the Evaluation						
Start Date	End Date	Project Title/(Organization)	Province/ Territory	Sector	Total Funding (\$)	HRSDC Contribution (\$)
2003 Projects						
6-Feb-06	31-Mar-09	JBET Training Society (James Bay Employment and Training Inc.)	ON	Mining	10,925,932	7,870,958
19-Sep-05	30-Sep-08	Trade Winds to Success Project (Trade Winds to Success Training Society) – <i>funded again in 2007 – same sector</i>	AB	Trades/Construction	5,467,965	3,869,893
15-Mar-05	31-Mar-09	VanAsep Construction Careers Project (VanAsep Training Society) – <i>funded in 2007 for different sector</i>	BC	Construction	21,624,800	7,800,000
14-Feb-05	31-Mar-09	Nunavut Fisheries Training Consortium (Nunavut Fisheries Training Coalition) – <i>funded again in 2007 – same sector</i>	NU	Fishery	5,413,402	3,239,185
4-Jan-05	31-Mar-09	Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative (Wuskwatim and Keeyask Training Consortium Inc.)	MB	Construction	62,000,000	22,000,000
30-Sep-04	31-Mar-08	NWT Oil and Gas Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership: Skills Development Strategy (Aboriginal Futures)	NWT	Oil and Gas	13,300,000	9,975,000
27-Sep-04	31-Mar-09	People, Land and Opportunities (ASEP New Brunswick Inc.)	NB	Forestry	5,463,081	2,876,719
13-Sep-04	31-Mar-09	NWT Industrial Mining Skills Strategy (Mine Training Society) – <i>funded again in 2007 – same sector</i>	NWT	Mining	39,990,000	14,886,100
23-Aug-04	31-Mar-09	Wood Buffalo Partners in Aboriginal Training (Wood Buffalo Partners in Aboriginal Training)	AB	Oil Sands	4,759,609	3,294,000
Subtotal for 2003 projects					168,944,789	75,811,855

Table 2: ASEP Projects Covered by the Evaluation						
Start Date	End Date	Project Title/(Organization)	Province/ Territory	Sector	Total Funding (\$)	HRSDC Contribution (\$)
2007 Projects						
1-Jul-09	31-Mar-12	Aboriginal Workforce Development of NB (Aboriginal Workforce Development NB Inc.)	NB	Energy/Construction/ Manufacturing	6,279,120	2,429,120
22-Jun-09	31-Mar-12	Prince Rupert Aboriginal Skills Employment Partnership Project (Prince Rupert ASEP Society)	BC	Transportation	5,128,400	2,000,000
1-Apr-09	31-Mar-12	Training for Nunavut's Developing Fishing Industry (Nunavut Fisheries Training Consortium) – funded in 2003 – same sector	NU	Fishery	5,936,970	2,909,115
1-Apr-09	31-Mar-12	Building on Success: New Directions for Mine Training in the Northwest Territories (Mine Training Society) – funded in 2003 same sector	NWT	Mining	18,000,000	9,000,000
16-Mar-09	31-Mar-12	<i>Création d'un centre de formation professionnelle autochtone pour les métiers de la construction et les métiers connexes (Consortium pour la Formation des Autochtones en Construction au Québec)</i>	QC	Construction	18,167,401	6,688,569
1-Mar-09	31-Mar-12	NE ASEP (Northeast Aboriginal Skills and Employment Program Society) – <i>including 2009 upward amendment</i>	BC	Oil and Gas/Trades	8,998,451	4,345,027
1-Jan-09	31-Mar-12	An'onwentsa (Corporation Anionwentsaen)	QC	Tourism	12,212,133	4,890,462
24-Nov-08	31-Mar-12	Aboriginal Aerospace Employment Initiative (Aboriginal Aerospace Initiative Inc.)	MB	Aviation/Aerospace	13,887,435	5,275,010

Table 2: ASEP Projects Covered by the Evaluation						
Start Date	End Date	Project Title/(Organization)	Province/ Territory	Sector	Total Funding (\$)	HRSDC Contribution (\$)
29-Oct-08	31-Mar-12	Van ASEP 2008-2012 Hydro Project (VanAsep Training Society) – <i>funded in 2003 for different sector – including 2009 upward amendment</i>	BC	Construction/Energy	31,549,300	13,699,300
20-Oct-08	31-Mar-12	Whitefeather Forest Training Initiative (Whitefeather Forest Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnerships Corporation)	ON	Mining/Tourism/ Forestry	12,933,786	5,343,473
13-Oct-08	31-Mar-12	Trade Winds to Success II (Trade Winds to Success Training Society) – <i>funded in 2003 – same sector</i>	AB	Construction/Trades	9,230,128	4,544,959
11-Aug-08	31-Mar-12	MAATS (Matachewan's Aboriginal Access to Mining Jobs Training Strategy Inc) – <i>including 2009 upward amendment</i>	ON	Mining	7,757,697	3,851,063
14-Jul-08	31-Mar-12	Unama'ki Partnership for Prosperity (2007) (Unama'ki Partnership for Prosperity Association) – <i>including 2009 upward amendment</i>	NS	Commercial Construction	6,855,380	3,433,441
14-Apr-08	31-Mar-12	Northern Career Quest Partnership (Northern Career Quest Partnership)	SK	Mining/Oil and Gas	33,168,224	15,000,000
7-Apr-08	31-Mar-12	Partnership, People, Production: Get Into It (Yukon Mine Training Association)	YK	Mining	20,462,000	9,262,500
Subtotal for 2007 projects					210,566,425	92,672,039

Table 2: ASEP Projects Covered by the Evaluation					
Start Date	End Date	Project Title/(Organization)	Province/ Territory	Sector	HRSDC Contribution (\$)
2009 PROJECTS					
1-Jan-10	31-Mar-12	PTP ASEP Training Society (Pacific Trail Pipeline Aboriginal Skills Employment Partnership)	BC	Natural Gas	18,439,887
30-Oct-09	31-Mar-12	Seven Generations (Mi'kmaq Seven Generations Society)	NS	Tourism Construction	2,000,000
26-Oct-09	31-Mar-12	Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership (Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership)	NL	Hydro Construction	14,999,949
15-Oct-09	31-Mar-12	BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association (BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association)	BC	Mineral/Mining Exploration	4,440,000
1-Jul-09	31-Mar-12	Our Resources, Our People (Building Inuvialuit Potential)	NWT	Construction/Marine/Transportation	7,179,285
1-Jul-09	31-Mar-12	Our People, Our Future (Dehcho First Nations Future Society)	NWT	Oil and Gas/Construction	2,384,200
4-May-09	31-Mar-12	Bridges & Foundations for Aboriginal Development (Bridges and Foundations Career Development Corp.)	SK	Construction	2,977,598
Subtotal for 2009 projects				104,231,863	41,981,032
Totals for 2003–2009 examined projects				483,743,077	210,464,926
Source: Program documentation					

2. Summative Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Objectives and Scope

The summative evaluation was a requirement set out in the ASEP Terms and Conditions, which stated the following with respect to the key objectives of the evaluation:

The main focus of the evaluation is on measuring the success of the initiatives in assisting individuals, employers and communities and in the development of ongoing collaboration between government, community and private sector. The key outcomes, as identified in the Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework for the ASEP are:

- 1. Aboriginal individuals assessed and placed in training or employment;*
- 2. Increased level of skills among Aboriginal participants;*
- 3. Enhanced employment situation of Aboriginal participants; and*
- 4. Long-term sustainable employment for Aboriginal people on major economic developments.*

This summative evaluation was based on two main components:

- 1. Evaluation component 1:** The first component consisted of a statistical analysis of program outcomes and incremental impacts for participants under the nine ASEP projects funded in 2003 who completed their participation by December 31, 2007. While these projects were covered by the first summative evaluation of ASEP, an assessment of their incremental impacts was not conducted due to the short post-program period. In addition, at the time of undertaking the current evaluation, only the participants in these projects had ended their participation early enough to allow the assessment of incremental impacts. A limited cost-benefit analysis was also conducted on participants in these nine projects using the incremental impact results. Evaluation component 1 covered the period 2003 to end of 2007.
- 2. Evaluation component 2:** The second component includes an examination of program relevance, success, costs as well as a follow-up on findings from the previous formative and summative evaluations and a data assessment. The assessment of success and costs as well as the data assessment focused on the 2007 and 2009 projects. The examination of program relevance and the follow-up on finding from previous formative and summative evaluations cover projects from 2003, 2007 and 2009. Overall, the evaluation component 2 focussed on the period 2003 to October 2011. More details on the periods covered by each lines of evidence are provided in the methodology section.

It is noted that the evaluation did not cover the entire program period as ASEP terminated on March 31, 2012.

2.2 Evaluation Issues and Questions

Issues and questions addressed by the evaluation are listed in the table below.

Table 3: Evaluation Issues and Questions	
Relevance	
Q1.	Is there a continued need for the program?
Q2.	To what extent does ASEP reflect broad federal government Aboriginal policy?
Success	
Q3.	To what extent did the ASEP participation result in enduring benefits for participants in the nine initial projects?
Q4.	To what extent are ASEP participants satisfied with the services and program received?
Q5.	To what extent has ASEP resulted in skills enhancement and work experience opportunities for program participants?
Q6.	To what extent has participation in ASEP resulted in reduced barriers to employment for ASEP participants and increased their ability to participate in the community?
Q7.	To what extent did participation in ASEP increased the ability of program participants to compete in the labour market and obtain and maintain employment?
Q8.	To what extent has the ASEP entity and its partners increased the level of Aboriginal employment in the major economic development project(s) identified in the funding agreement/project proposal?
Q9.	To what extent have ASEP contributions increased the ability of partners to provide employment training to the Aboriginal population and to address employment barriers these individuals are facing?
Q10.	What innovations in human resource development, skill development and training initiatives have resulted from utilizing a collaborative approach?
Q11.	To what extent have the projects utilized a collaborative approach to comprehensive Aboriginal training and employment plans that link skills development with specific job opportunities?
Q12.	To what extent have industry partner workplaces changed due to involvement with ASEP?
Q13.	How has partners' understanding of industry changed due to utilizing a collaborative approach?
Q14.	To what extent have ASEP projects contributed to establishing sustainable partnerships? What are the best practices and lessons learned in terms of sustaining partnerships?
Q15.	How has the ASEP experience influenced current and future labour market programming for Aboriginal people?
Cost Effectiveness	
Q16.	Are ASEP projects cost effective from the individual, social and government perspective?
Q17.	How do the costs of ASEP funded projects compare to other similar programs for Aboriginal people?
Other Questions	
Q18.	To what extent have ASEP projects leveraged additional investments from project partners?
Q19.	How has this program worked within the suite of other HRSDC and Federal Government programs?
Follow-up on issues identified in previous formative and summative evaluations	
Q20.	To what extent have the issues identified in the previous formative and summative evaluations been addressed?

2.3 Evaluation Methodology

The summative evaluation relied on multiple lines of evidence and was conducted using the following quantitative and qualitative methods:

Evaluation component 1: Net impact and cost-benefit analysis of 2003 ASEP projects

Statistical analysis of outcomes and incremental impacts for participants in the 2003 ASEP projects: A statistical analysis of key labour market outcomes and incremental impacts was conducted on participants who received Employment Benefits (EBs)⁶ under the nine ASEP projects funded in 2003 who ended their participation by December 31, 2007. Outcomes and impacts were measured using ASEP participant data linked to data from the EI Databank and the Canada Revue Agency. The incremental impact analysis relied on quasi-experimental methods. It was carried out using multiple statistical tests and procedures, including Inverse Propensity Weighting, kernel matching, and difference-in-differences. More details on the methodology used are provided in Section 3.2.1.2 of the report.

Cost-benefit analysis: A limited cost-benefit analysis has been undertaken for the 2003 ASEP projects using the incremental impact estimates as well as participant counts and program expenditure.

Evaluation component 2: Examination of other evaluation issues with focus on success, cost analysis and data assessment for the 2007 and 2009 projects

Document review: Federal government and ASEP program documentation was reviewed to address most of the evaluation questions related to relevance, success and cost-effectiveness. The document review includes documents on 2003, 2007 and 2009 projects.

⁶ Employment benefits include a single or a combination of programs and services similar to Skills Development, Targeted Wage Subsidies, Self-employment and Job Creation Partnership of the *EI Act*. This category excludes individuals who received **only** programs and services similar to Employment Assistance Services.

Key informant interviews: Key informant interviews gathered in-depth information, including opinions, explanations and examples regarding program success and other evaluation questions. In total, 96 interviews were completed between August and October 2011 with the following types of key informants. Key informants were from the 27 organisations funded in 2003, 2007 and 2009:

- 20 ASEP project representatives;
- 17 Aboriginal partners;
- 20 industry partners;
- 18 training partners;
- 11 other stakeholders;
- 5 HRSDC program representatives; and
- 5 Aboriginal partners from closed out projects funded in 2003. These were interviewed in order to obtain input on the sustainability of the ASEP partnership following the conclusion of ASEP funding.

Data assessment: An assessment of the participant case management data from 21 out of the 22 projects funded in 2007 and 2009 was conducted in order to examine the completeness, integrity, and quality of ASEP administrative data; the data collection process at the project level; and uploading to the HRSDC database (Standard Data File). It also aimed to determine the extent to which the data improved following the last formative and summative evaluations. The assessment was carried out between August 2011 and February 2012 and involved the following components:

- Site visits of 15 ASEP projects, which involved interviewing staff in order to obtain a better understanding of the processes in place to serve participants for case management and financial data recording;
- Examination and comparison of hard copy files with data in the project's electronic case management systems for a random sample of 20 participants from 20 of the 21 projects;
- Comparison of counts of participants, interventions and action plan results generated from the project's case management system to similar counts generated from HRSDC's Standard Data File;
- Document review; and
- Interviews with HRSDC staff familiar with ASEP data collection and reporting processes and staff responsible for updating HRSDC's Standard Data File and reporting on results.

Participant survey: A survey was conducted with participants in the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects who received programs and services between 2007 and the end of 2010. Interviews were mainly conducted by phone but respondents also had the option of completing the questionnaire online. The survey was administered between December 2 and 20, 2011 and January 3 and 20, 2012, which is approximately 12 to 30 months after the respondents ended their participation in ASEP. Interviews were offered in English and French, as well as in Inuktitut for participants from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

The initial survey sample included 6,811 ASEP participants; however contact information was available on file for only 5,984 individuals. Of these, 4,591 participants had valid telephone contact information following efforts to find new telephone numbers where the number on file was found to be either not in service or invalid. Therefore, 2,220 cases (or 33%) of the initial sample had either no contact information or inaccurate contact information. Of the valid sample of 4,591 individuals, there were 1,002 cooperative contacts, including 769 completed interviews and 233 respondents who did not consider themselves to be eligible to complete the questionnaire. In spite of the intensive efforts made to reach participants (e.g. sending advance letters including a URL and PIN to complete the survey online, tracking of all invalid numbers and making up to 15 call-backs), the final survey response rate was 22%. This is considerably lower than the rate from the previous ASEP summative evaluation, which was 49.5%.

The response rate was calculated by dividing the total cooperative contacts by the total eligible contacts. The total eligible contacts are equal to the total number of participants in the database minus those without contact information or with invalid contact information or who had moved ($6,811 - 2,220 = 4,591$). The total cooperative contacts include survey respondents and individuals who were not eligible to complete the survey ($769 + 233 = 1,002$).

Statistical analysis of administrative data for the 2007 and 2009 participants: A statistical analysis of the pre-, in- and early post-program labour market experience of participants in the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects was conducted using participants' data transferred to HRSDC and data from the Employment Insurance (EI) Databank and the Canada Revenue Agency.

2.4 Evaluation Strengths, Limitations and Challenges

Timing of the key informant interviews: The key informant interviews were held shortly after ASEP partners and other stakeholders had been informed that ASEP would sunset as of March 31, 2012 and during the period when projects were undergoing close out procedures. During the interviews, a significant number of the key informants expressed their dismay at the termination of ASEP and commented that it was an exceptionally effective Aboriginal employment program model. It is clear that the timing of the interviews influenced the largely positive opinions of these key informants regarding the ASEP program.

Survey response rate: A very low response rate was achieved for the participant survey. In an attempt to obtain a sample as representative as possible, some weighting was implemented to account for the small sample. However, there may have been a systematic bias in the types of individuals who responded to the survey that affected their perceptions of the program and/or employment outcomes. Administrative data were used, when available, to confirm the survey results. For example, the descriptive analysis of outcomes for the 2007 and 2009 participants which was based on administrative data confirms the increases in employment earnings reported by the survey respondents.

Survey reference period and recall bias: Participants who were selected for the survey received programs and services between 2007 and the end of 2010. As the survey took place in December 2011 and January 2012, it was conducted between 12 and 30 months after the end of participation, which provided time for the respondents to participate in the labour market and experience outcomes. However, participants' recall and perceptions of experiences and outcomes may have been affected by the length of time between their ASEP participation and the survey. Again as noted above, administrative data were used, when available, to confirm the survey results. For example, the descriptive analysis of outcomes for the 2007 and 2009 participants which was based on administrative data confirms the increases in employment earnings reported by the survey respondents.

Limited post program period for the descriptive statistical analysis of outcomes for participants in the 2007 and 2009 projects: At the time of the evaluation, data on earnings from the Canada Revenue Agency were available up to the end of 2009. Consequently, earnings information was only available for one complete year following the end of participation for a sample of 406 participants among the 7,081 who received programs and services under the 2007 and 2009 projects covered by the evaluation. Therefore, the findings from the descriptive analysis of outcomes may not be generalizable to the entire population of all ASEP participants in the 2007 and 2009 projects.

Strength of the approach used for the incremental impact analysis: First, the matching of participants and non-participants was based on a number of characteristics, including discrete geographic areas using three-digit postal code information. Combined with the use of techniques such as Inverse Propensity Weighting and kernel matching, the matching process led to the creation of reference groups closely matched to the ASEP participants in terms of their background characteristics. Secondly, the assessment of multiple comparison case options allowed the evaluation team to test the sensitivity of the findings to the selection of the reference group and provided greater confidence in the results. Thirdly, the analysis was carried out using administrative data from the EI Databank and the Canada Revenue Agency, which provided complete information on employment earnings and EI receipt for all participants and comparison cases. Compared to survey data, the administrative data are not subject to limitations related to response rates, potential self-selection biases and recall errors. Finally, given the limited number of cases for the participants and comparison/reference groups, it was possible to use all available participants or comparison cases in the analysis. This improved the evaluation team's ability to obtain good matches between participants and comparison cases and greatly enhanced the statistical power of the incremental impact estimation methodology.

Limitations and context related to the incremental impact analysis: Despite the efforts made to match the comparison cases as closely as possible to the participants, it is never known how effective this strategy is for accurately estimating the incremental impacts of programs. There may have been pre-existing differences between the participants and comparison cases that influenced the outcomes and that were not measured in the matching process. For example, data on factors such as skills and motivation to seek employment were not directly measured except to the extent they were captured in prior income. That being said, the use of different estimation techniques and different reference

groups increased the confidence in the findings. Also, the EI and earnings patterns in the pre-program period on which there were complete data could be used with confidence as a proxy for the pre-existing differences. However, one cannot conclusively state that the incremental impact findings were not influenced by pre-existing differences between the participants and the reference groups.

As context around the analysis conducted, it is noted that it was only possible to conduct the incremental impact analysis on the 2003 ASEP projects since only those had a sufficient number of participants with three or more years of post-program outcome information. Given that 36 projects were funded under ASEP between 2007 and 2009, readers should keep in mind that it is not known how the nine projects covered by this analysis are representative of the newer projects. It is also noted that it was not possible to segment the incremental impact analysis by type of EBs provided under ASEP as the coding of interventions was not reliable enough to allow for an adequate categorisation of interventions taken. The issue with the coding of interventions under the 2003 projects is well documented in the previous formative and summative evaluations of ASEP.

Finally, the net impact analysis covered participants who ended their participation between 2004 and 2007. Given that at the time of the evaluation, Canada Revenue Agency data were available up to December 2009, two to five years of post-program data were available for the net impact analysis. However, the number of Action Plan Equivalents⁷ completed in 2004 and 2005 and for which four and five years of post-program data was available, was too small to be representative of the overall sample of Action Plan Equivalents covered by the analysis. Specifically, of the 2,574 Action Plan Equivalents covered by the analysis, 12 ended in 2004 and 475 ended in 2005. As a result, in order to ensure the results were representative of the covered sample, net impacts were measured over three years following the program start year. Previous research has shown that the impacts of EBs are such that it may take five or more years before the benefits outweigh the costs of delivering the program. Three years is a relatively short time to measure the impacts of training and related interventions. Readers should keep this in mind when looking at the results.

⁷ Action Plan Equivalents are the unit of analysis. These regroup all programs and services received by an individual within no more than six months of each other.

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance

Q1. Is there a continued need for the program?

There is an ongoing need for Aboriginal labour market programming, similar to ASEP, that help to address systematic barriers which impede the full participation of Aboriginal people in the labour market, particularly in major economic development projects.

The documentation reviewed confirmed that Aboriginal people have the potential to be an important supply of workers for the Canadian labour market. However, Aboriginal individuals face significant labour market barriers. Programs that aim to address these barriers can contribute to facilitate the participation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian labour market.

Aboriginal people, on average, have higher unemployment rates (14.8% compared to 6.3% for the general population),⁸ lower individual incomes (30% lower than the \$35,872 for the rest of Canadians), and lower levels of education than the general population.⁹ As a result, more than twice as many Aboriginal Canadians live in poverty as compared to non-Aboriginal Canadians.¹⁰ In this respect, the data analyses conducted for the evaluation confirmed the very low level of employment earnings of ASEP participants from the 2007 and 2009 projects prior to their participation in ASEP programs and services. On average, these participants received \$14,019 in employment earnings in the year before their participation in ASEP. Fifty-eight percent of them earned less than \$10,000 during the same period of time.

An important portion of the employment rate gap and lower wage rates of Aboriginal individuals has been attributed to lower educational attainment among the Aboriginal population than among the non-Aboriginal population.¹¹ It has also been found that while education reduces the employment rate gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the gaps persist at all education levels.¹² Specifically, the Auditor General has observed that the lack of basic education and skills has been consistently identified as a principal

⁸ Statistics Canada, Census 2006.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wilson, D. & Macdonald, D. (April 8, 2010). *The Income Gap between Aboriginal Peoples and the Rest of Canada*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

¹¹ Centre for the Study of Living Standards. (2009). *The effect of increasing Aboriginal educational attainment on the labour force, output and the fiscal balance*.

¹² Statistics Canada. (2007). *Aboriginal people living off-reserve and the labour market: Estimates from the labour force survey*.

barrier to improving economic conditions in Aboriginal communities.¹³ Job-readiness of residents of Aboriginal communities, and particularly the need to improve literacy and essential skills development and industry-specific job training responsive to the needs of the private sector, was underlined as a pressing issue in the consultations conducted as part of developing a new federal framework for Aboriginal economic development.¹⁴

From an assets perspective, Aboriginal people represent an important supply of workers for current and projected skill shortages. In 2006, it was estimated that 400,000 Aboriginal people will reach an age to enter the labour market over the next ten years, representing a significant opportunity to help meet Canada's long-term demand for workers.¹⁵ Aboriginal people are approximately two times more likely to be employed in natural resources and are also somewhat more represented in construction, among other sectors – these are both areas of focus for ASEP projects.¹⁶ For example, the mining industry, which is the focus of 8 of the 31 ASEP projects included in this evaluation, has projected a labour shortage of 100,000 workers by 2020.¹⁷ According to the Mining Industry Human Resources Council's *Canadian mining industry employment and hiring forecasts 2011*, challenges relating to human resources are one of the largest threats to the future competitiveness of the Canadian mining industry and “[...] *Aboriginal engagement is also crucial since Aboriginal communities represent a large source of labour close to a significant number of mining operations.*”¹⁸

Q2. To what extent does ASEP reflect broad federal government Aboriginal policy?

ASEP reflected broad federal government Aboriginal Policy. The Skills and Partnership Fund established under the 2010-2015 Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy has the provisions to support ASEP-like projects that will continue to support federal government Aboriginal policy directions in the future.

Various policy documents articulate the federal government's commitment to enhance the well-being of Aboriginal Canadians through measures designed to enable them to participate in the labour market. As an example, in 2006, the Government of Canada stated in *Advantage Canada* its intention to bolster programs that are specifically focused on enabling Aboriginal Canadians to participate in the labour market and specifically made

¹³ Government of Canada. (2010). *2010 Spring report of the Auditor General of Canada*.

¹⁴ INAC. (2009). *Toward a new federal framework for Aboriginal economic development: Regional and national engagement sessions – Thematic summary*.

¹⁵ M. Mendelson (2006). *Aboriginal Peoples and Post Secondary Education (PSE) in Canada*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Mining Industry Human Resources Council. (2011). *HR prospector*. July.

¹⁸ Mining Industry Human Resources Council. (2011). *Canadian mining industry employment and hiring forecasts 2011*.

reference to ASEP.¹⁹ The *Speech from the Throne* from 2006 to 2008, as well as the *Budget* from 2007 to 2010 also referenced the Government's commitment to enhancing the well-being of Aboriginal people in Canada, in particular through skills training and economic development.

Budget 2009 identified fostering partnerships as an essential element of Aboriginal training efforts. The *Budget* from 2007 to 2010 specifically referenced the ASEP program. The 2008 *Budget* speech noted that “close to 16,000 aboriginal people are taking advantage of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership Program, which helps them receive trades training and secure sustainable skilled jobs in the north and across Canada.”²⁰ Finally, in *Budget 2012*, the federal government committed to expanding opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to fully participate in the economy. The government identified as a priority the provision of skills and opportunities by investing in education, renovating schools, encouraging training for income assistance recipients and renewing the Urban Strategy.

In addition, “Developing Aboriginal Human Capital” by supporting demand-driven labour market development as well as leveraging investment and promoting partnerships with the private sector figured among the strategic priorities of the 2009 *Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development*. The document *Toward a New Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development* indicated that the Government of Canada had promised (through the new framework) to adopt a “whole-of-government” approach to Aboriginal economic development that would guide federal policy-making and program development.²¹ Similarly, *Canada's Northern Strategy* highlighted the need to support the development of skills and knowledge of Aboriginal persons in the North, and specifically referenced the ASEP program in this regard.

In the context of ASEP termination, it is noted that SPF has a similar objective to ASEP of encouraging innovation and partnerships to increase Aboriginal skills development and participation in the labour market. In addition, ASETS has similarities with ASEP as it requires funded organizations to form partnerships with employers to deliver demand-driven skills training programs. ASEP differed from these two programs in its targeted focus on major resource development projects in specific sectors.

¹⁹ Advantage Canada, (p. 49).

²⁰ Government of Canada. (2008). *Budget speech*.

²¹ INAC. (2009). *Toward a new federal framework for Aboriginal economic development: Regional and national engagement sessions – Thematic summary*.

3.2 Success

A. Evaluation Component 1: Outcomes and Impacts of 2003 ASEP Projects

3.2.1 *Outcomes and incremental impacts from participating in the 2003 ASEP projects*

The following section presents findings from the statistical descriptive analysis of outcomes and the assessment of incremental impacts for EB participants under the 2003 ASEP projects.

Q3. To what extent did the ASEP participation result in enduring benefits for participants in the nine initial projects?

3.2.1.1 *Descriptive analysis of outcomes before and after participation*

The descriptive analysis aims to generate basic understanding of the key labour market outcomes experienced by ASEP participants before, during, and after their participation. The outcomes assessed are the following:

- Mean employment earnings;
- Incidence of employment (i.e. percent of participants with employment earnings);
- Use of EI: mean EI benefits received; mean number of weeks spent on EI; and proportion of participants receiving EI benefits; and
- Use of Social Assistance: mean Social Assistance benefits received; percent of participants receiving Social Assistance benefits.²²

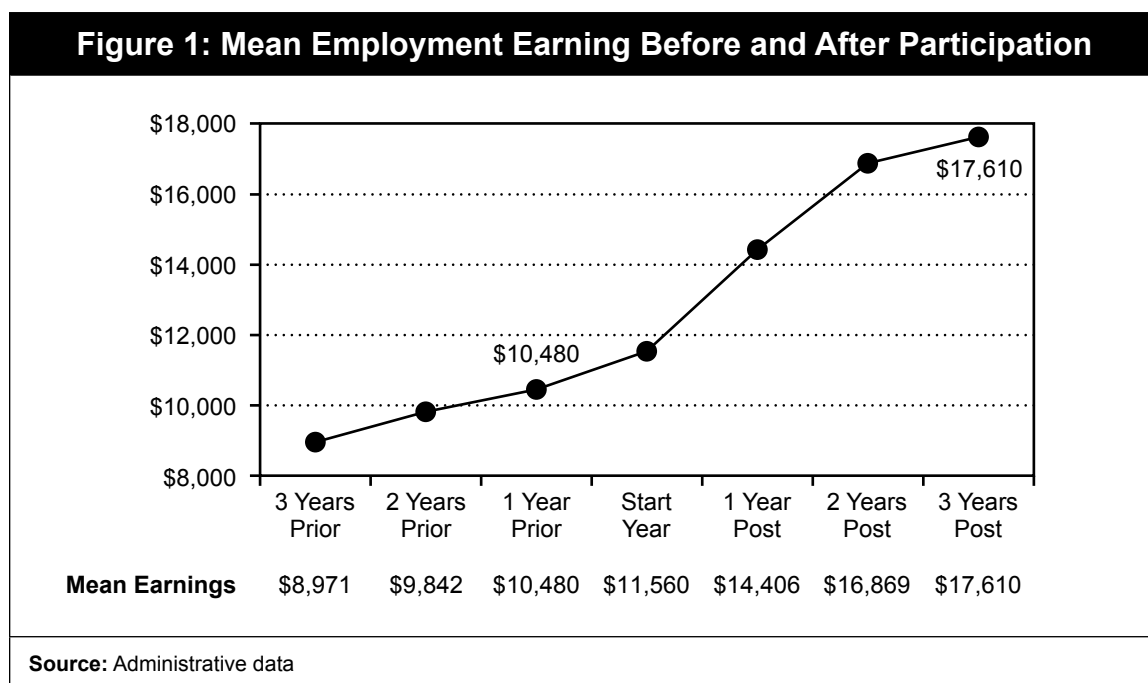
The findings presented in the following section pertain to participants in all nine projects combined. However, important variations were found in outcomes experienced by participants across various projects. Breakdowns of the outcomes by project are presented in Annex A.

²² Information on Social Assistance came from the Canada Revenue Agency T1 file, meaning that this information was missing for individuals who did not file a tax report in a given year. Typically, fewer than 20% of individuals in the analysis were missing information on Social Assistance in a given year. As a consequence, the outcome results pertaining to use of Social Assistance may be underestimated. In the context of the incremental impact analysis, it should be noted that this information was missing for both the participants and the non-participants. Therefore, the direction of the incremental impacts was not influenced by the missing data, although these results may also be underestimated. Finally, it should be noted that this situation does not apply to information on employment earnings. Data on this variable were pulled from the T4 files, which are filed by employers and are available for all individuals who were employed in a given year.

Employment earnings and incidence of employment before and after participation

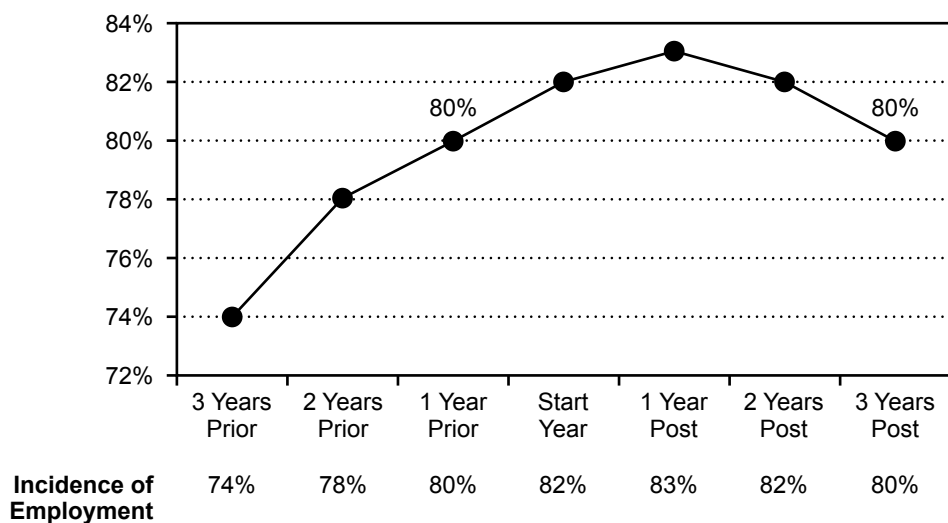
Between the first year before their ASEP participation and the third year following the start of their participation, the employment earnings of ASEP participants increased by \$7,130 while the incidence of employment remained stable. These findings provide indications that ASEP was likely more effective at improving the employment earnings of participants than increasing the number of individuals entering into paid employment.

As shown in Figure 1, earnings for the participants in the 2003 ASEP projects (n=2,574) increased substantially from the year prior to participation to the third year after the start of participation (i.e. a gain of \$7,130 or 68%). Although the increase was large, the average employment earnings three years after the start of participation were \$17,610, which is relatively low compared to the median individual total income in Canada estimated by Statistics Canada at \$29,250.



The incidence of employment earnings of participants in the 2003 ASEP projects (i.e. 2,574 participants) is presented in Figure 2. Overall, the incidence of employment increased modestly between the first year before participation (80%) and the first year following the start of participation (83%) and decreased to approximately 80% in the third year following the beginning of participation. In light of this, it appears that the large gain in employment earnings described above was mainly due to an increase in employment earnings of participants rather than an increase in the number of participants entering into paid employment.

Figure 2: Incidence of Employment Before and After Participation



Source: Administrative data

Use of EI and Social Assistance

There were modest increases in the use of EI and Social Assistance by ASEP participants between the year preceding their participation and the third year following the start of their participation.

The use of EI benefits increased modestly in absolute dollars after participation in ASEP, from \$1,652 in the first year before participation to \$2,039 in the third year following the start of participation, an increased use of \$387.

Table 4: Use of EI and Social Assistance Benefits								
	Pre-Program Period			Program Period		Post-Program Period		n =
	3 years prior	2 years prior	1 year prior	Start year	1 year post	2 years post	3 years post	
Mean EI benefits	\$1,383	\$1,500	\$1,652	\$1,634	\$1,824	\$1,719	\$2,039	2,574
Mean number of weeks on EI	4.7 weeks	5.0 weeks	5.4 weeks	5.1 weeks	5.5 weeks	4.9 weeks	5.6 weeks	2,574
Proportion of participants with EI benefits	22.4%	23.4%	24.2%	25.1%	25.5%	24.5%	26.7%	2,574
Mean Social Assistance benefits	\$580	\$523	\$480	\$490	\$532	\$626	\$650	2,180
Proportion of participants with Social Assistance benefits	15.6%	13.5%	13.2%	12.6%	13.3%	13.8%	13.4%	2,180
Source: Administrative data								

As shown in Table 4, the mean number of weeks spent on EI increased very slightly from the year before participation (5.4 weeks) to the third year following the beginning of participation (5.6 weeks). The overall proportion of participants who were receiving EI benefits also increased slightly in the post-program period (i.e. 3 percentage points) going from 24% in the year prior to program start to 27% in the third year following the program start year.

The use of Social Assistance benefits increased by \$170 between the year prior to program participation and the third year following the start of participation (i.e. from \$480 to \$650). While this increase in absolute dollars is modest, it equated to an increase of 35% since the average amount of Social Assistance benefits received in the year prior to participation was very small. The proportion of participants receiving SA benefits virtually did not change; it moved from 13.2% in the year prior to participation to 13.4% three years after the program start year.

3.2.1.2 Incremental impact estimates

Approach used to estimate incremental impacts

An analysis of incremental impacts was conducted to determine the difference participating in EBs offered under the 2003 ASEP projects made on key labour market outcomes of participants in comparison to those who received minimal employment services or no employment programs or services. In other words, the incremental impact is the difference between 1) the change in a particular labour market outcome experienced by ASEP EB participants between a pre- and a post-participation period and 2) the change in the same labour market outcome experienced by members of the reference group between the same pre- and post-participation periods.

Impacts were measured for all types of EBs combined. The unit of analysis was the Action Plan Equivalents rather than a single intervention. Action Plan Equivalents regrouped a single EB or a group of EBs taken by a single individual within no more than six months of each other.

The incremental impacts were measured over four years (i.e. the year in which the participation started and the following 3 years) and for the following key labour market outcome indicators:

- Mean annual employment earnings;
- Annual incidence of employment (i.e. proportion of participants with earnings from employment);
- Mean annual EI benefits received; and
- Mean annual SA benefits received.

Two different techniques were used to match the reference group members to ASEP participants: Inverse Propensity Weighting and kernel matching. However, only impacts measured with the Inverse Propensity Weighting model are reported in this report.²³ Reference group members were also selected from the core labour market areas in which each of the 2003 ASEP projects were located using three digit postal codes in order to ensure that both ASEP participants and reference group members were in the same labour markets.

Results presented in this section were assessed using two different reference groups. It was not possible to create a comparison group entirely composed of individuals who did not receive any employment services or programs. Therefore, the two reference groups used were mainly composed of Aboriginal individuals who received limited services under ASEP or another program. Net impacts relative to these reference groups indicate what results can be attributed to participating in EBs (intensive intervention) under ASEP relative to receiving a limited treatment or minimal service. In all cases, the reference group members

²³ Results from the kernel matching and inverse propensity weighting models are both presented in the draft technical report on incremental impact analysis. This report is available upon request.

were selected from the core labour market areas in which each of the 2003 ASEP projects were located using three digit postal codes in order to ensure that both ASEP participants and reference group members were in the same labour markets.

The first reference group was composed of Aboriginal individuals who received Employment Assistance Services (EAS) under the AHRDAs, which covered six of the nine ASEP projects since it has not been possible to find a sufficient number of AHRDA EAS only participants to match ASEP EB participants in the geographic areas covered by NWT Diamond Mining, NWT Oil and Gas, and Manitoba Hydro projects. The second reference group used comprised Aboriginal individuals who received EAS under ASEP, AHRDAs and the Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) plus Aboriginal individuals who received EI benefits but no employment services or programs. This group covered all nine ASEP projects.

Results from the analysis are presented in the following section. As well, for each outcome indicator measured, there is a short discussion on how ASEP incremental results compare to incremental results found in the summative evaluation of AHRDA. This aims to help the readers to obtain an appreciation of the impacts of two major HRSDC Aboriginal employment programs.

Employment earnings

Participants had a gain in employment earnings (i.e., cumulative incremental increase in the \$3,567 to \$5,170 range). This gain was stronger for participants in ASEP projects focused on a specific industrial development (i.e., cumulative incremental increase of \$8,459).

As shown in Table 5, relative to the AHRDA EAS only reference group, the ASEP EB participants had statistically significant increases in their annual employment earnings of \$1,267 in the first year, \$2,257 in the second year, and \$2,060 in the third year following the start year of participation. This equated to a statistically significant cumulative impact of \$5,170 over four years (i.e. year of participation start to the following third year).

Incremental impacts assessed relative to the ASEP, AHRDA, LMDA EAS only plus EI only reference groups were somewhat lower. ASEP EB participants had a statistically significant decrease in their employment earnings of -\$1,204 in the start year of participation but had statistically significant gains of \$1,631 in the first year, \$1,343 in the second year and \$1,797 in the third year following the year in which they began their participation. This represented a cumulative statistically significant gain of \$3,567 over four years.

Table 5: Incremental Impacts on Mean Employment Earnings					
Reference Groups Used to Estimate Impacts	Program Period		Post-Program Period		Cumulative
	Start year	1 year post	2 years post	3 years post	
AHRDA EAS only (limited number of projects)	-\$415	\$1,267*	\$2,257**	\$2,060*	\$5,170**
ASEP/AHRDA/LMDA EAS only plus EI only (all projects)	-\$1,204*	\$1,631***	\$1,343***	\$1,797***	\$3,567***
Source: Administrative data Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001					

Using the reference group of ASEP, AHRDA, LMDA EAS only plus EI only, a segmented analysis of incremental impacts on earnings was conducted for EB participants in projects with site/industrial project focus²⁴ (e.g. ASEP projects focusing on a specific industrial development such as a mine) versus projects with a broader industry focus²⁵ (e.g. ASEP projects focusing on an industry such as construction or forestry). Participants in ASEP projects with site/industrial project focus had statistically significant incremental impacts on their annual employment earnings of \$2,660 in the first year, \$2,203 in the second year and \$3,935 in the third year following the participation start year. This led to a statistically significant cumulative impact of \$8,459 over the four years following the start of participation. Incremental impacts estimated for participants in the ASEP projects with broad industry focus followed a different pattern. These participants had a statistically significant decrease of -\$1,264 in the year they began their participation and a statistically significant gain of \$1,272 in the following year. Estimates for all other years, as well as for the cumulative period, were non-significant.

Overall, the positive incremental impacts found on the employment earnings of ASEP participants were generally within the same range as the positive incremental impacts found in the summative evaluation of AHRDAs. Specifically, the statistically significant incremental impacts found in the AHRDA summative evaluation over the three years following the end of participation ranged between \$1,944 and \$2,308 for active EI claimants and between \$1,040 and \$1,722 for non EI claimants. Former claimants had statistically significant decreases in employment earnings ranging from -\$204 to -\$777 in the three years following the end of participation.

²⁴ ASEP projects with a site/industrial project focus were Alberta Oil Sands; NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas; Manitoba Hydro and Northern Ontario Diamond Mining.

²⁵ ASEP projects with a broad industry focus were Nunavut Fishing Industry; Alberta Construction; VanASEP and NB Forestry.

Incidence of employment

The incidence of employment of ASEP participants increased in all three years following the program start year. The gains in incidence of employment and in earnings indicate an increase in the overall duration of participant's employment.

Table 6 presents the incremental impacts on the incidence of employment. As shown, impacts estimated relative to the AHRDA EAS only reference groups were statistically non-significant in all years. Impacts measured relative to the ASEP/AHRDA/LMDA EAS only plus EI only reference group showed a statistically significant decrease in the incidence of employment of ASEP EB participants in the program start year (-3.6 percentage points) but statistically significant increases in all other years. Gains found were 4.0 percentage points in the first year, 3.0 percentage points in the second year and 2.5 percentage points in the third year following the participation start year.

Table 6: Incremental Impacts on Incidence of Employment					
Reference Groups Used to Estimate Impacts	Program Period		Post-Program Period		Cumulative
	Start year	1 year post	2 years post	3 years post	
AHRDA EAS only (limited number of projects)	-1.8 pp	6.6 pp	9.2 pp	12.5 pp	N/a
ASEP/AHRDA/LMDA EAS only plus EI only (all projects)	-3.6 pp***	4.0 pp***	3.0 pp**	2.5 pp**	N/a
<p>pp = percentage points Source: Administrative data Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001</p>					

The increased incidence of employment found for ASEP participants is also comparable to, if not generally higher than, those found in the AHRDA summative evaluation. The statistically significant gains found for AHRDA participants over the three years following the end of participation ranged from 0.7 to 1.9 percentage points for active EI claimants; 0.6 to 1.9 percentage points for former EI claimants; and 4.1 to 5.7 percentage points for non EI claimants.

EI and Social Assistance benefits

Incremental impacts on use of EI and Social Assistance benefits were mostly statistically non-significant. However an increase in EI use of \$674 was found in the third year following the program start year.

The ASEP/AHRDA/LMDA EAS only plus EI only reference group was found to be an inappropriate counterfactual to measure incremental impacts on use of EI benefits. Therefore, only results measured relative to the AHRDA EAS only reference group are presented in this report. As described in Table 7, ASEP participants had a statistically significant incremental increase of \$647 in the third year following the participation start year. Estimates for all other years were statistically non-significant.

Table 7: Incremental Impacts on Mean EI Benefits and Social Assistance Benefits					
Reference Groups Used to Estimate Impacts	Program Period		Post-Program Period		Cumulative
	Start year	1 year post	2 years post	3 years post	
Incremental impacts on mean EI benefits					
AHRDA EAS only (limited number of projects)	-\$261	-\$116	\$73	\$674***	\$371
Incremental impacts on mean Social Assistance benefits					
AHRDA EAS only (limited number of projects)	-\$99	-\$128	-\$236	-\$72	-\$535
ASEP/AHRDA/LMDA EAS only plus EI only (all projects)	\$35	\$25	-\$79	-\$153	-\$172
Source: Administrative data					
Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001					

Some increases in the use of EI benefits post program were also found in the AHRDA evaluation for former EI claimants and non-EI claimants. In that respect, former claimants had a decrease of -\$151 in the first year following the end of participation but had an increase of \$117 in the third year following the end of participation. Similarly, over the three years following the end of participation, non EI claimants had statistically significant gains ranging from \$111 to \$332. Active EI claimants had statistically significant decreases ranging from -\$146 to -\$225. None of the estimates on use of Social Assistance benefits were statistically significant.

In comparison, the AHRDA summative evaluation found fairly modest statistically significant decreases in the use of Social Assistance benefits by active EI claimants (i.e. -\$28 and -\$43 in the second and third year following the end of participation) and former claimants (-\$36 in the second year post-participation). Non EI claimants also had statistically significant decreases in their use of Social Assistance benefits in all post program years but these were much larger (i.e. between -\$247 and -\$268).

Incremental impacts relative to the AHRDA EBs reference group

ASEP participants had a cumulative incremental gain in employment earnings of \$2,939 relative to AHRDA participants. This shows that the ASEP approach is more effective than the AHRDA approach for increasing the employment earnings of participants.

Incremental impacts of receiving EBs under the 2003 ASEP projects were also assessed using a reference group composed of Aboriginal individuals who received EBs under AHRDAs. The purpose of this analysis was to measure the value added of the ASEP approach. Precisely, the analysis aimed to test if the particular focus of ASEP on industry, more direct involvement of the private sector in the programming, and matching of program delivery to the labour market produced better outcomes than the delivery model used by AHRDAs, which is less demand driven. For example, a statistically significant positive impact measured relative to the AHRDA EB reference group means that the ASEP approach provided added value compared to the AHRDA delivery approach while no impact means that both programs are equally effective.

The AHRDA EB reference group was matched to ASEP EB participants using both the Inverse Propensity Weighting and the kernel matching techniques. However, only results from the Inverse Propensity Weighting model are presented in this report. AHRDA EB participants were also selected from the same core labour market areas as those in which the 2003 ASEP projects were located. Results were estimated for participants in all nine ASEP projects funded in 2003.

As shown in Table 8, ASEP EB participants had some incremental gains in their annual employment earnings relative to the AHRDA EB reference group. On an annual basis, a statistically significant increase was only found in the year of participation start (i.e. \$1,426); however, the cumulative impact assessed over the four year period showed a statistically significant gain of \$2,939.

In regard to the incidence of employment, ASEP EB participants had a statistically significant decrease of -2.4 percentage points in the participation start year and -2.9 percentage points in the third year following the beginning of participation. Estimates for the other years were statistically non-significant. A statistically significant impact on the mean EI benefits was found only in the program start year (-\$380). None of the estimates on use of Social Assistance benefits were statistically significant. These results provide indications that the ASEP approach was not more effective than the AHRDA approach at increasing the number of participants employed after participation. However, these results provide indications

that the ASEP approach was more effective than the AHRDA approach at helping the participants who worked after participation to improve their employment situation by either getting jobs with better pay or by working more hours than before their participation.

Table 8: Incremental Impacts Relative to the AHRDA EB Reference Group

Indicators	Program Period		Post-Program Period		Cumulative
	Start year	1 year post	2 years post	3 years post	
Mean annual employment earnings	\$1,426***	\$731	\$808	-\$26	\$2,939***
Incidence of employment	-2.4 pp*	-0.4 pp	-1.7 pp	-2.9 pp**	N/a
Mean EI benefits	-\$380***	\$119	-\$80	\$154	-\$188
Mean Social Assistance benefits	-\$13	-\$32	\$3	-\$62	-\$104
Source: Administrative data Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001					

B. Evaluation Component 2 : Outcomes of 2007-2009 ASEP Projects

3.2.2 Outcomes from participating in the 2007 and 2009 projects

The following section presents a profile of participants and interventions under the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects as well as outcomes from participating in these projects.

3.2.2.1 Profile of participants and intervention

Socio-demographic profile

ASEP participants are mainly male, young, single and registered status Indians. Most participants have high school or less as their highest level of education.

Table 9 provides a basic profile of participants by gender, age, marital status, and Aboriginal status based on administrative data. As shown, ASEP participants were, overall, young (63% under age 35) single (68%) and male (76%). Sixty-six percent of participants were registered Status Indians while 12% were Métis and 7% Inuit. Information available in the administrative data did not allow for determining the proportion of participants living on and off reserve.

As complete information on education level of participants was not available from the administrative data, it was collected through the survey, which was completed by 759 participants from the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects. The highest level of education

of the majority of respondents (67%) was high school or less (35% with no high school or some high school and 32% having graduated from high school or having completed high school equivalency). Twenty-one percent of respondents had either some college or a trade certificate/apprenticeship. Eleven percent had either some university, a university degree or professional certificate.

Table 9: Proportion of ASEP Participants by Socio-Demographic Characteristics	
	Total
Gender	
Male	76.0%
Female	24.0%
Total	100.0%
Number of participants (n=)	6,851
Age	
Under 25	30.4%
25 to 34	32.3%
35 to 44	21.7%
45 plus	15.6%
Total	100.0%
Mean age	32.6
Number of participants (n=)	6,752
Marital status	
Married or equivalent	32.5%
Single or equivalent	67.5%
Total	100.0%
Number of participants (n=)	5,142
Aboriginal status	
Registered status Indian	65.7%
Non-status Indian	13.1%
Métis	11.7%
Inuit	6.9%
Non-Aboriginal	2.2%
Aboriginal not specified	0.4%
Total	100.0%
Number of participants (n=)	6,719
Source: Administrative data	

Profile of program and services received (2007–2009 projects)

Programs and services offered by ASEP projects were mainly Skills Development and Employment Assistance Services (respectively received by 63% and 57% of participants). The majority of participants (74%) received at least one EB and their Action Plan Equivalent had an average duration of 2.6 months.

The interventions most frequently received by participants (n=7084) were Skills Development (63%) and Employment Assistance Services (57%). Targeted Wage Subsidies (4%) and Job Creation Partnerships (0.6%) were used infrequently.

The data assessment revealed that most of the ASEP projects reviewed were not actively utilizing the action plan concept. They were typically offering participants one program or service in relation to the industry/occupation targeted by the projects. Therefore, in order to assess the extent to which participants received multiple interventions, all interventions taken by a participant within a 6 month interval of each other were pooled into Action Plan Equivalents.

An assessment of these shows that the majority of participants (76%) received at least one EB such as Skills Development, Targeted Wage Subsidies or Job Creation Partnerships²⁶ while about a quarter (24%) only received EAS. The average length of an Action Plan Equivalent was just over 2 months. The majority (74%) were of 3 months or less in duration while only 9% were longer than 6 months. On average, Action Plan Equivalents with at least one EB were 2.6 months in duration while those with only EAS were less than a month in duration.

²⁶ The employment benefit category includes cases with only employment benefits recorded and cases with EAS and at least one employment benefit.

3.2.2.2 Participant's program experience and perceived effects

- Q4. To what extent are ASEP participants satisfied with the services and program received?**
- Q5. To what extent has ASEP resulted in skills enhancement and work experience opportunities for program participants?**
- Q6. To what extent has participation in ASEP resulted in reduced barriers to employment for ASEP participants and increased their ability to participate in the community?**
-

Satisfaction with programs and services received

The majority of survey respondents (80%) were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the quality of program and services received from ASEP projects

Most of the survey respondents (80%) were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the quality of employment services and programs received from ASEP projects, with an average rating of 3.95 on a 5-point scale. Only 10% of respondents indicated that they had problems accessing the programs or services they needed.

Participation in skills training and work experience opportunities

As part of their participation in ASEP, 77% of survey respondents took a training course and of these, 87% received a diploma. Forty seven percent of survey respondents had work experience with an employer and of these, 54% worked for that same employer for some time after the end of their ASEP participation.

Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents took a training course as part of their participation with the ASEP project and 90% of these stayed until the end of the course. Of the respondents who completed their training, 87% received a diploma. The largest proportion of these respondents received a trade certificate (40%), followed by another certification or diploma not listed in the choice of survey responses (34%) and first aid or safety in the workplace certification (17%).

Forty-seven percent of the survey respondents obtained on-the-job-training or work experience with an employer as part of the programs and services received from ASEP. Of these, 54% worked for the same employer that provided them with the job experience for some time after the end of the ASEP program period, and 32% were still working for that same employer at the time of the survey. Overall, 71% of the respondents said that they would not have been able to obtain this on-the-job-training or work experience without the help of the ASEP project.

Perceived program effects on skills levels, reducing employment barriers and improving quality of life indicators

Most survey respondents thought their participation in ASEP was either quite useful or very useful in terms of providing them with job-related skills, reducing employment barriers and improving quality of life indicators.

The majority of survey respondents found the employment services and programs received from ASEP projects useful in terms of providing them with job-related skills, as well as in helping them to find employment and to improve career planning and various quality of life indicators. The proportion of respondents who reported their participation as being quite useful or very useful for each of the specific outcomes assessed is as follows:

- Providing specific job-related skills: 78%
- Providing skills that could be used for jobs in the industry targeted: 78%
- Increasing self-confidence: 73%
- Increasing motivation to achieve their personal and career goals: 73%
- Increasing sense of optimism about future work possibilities: 71%
- Helping to get further training or education: 67%
- Helping to improve the well-being of family through increased or stabilized income: 66%
- Improving ability or desire to participate in their community: 64%
- Clarifying what kind of career would be best for them: 63%
- Helping to find employment or self-employment: 62%

Table 10: Perceived Usefulness of Programs and Services

	Not Useful	A Little Bit Useful	Quite Useful	Very Useful	Don't Know/ No Response	Total	Mean	n=
Providing you with specific job-related skills	8.8%	11.5%	28.5%	49.8%	1.3%	100%	3.24	628
Providing you with skills you could use for jobs in the targeted industry	10.7%	9.1%	24.6%	53.8%	1.8%	100%	3.27	617
Helping you to get further training or education	14.9%	16.2%	26.0%	41.1%	1.8%	100%	2.99	723
Increasing your self-confidence	10.9%	13.8%	26.2%	46.8%	2.3%	100%	3.16	737
Increasing your motivation to achieve your career and personal goals	11.0%	14.0%	27.5%	45.7%	1.8%	100%	3.13	736
Increasing your sense of optimism about your future work possibilities	10.5%	15.7%	26.4%	44.2%	3.2%	100%	3.14	737
Helping you to improve the well-being of your family (through increased or stable income)	18.0%	14.1%	25.0%	40.6%	2.2%	100%	2.95	722
Improving your ability or desire to participate in your community	15.6%	17.7%	27.2%	36.6%	2.9%	100%	2.94	729
Clarifying what kind of career would be best for you	15.7%	17.4%	26.9%	36.5%	3.5%	100%	2.95	723
Helping find employment or self-employment	19.1%	16.9%	25.0%	36.6%	2.4%	100%	2.86	719

Source: Survey of participants

3.2.2.3 Employment experience post-program

Q7. To what extent did participation in ASEP increased the ability of program participants to compete in the labour market and obtain and maintain employment?

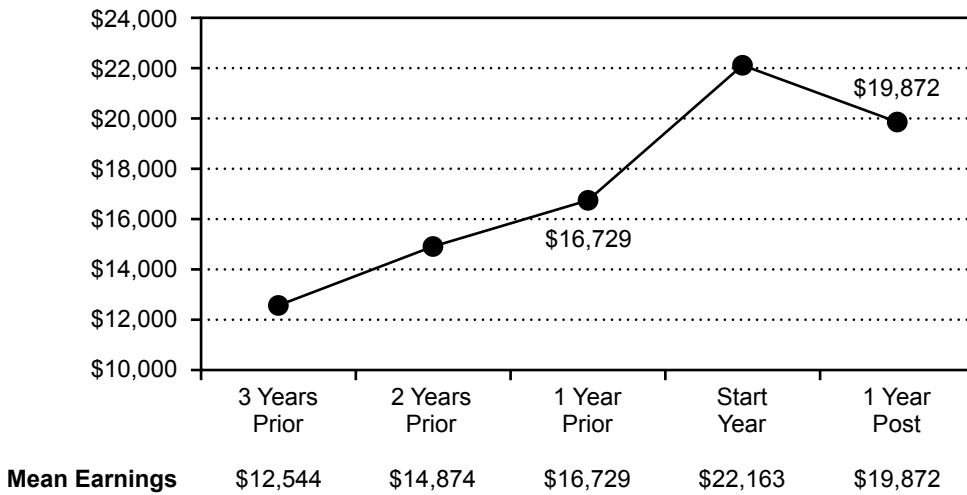
Descriptive statistical analysis of employment outcomes before and after participation

Between the year preceding their ASEP participation and the year following their participation start year, participant's employment earnings increased from \$16,729 to \$19,872 but their incidence of employment decreased slightly, going from 82,70% to 81%. These results also provide indications that ASEP was likely more effective at improving the employment earnings of participants than increasing the number of participants entering into paid employment.

To gain some insight about the employment experiences of participants, a descriptive analysis of the earnings and incidence of employment in the three years preceding participation and the two years following the start of participation was conducted using a sample of 406 participants from the 2007 projects for whom a full year of post program employment earnings data was available at the time of the evaluation.

As shown in Figure 3, participants had gains in their employment earnings of about \$2,000 per year in the period prior to their participation in ASEP. Their employment earnings also rose from \$16,729 in the year prior to participation to \$22,163 in the year of the start of participation, which constitutes an increase of \$5,434. Their average earnings dropped to \$19,872 in the following year; however, this represents a gain of \$3,143 compared to the year prior to their participation.

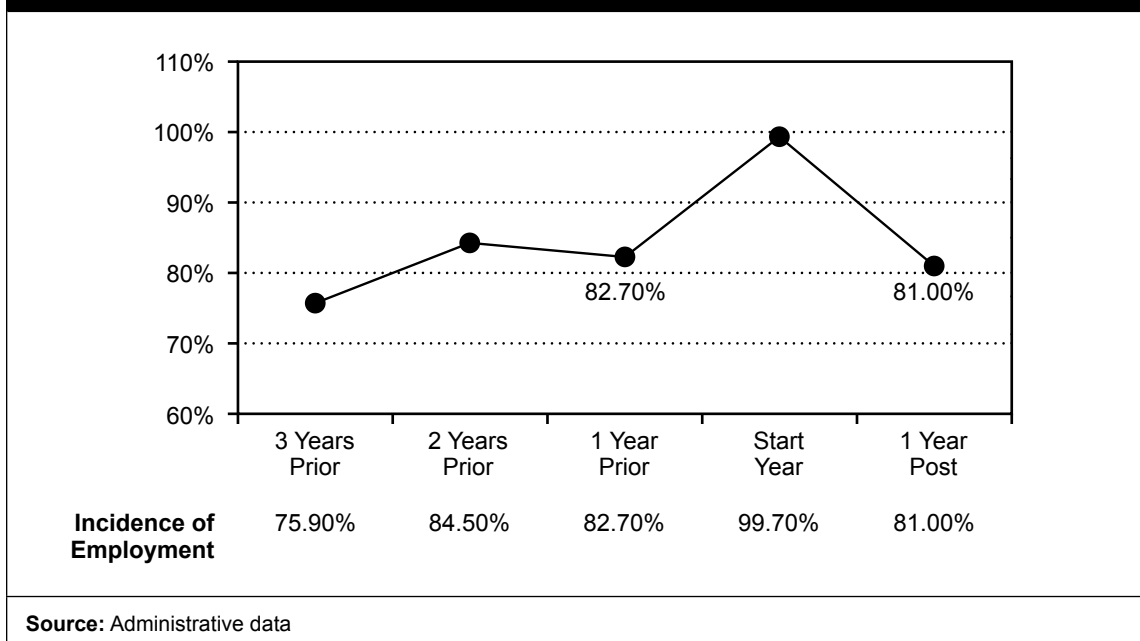
Figure 3: Mean Employment Earnings Before and After Participation
(Limited Sample of 2007 ASEP Project Participants ([n=406])



Source: Administrative data

As indicated in Figure 4, in the year prior to their program participation, 83% of the ASEP participants had employment earnings. This is about two percentage points lower than the previous year (85%) but about seven percentage points higher than the third year prior to participation. The incidence of employment among the participants rose from 83% in the year before participation to nearly 100% in the participation start year. This represents an increase of 17 percentage points. In the subsequent year, the incidence of employment dropped to 81%, two percentage points lower than the year prior to their program participation.

Figure 4: Incidence of Employment Before and After Participation
(Limited Sample of 2007 Project Participants ([n = 406])



Employment experience of survey participants before and after participation

Compared to the year before their ASEP participation, survey respondents spent less time unemployed and on Social Assistance in the 12 month period preceding the survey interview. Their number of hours worked per week, hourly wage and employment income also increased.

Employment outcomes were also measured for survey respondents who were asked about their employment situation before their program participation (i.e. 12 months prior to participation) and after their participation (i.e. 12 months prior to the survey). The change between these two periods was then measured on a number of indicators. There were statistically significant changes in average months unemployed and looking for work, average months unemployed and in school or training, average months receiving social assistance, average hours per week worked, average hourly wage for the last job worked, and average total employment income.

As shown in Table 11, on average the survey respondents increased their employment from an average of 6.6 months in the 12 month period preceding their participation to 7.0 months in the 12 month period before the survey. The average number of months spent unemployed decreased from 5.4 to 5.0 months. Respondents also reduced the number of months spent unemployed and waiting to be called back to work from 1.6 months to 1.5 months. The change measured on these three outcome indicators was statistically non-significant.

The time spent unemployed and looking for work decreased by -0.7 months from 3.5 months to 2.8 months. The average number of months spent in school or training was also reduced by -0.3 months from 1.1 months to 0.8 months. The average time spent on Social Assistance decreased by -0.3 months, going from 1.5 months to 1.3 months. Similarly, the average amount of Social Assistance benefits received decreased from \$907 to \$747, which represents a reduction of \$93.

Respondents who were employed worked an average of 42 hours per week in the last job held during the year preceding participation and an average of 47 hours per week in the last job they had in the year preceding the survey. This represents a gain of 5 hours per week. Their hourly wage also increased by \$2.92, going from \$18.44 to \$21.33. Similarly, they increased their total employment income from \$20,107 to \$24,668, which represents an increase of \$3,883.

Table 11: Change in Employment Status from Pre-Program to Post-Program

	Status Pre-Program (12 months before participation)	Status Post-Program (12 months before survey)	Average Change in Employment Status
Employment			
Months employed (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	6.6 692	7.0 720	0.4 664
Months unemployed (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	5.4 692	5.0 720	-0.4 664
Months unemployed and waiting for call back to work (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	1.6 688	1.5 707	-0.1 650
Months unemployed and looking for work (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	3.5 709	2.8 716	-0.7*** 675
Months unemployed and in school or training (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	1.1 709	0.8 721	-0.3** 681
Social Assistance			
Months receiving social assistance (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	1.5 712	1.3 724	-0.3* 686
Total amount of Social Assistance received prior (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	\$907 689	\$747 708	-\$93 370
Hours and pay			
Hours per week worked in last job (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	42.4 552	47.3 616	4.9*** 489
Hourly wage in last job (average) <i>Number of Respondents</i>	\$18.44 531	\$21.33 558	\$2.92*** 450
Total employment income (average)	\$20,107	\$24,668	\$3,883***
Number of Respondents	456	491	370
Source: Survey of participants Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001			

Survey respondents (n=653) were also asked questions about the characteristics of the longest job they had in the 12 months preceding the survey. In their longest job, 94% of respondents were working for an employer as opposed to working for themselves and 38% of respondents were in seasonal employment. In terms of occupations, the largest percentage of respondents reported that this job was as a skilled labourer (28%), followed by apprenticed trade (26%) and semi-skilled or unskilled labourer (15%).

Eighty-five percent of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied (mean rating 4.25) with the longest job they held over the 12 months before the survey. About half of the respondents (49%) rated the employment services and programs provided to them by ASEP projects as either very important or quite important in helping them get this job (mean rating 3.23), although 27% of respondents indicated that the employment services and programs received from the ASEP projects were not at all important in helping them get their longest job.

3.2.3 ASEP participant employment in the major economic development projects

3.2.3.1 Achievement of targets set out in the contribution agreements

Q8. To what extent has the ASEP entity and its partners increased the level of Aboriginal employment in the major economic development project(s) identified in the funding agreement/project proposal?

Overall, the 2003, 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects covered by the evaluation exceeded their targets in terms of number of participants served and number of participants employed.

In their contribution agreements, each of the ASEP projects set out targets with respect to the number of participants they were expecting to serve over the funding period and the number of participants they were expecting to return to employment or self-employment after receiving ASEP employment services and programs.

All of the nine projects funded in 2003 closed by March 31, 2009. Over the funding period, five of these nine projects did not meet their target for participants served and four did not meet their target for clients employed. However, overall, the target for participants served by these nine projects was exceeded by 20% (final result of 7,533 compared to a target of 6,245) and the target for participants employed was exceeded by 9% (final result of 3,575 compared to a target of 3,288).

Projects funded in 2007 and 2009 terminated on March 31, 2012. According to the final results, three of these 22 projects did not meet their target for participants served while nine did not meet their target for participants employed. Overall, the target for participants served for these 22 projects was exceeded by 71% (18,885 actual compared to a target of 11,071). The target for participants employed was exceeded by 3% (6,424 actual compared to a target of 6,263).

3.2.3.2 *Employment and retention of participants in the major economic development projects*

Evidence from the key informants interviews show that ASEP projects helped participants find employment related to their skills and better jobs than they had before. Industry partners interviewed confirmed having hired ASEP participants and half of the survey respondents indicated having worked in the targeted industry for some time after their participation in ASEP. On average, respondents had 12 months of full time work (i.e. more than 30 hours per week) and 3 months of part time work (i.e. less than 30 hours per week) in the targeted industry between the end of their participation and the survey.

Most of the project representatives interviewed (18/20) felt that the ASEP projects helped participants find employment related to their skills. All indicated that the driving factors were related to the ASEP model, such as only investing in training directly linked to jobs (either with the industry partners or in their communities) and giving some degree of job guarantee to training graduates.

Similarly, 13 out of 20 project representatives believed ASEP helped participants a lot in finding better jobs than they had before (i.e. jobs requiring more skills and/or paying better wages). The evidence cited by key informants (7/13) for this included the fact that many participants were doing contract or dead end work before or were dependent on Social Assistance, and yet obtained longer-term jobs with career potential after participating in ASEP. Three out of 20 project representatives mentioned that the projects somewhat impacted participants' finding better jobs, the main limitation being the recent economic slowdown, which limited opportunities in the targeted industry.

At the time of the key informant interviews, 12 of the 20 industry partners interviewed had hired ASEP participants, ranging from several to 100, depending on the scope of the resource development project. Among the other interviewees, one had planned to hire but no participants had been trained with the skills required by that company; five played a coordinating role in the partnership and did not hire participants directly as they were either from industry associations or Port Authorities; and two were the lead employers for resource development projects that had been delayed. In the two latter cases, project and industry partner key informants indicated that the ASEP project focused on finding employment for participants in other related industry projects in the area or with firms doing preparation work for the resource development project.

Half of the project representatives interviewed (10/20) said the projects contributed a lot to the retention of participants in jobs in the targeted industry while the other half (10/20) indicated that the projects helped somewhat. Contributing factors were the job coaches or follow-up provided by ASEP staff (cited by 6/10 project representatives) and the training model, which included pre-employment training and on-the-job training (7/10), thereby ensuring a good preparation of the participants for both the skill training and the job. Limiting factors cited by the key informants included the lack of job coaches or follow-up (2/10) and the focus of some projects on only entry level jobs (3/10).

All 12 industry partners who had hired ASEP participants felt that the retention rate for these individuals was as good as or better than that of their non-Aboriginal workforce. The contributing factor cited most frequently (7/12) was the quality of the ASEP training and supports that had prepared participants for what to expect in the workplace and that boosted their confidence to move on to employment.

The employment and retention of ASEP participants in the targeted industry was also assessed through the survey. After the end of their participation in ASEP, half (50%) of the survey respondents worked at some point in the industry targeted by the ASEP project from which they had received programs and services. Among these, 59% were still working in the targeted industry at the time of the survey. On average, the survey respondents had 12 months of full time work (i.e. more than 30 hours per week) and 3 months of part time work (i.e. less than 30 hours per week) in the targeted industry between the end of their participation and the time the survey took place. Note that approximately 12 to 30 months elapsed between the time that the respondents ended their participation and when the survey took place.

Survey respondents who were not working in the targeted industry at the time of the survey were asked about the most important reason why they were no longer occupying a job in this industry. The reasons most frequently mentioned were: the job was seasonal (15%); lack of work available, no work/employment opportunities (15%), and returned to school (10%).

When asked whether they needed to have any specific educational certificates for the job they were hired for in the targeted industry, 58% of the respondents answered yes. Among these, 69% indicated that they had obtained these educational certificates from the employment programs and services provided by ASEP. Similarly, 58% of the respondents said they needed specific skills (other than formal educational certificates) for the job they were hired for in the targeted industry and 65% of these respondents mentioned having obtained these necessary skills from the employment programs and services provided by ASEP.

Overall, 47% of respondents thought the employment programs and services they had received from ASEP projects were very important in obtaining employment in the targeted industry, while 22% rated these as being quite important. Nine percent of the respondents believed their participation in ASEP was not important at all in obtaining employment in the targeted industry.

3.2.3.3 Level of advancement of participants in targeted industry

Most project representatives interviewed felt ASEP had a lot of impacts on the career advancement of ASEP participants in the partners industry while less than half of the industry partners interviewed felt that many of the ASEP participants they hired were able to move beyond the entry level. Close to two third of survey respondents said they have not had a chance to apply for a higher paying job in the targeted industry.

Seven out of the 20 project representatives interviewed believed the projects had a lot of impact on the advancement of ASEP participants in their careers in the partners' industry, while an additional six felt that the projects somewhat impacted advancement. Three of

the project representatives who reported that there was more limited advancement of participants explained that it was due to the focus on training for entry-level positions. Three key informants mentioned that it was too early to see advancement.

Of the 12 industry partner key informants who had hired ASEP participants, five felt that many of those hired moved beyond the entry level, while five said that many of those hired showed potential but it was too early to see advancement, given that progression in the industry is a long-term process (e.g. advancement from entry to more senior levels within mining).

Survey respondents who were still working in the targeted industry at the time of the survey (i.e. 234 individuals) were asked if they had applied for a higher-paying job in their industry since the first job accepted after the program. A little less than two thirds of these respondents (64%) said they had not. However, 86% of these same respondents believed they will have an opportunity in the future to apply for a higher paying position in their industry.

3.2.4 Impact of ASEP collaborative approach

The following section presents findings with respect to the effects of ASEP funding and the collaborative approach on various issues in relation to the partner's ability to address employment barriers and the needs of the Aboriginal population, to provide programs and services that meet industry needs and to maintain effective partnerships. It also discusses lessons learned from the ASEP experience in regard to these various aspects.

3.2.4.1 Partners' ability to provide employment services and address employment barriers faced by the Aboriginal population

Q9. To what extent have ASEP contributions increased the ability of partners to provide employment training to the Aboriginal population and to address employment barriers these individuals are facing?

Increasing partners' ability to provide employment training to the Aboriginal population

Most key informants interviewed felt that ASEP projects provided useful employment training to Aboriginal individuals.

The vast majority of Aboriginal and industry partners (35/37) felt that ASEP projects provided participants with useful employment training. The contributing factor most frequently mentioned was the approach of only offering training that responded to identified needs of the targeted industry. Other contributing factors identified were the job guarantees for graduates of programs and services provided by ASEP projects and the fact that the skills taught by ASEP projects were transferable to other employers and industries.

Twelve of the 17 training institution partners interviewed said that the ASEP projects increased a lot their respective institutions' capacity to offer training which met the needs of participants, while four, who were already delivering similar training, felt that their capacity increased somewhat.

Increasing partners' ability to address employment barriers participants are facing

Evidence from key informant's interviews showed that ASEP contributed to increase partner's ability to address employment barriers the participants are facing. Key informants cited a number of features in relation to the collaboration of partners and the service delivery approach that were particularly effective in addressing employment barriers.

Key informants and the project documents identified a number of complex barriers that ASEP participants were facing, including lack of transportation, lack of childcare, racism, fear of leaving the community, language barriers, low education, lack of essential employment and academic skills, limited knowledge of the labour market, limited work opportunities for women and youth, and social and personal issues such as alcohol and drug abuse and criminal records.

All project representative key informants (20/20) cited features in their projects that were particularly effective in addressing the employment barriers faced by participants. These can be grouped broadly under two themes: 1) the *collaboration of partners* in developing the training plan to address industry needs and to ensure supports were provided to participants to address a range of personal and social barriers, and 2) the overall *service delivery approach* of the projects, which involved assessment, building the confidence of participants, providing training in flexible and client-focused ways (e.g. community-based training) and follow-ups through job coaches or other ASEP staff. Similarly, documentation from 15 of 31 projects provided examples of measures implemented by the ASEP projects to address barriers, including carrying out outreach activities, incorporating Aboriginal cultural practices into training, training approaches based on the medicine wheel (i.e. an Aboriginal training method that trains the mind while addressing the physical, spiritual, and emotional elements of the trainee), and building community capacity.

Half (24/48) of the Aboriginal partners, industry partners, and other stakeholders interviewed thought the ASEP funding increased a lot the partners' ability to address the employment barriers that participants faced, while a little more than a third of these key informants (18/48) felt that this increased somewhat. Various measures and positive features adopted to address the barriers and identified by the interviewees included:

- Offering of community-based training initially to enable trainees to build their confidence;
- Good assessments of candidates to determine their readiness for training and work;
- Follow up provided to participants through training and employment by ASEP staff or job coaches;

- Help to deal with personal needs or issues such as funding for transportation and childcare, the provision of interpreters for participants who did not speak English, offering alcohol awareness sessions, and helping participants apply for criminal pardons;
- Wage subsidies which enabled employers to be tolerant of participants as they made the transition to work; and
- Provision of academic upgrading and essential skills training.

For their part, nine of 18 training institution partners said that ASEP funding increased a lot their institution's ability to address the employment barriers faced by participants, while seven thought that this increased a little or somewhat.

3.2.4.2 *Innovations in human resources and skills development*

Q10. What innovations in human resource development, skill development and training initiatives have resulted from utilizing a collaborative approach?

According to key informants, best practices and innovations put in place by partners in terms of human resources development, skills development and training initiatives are mainly centered on the collaboration of partners and the service delivery approach.

Key informants cited various examples of best practices and innovations put in place by partners in terms of human resources development, skills development and training initiatives. These can be grouped into two categories, collaboration of partners and service delivery approach:

Collaboration of partners

- The collaboration of all the partners to ensure the understanding of both the industry and the participants' needs, as well as the application of this to client assessment, and the design of training and supports.

Service delivery approach

- Job coaches;
- Building confidence of participants;
- Training approach that followed a progression such as pre-employment, classroom and then on-the-job trainings;
- Development of essential skills training programs based on identified barriers to cover academic upgrading, work ethics, financial management skills, safety, confidence building;
- Community-based training: for example, practices included hiring of local trainers and mentors, honouring elders during community-based courses, and hiring community liaison officers;

- Building in hands-on training from the beginning;
- Offering programs leading to certification/credentials – demonstrating that the institution was “serious about offering quality training to ensure participants would also take this seriously”;
- Hiring teachers with the personal skills needed to work with Aboriginal trainees in a supportive way;
- Being flexible in the schedule (e.g. adjusting the program’s daily hours and course length as needed to ensure success); and
- Providing a wide range of supports needed to ensure success (e.g. providing interpretation services for participants who did not speak English and financial support).

3.2.4.3 *Linking skill development to specific job opportunities*

Q11. To what extent have the projects utilized a collaborative approach to comprehensive Aboriginal training and employment plans that link skills development with specific job opportunities?

Level of collaboration in the development of training and employment plans linked with specific job opportunities

The majority of key informants said the partners worked well or a lot together in developing training and employment plans linked to job opportunities.

Overall the majority of the project representatives and of the Aboriginal, industry and training institution partner key informants felt that the partners worked well or a lot together in developing training and employment plans linked to job opportunities (64 of 75 key informants). For example, 17 of the 18 training institutions cited specific training programs that had either been developed in conjunction with the targeted industry (e.g. underground miner); existing certified programs for which the delivery was tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal participants (e.g. cultural sensitivity on the part of instructors); or new pre-employment programs that were tailored to the needs of Aboriginal people (e.g. pre-apprenticeship programs and essential skills programs).

The main factors cited by the various key informants as contributing to the collaboration of partners in the development of training and employment plans linked to specific job opportunities included the following:

- Project representatives cited an effective board structure with solid board members who were open to collaboration and focused on the success of participants, and an industry-driven process which focused on jobs to be filled and how to best prepare Aboriginal workers for these jobs.

- Aboriginal partners identified the focus on ensuring that the needs of Aboriginal participants were addressed while only providing training that met industry standards and the building in of job guarantees for successful graduates.
- Training partners mentioned the high degree of industry involvement with other partners in focusing on the skills needed and, in some cases, the delivery of training at the worksites.

Challenges most frequently encountered by the partners in maintaining an effective partnership included:

- Some competing agendas/goals getting in the way of the focus on results;
- Challenges in communicating among partners, and with others in their organizations, on the intent of ASEP;
- The changing commitment of partners to employment in cases where the economic downturn or other factors led to delays in the start-up of the targeted industry development project; and
- Length of time required to establish the relationships and good communications among partners and with communities.

Extent to which the training provided under ASEP met employer's needs

Most key informants felt the training offered under ASEP met employer's needs.

All (20/20) project representatives said the partnership formed under the ASEP funding contributed to increasing the partners' understanding of designing and delivering training to prepare Aboriginal people for job opportunities in the targeted industry. Most of the project representatives interviewed (18/20) also agreed that ASEP provided the skills required by the employers.

Fourteen of the 18 training institution partners interviewed said that the ASEP funding increased their capacity to meet the needs of the targeted industry. They attributed this to the involvement of industry in advising them on the design of programs.

Seventeen of the 20 industry partners indicated that their training needs (or the needs of the industry being targeted) were met while two said their needs were somewhat met, and one had not done any hiring at the time of the interview. The key reasons given for success included the selection of good candidates with the motivation to learn, training linked directly to jobs, the focus on certified training, and the progression of classroom followed by workplace training. Examples of specific training designed to meet their needs included underground miner training and aerospace machining being offered in level 1, as opposed to level 3, of the machinist apprenticeship program.

3.2.4.4 Changes brought about by ASEP to partners

Q12. To what extent have industry partner workplaces changed due to involvement with ASEP?

According to key informants, industry partner's involvement in ASEP led to changes in their workplace.

A little less than half of the project representatives and Aboriginal partners interviewed (17/37) thought that there were changes in the workplaces of industry partners due to their involvement with ASEP. For their part, of the 12 industry partners that had hired ASEP participants, eight felt that their involvement in the projects had a positive impact on their workplaces. Specific examples of these positive impacts (cited by one or two key informants each) included the development of a form of cultural sensitivity program in the workplace; the success of the ASEP projects in preparing participants for the workplace and in developing their skills, which helped improve the attitude of supervisors and other workers towards Aboriginal workers; and employers being able to move beyond hiring Aboriginal workers for entry-level positions to being able to train them for promotion as a result of the ASEP training, which also helped build a positive image for the company in Aboriginal communities.

Q13. How has partners' understanding of industry changed due to utilizing a collaborative approach?

Key informants generally agreed that the ASEP partnership contributed to increase partner's understanding of the needs of the targeted industry and the related employment opportunities.

Fifteen of the 20 industry partner key informants said that their needs (or the needs of the targeted industry more generally) were better understood by all partners. Examples of specific needs that were better understood included: Aboriginal partners knowing that they have to encourage their members to live healthy lives, show up for commitments, achieve certification and be part of the working economy; and more awareness of the diversity of occupations in the targeted sector.

A little more than three quarters (37/48) of project representatives, Aboriginal partners and other stakeholders interviewed felt that the ASEP partnership contributed to increasing the partners' and/or the Aboriginal communities' understanding of the employment opportunities in the targeted industry sector. Success in this aspect of the projects was attributed to the communication and collaboration inherent in the ASEP model.

Ten of 18 training institution partners felt that they were already quite involved with the targeted industry and that ASEP did not change their awareness of the industry. However, eight key informants reported that their involvement in ASEP allowed them to learn more about the types of occupations involved.

3.2.4.5 Sustainability of partnerships established under ASEP

Q14. To what extent have ASEP projects contributed to establishing sustainable partnerships? What are the best practices and lessons learned in terms of sustaining partnerships?

Sustainability of collaboration among partners

Many key informants felt the partnership would continue at least on an informal basis after ASEP termination but the vast majority thought the continuation of the partnership was contingent on obtaining funds from other sources.

All (20/20) ASEP project representative key informants felt that the partnerships and activities of the ASEP projects would continue after the end of the ASEP funding period, either on a formal basis with other federal, provincial and/or partner funding, or on an informal basis with no funding and with a focus on information sharing among industries and Aboriginal employment service providers. At the time of the interviews, all key informants had efforts underway to seek post-ASEP funding, including applications to the SPF and provincial/territorial governments. All but one project representative thought that the continuation of a formal partnership was contingent on receiving other funding from the government and/or from other sources due to the nature of the needs to be addressed. The view was that preparing Aboriginal people for entry to industrial projects requires significant funding and this cannot be done by the employers alone.

Similarly, 13 of the 17 Aboriginal partner key informants believed that the partnerships formed would continue at least on an informal basis if other funding is found and 13 of the 20 industry partners interviewed felt that continuation of the partnership was contingent on obtaining continued funding from some sources. Seven industry partners also thought that the partnership would continue in at least an informal manner, using the training infrastructure that was developed, or with different partners. All (18/18) training institution partners interviewed expected to maintain their partnerships and linkages with industry in order to continue providing training to meet their needs.

Interviews were held with an Aboriginal partner from five ASEP projects funded in 2003 that had concluded. The interviews aimed to examine if the partnership formed during the course of the projects continued in either a formal or informal manner and with what sources of funding. All of these key informants were AHRDA holders who were partners in these 2003 ASEP projects. All five indicated that the partnership and collaboration between Aboriginal organizations and industry continued after the end of the funding period. At the time of the interviews, two of these key informants were partners in other ASEP projects

and three were receiving funding under ASETS. These three key informants felt that the ASEP experience helped build relationships with industry and said that the collaboration with industry, which included in-kind contributions from industry, continued on an informal basis.

Best practices and lessons learned in terms of sustaining partnerships

The documentation reviewed and the key informants identified a number of best practices and lessons learned in terms of sustaining partnerships. Among these, the majority of key informants identified communication as being an important factor.

Various program and projects documents including the new version of HRSDC's 1994 Partnership Handbook, which was updated by VanASEP (2009), identified best practices and lessons learned from the ASEP projects in terms of sustaining partnerships. Similarly, participants in the 2008 National ASEP Conference identified various factors, such as the need to encourage non-Aboriginal individuals in the partnership to experience Aboriginal culture, develop mechanisms to resolve conflicts, and build in accountability mechanisms.

The majority of key informants who identified best practices during their interviews mentioned that communication was important. This included keeping all partners informed of training activities and other activities of ASEP; having industry partners visit communities; communicating to share resources and avoid duplication in training efforts; inviting partners to graduation days; recognizing them at these events; being up front, through regular meetings and other communications from staff on activities; and listening to and learning about the needs of others. Other best practices most frequently identified by the key informants included:

- The importance of good governance structures (with directors having clear authorities) and documentation of policies;
- Taking time to establish the relationships up front, agreeing on expectations and getting to know the other partners; and
- The importance of having partners who work collaboratively together/having good chemistry among partners.

3.2.5 *Influence of ASEP on other labour market programs for Aboriginal individuals*

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the ASEP experience and lessons learned from it influenced other current and future labour market programming for Aboriginal individuals.

Q15. How has the ASEP experience influenced current and future labour market programming for Aboriginal people?

Influence of ASEP on other programming for Aboriginal individuals

Key informants interviews conducted with HRSDC program representatives confirmed that ASEP had an influence on other programming for Aboriginal individuals such as ASETS and SPF as well as on the Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development.

All HRSDC program representatives interviewed (5/5) confirmed that ASEP influenced the design of ASETS, which replaced the AHRDAs. In particular, ASEP was seen as having influenced the focus of ASETS on demand-driven skills development and partnerships with the private sector. All key informants also said that ASEP influenced the SPF approach of fostering partnerships of Aboriginal organizations and communities with the private sector and focusing on actual job openings. However, it was noted that ASEP had stronger requirements for mandatory partnerships and leveraging of investments from other partners than the SPF.

One HRSDC program representative noted that the Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development has been influenced by ASEP in terms of its focus on skills training for long-term job opportunities and partnerships with investments from the private sector. Another mentioned that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada had undertaken efforts to apply some of the partnership/engagement lessons from ASEP to its economic development programming.

HRSDC program representatives interviewed were also asked about key lessons learned from ASEP that could be applied to other labour market programming for Aboriginal individuals. These included (each mentioned by one or more key informants):

- The ASEP partnership brought together entities with shared interests. Partnerships with strong self-interests proved to be stronger and can be built on going forward.
- The requirement for incorporated partnerships forced people to come together and led to some cultural shifts among partners and to some lasting partnerships.
- Some partners – both institutional and individual – have come and gone, which has challenged the partnerships and the project. The board of directors needs to be strong in handling these changes.

- The requirement for a 50% contribution (in-kind or financial) from partners helped establish commitments in terms of employment opportunities and sustaining the projects that might not have happened otherwise and provided a good place to start with accountability.
- Tying each ASEP project to one industry created risks for projects when there were delays in start-up or a reduction in the workforce due to the economy and markets.
- Having HRSDC as ex-officio member of the Boards of Directors of ASEP projects was key to establishing and sustaining the partnerships.
- Centralized delivery (with regional representatives) had both strengths and challenges. This approach created a critical mass of staff that was appropriate given the relatively small size of the program (compared to ASETS, for example) and the focus on major resource development projects rather than proportionate allocation of funds across regions. It also enabled maintaining a national perspective while taking regional differences into account. However, the approach increased the costs due to having to travel to remote areas.
- The national approach also helped create synergy and connections among ASEP projects, including sharing of ideas and tools.
- The streamlined delivery approach was effective. This included fewer internal processes and reviews of proposals by those most appropriate to do the reviews. The program also used a request for proposals process that involved consultation to fully develop the projects – this contributed to the lasting effect of the projects.

3.3 Cost-Effectiveness

The following section presents an assessment of the costs of delivering the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects, as well as the findings from the cost-benefits analysis carried out on the 2003 projects.

Q16. Are ASEP projects cost effective from the individual, social and government perspective?

Q17. How do the costs of ASEP funded projects compare to other similar programs for Aboriginal people?

3.3.1 *Evaluation component 1: Cost-benefit analysis (participants in 2003 projects)*

Within the four year period covered by the analysis, the benefits from participating in ASEP did not exceed the costs of delivering the program neither from the social or the government perspectives. Relative to AHRDAs, the incremental benefits of participating in ASEP did not exceed the incremental costs from the social perspective, but these benefits were almost equal to the costs from the government perspective. It is however acknowledged that a longer timeframe than the four years covered by this analysis would be required to evaluate the cost-benefit ratio of a program like ASEP, especially since the program was expected to generate longer term benefits that may last as long as the industry project it is targeting (e.g. a mine).

A limited cost-benefit analysis was conducted for the 2003 ASEP projects using the incremental impact benefits presented in section 3.2.1.2 of this report. This analysis included two different components. The first was an assessment of the benefits of participating in EBs under the 2003 ASEP projects in comparison to the average cost of delivering these projects. The second component was an examination of the relative benefits of participating in ASEP EBs compared to participating in AHRDA EBs (i.e. incremental impacts of ASEP EBs relative to the AHRDA EBs reference group) and the incremental cost of delivering ASEP relative to AHRDAs.

Both components of the cost-benefit analysis were conducted from a broader social perspective and from a government perspective for a period of four years: the program start year and the following three years. The benefits arising from ASEP were measured as the discounted income gains that can be attributed to program participation. To that effect, income gains were discounted using a 5% rate. Income gains were defined as the incremental employment earnings gains from participating in ASEP EBs. EI and Social Assistance benefits received were not included as they net out since they were a benefit to the participant but also a cost to the government.

Under the broad social perspective, the cost was measured as the total average cost per participant served based on the total project expenditures, which include HRSDC's and the project partner's contribution. Under the government perspective, the cost was defined as the cost per participant served based on HRSDC's contribution only.

This cost-benefit analysis is limited in the sense that it does not account for all the costs and benefits from the broader social perspective. For example, information on the out-of-pocket expenses assumed by participants for participating in ASEP programs and services (e.g. transportation) was not available. Social benefits to participants and communities, such as increased self-confidence, crime reduction, family well-being, and improved health status of participants, were not accounted for since it is difficult to attribute to them a dollar value. In that respect, it is noted that although the costs and benefits to participants and communities cannot all be quantified, a program like ASEP is expected to be beneficial for the individuals and the communities as the costs paid by individuals (e.g. opportunity costs and out-of pocket expenses) are generally lower than the earnings and social benefits obtained.

This limited cost-benefit analysis is also a partial equilibrium analysis since it does not account for the displacement effects (ASEP participants now occupy jobs that could have been filled by qualified non-participants). Displaced and unemployed non-participants may experience social disadvantages compared to the social benefits of employed ASEP participants. However, since ASEP focused on employment of the local Aboriginal population, most of the displacement impacts would likely occur outside the labour markets that the program is intended to benefit and, therefore, it is reasonable to exclude these displacement effects from the analysis.

Table 12 shows the cost-benefit ratio for component 1 of the analysis. From the broad social perspective, the total average cost of delivering the 2003 ASEP projects was \$16,484 per participant. From the government perspective, this average cost was \$9,705 per participant²⁷. The benefit of participating in ASEP EBs measured over the four year period totaled \$3,120, which did not exceed the costs from both the social and the government perspectives.

²⁷ A breakdown of cost per participants for each ASEP project is provided in Annex B.

Table 12: Cost-Benefit of ASEP EB Participation Based on ASEP/AHRDA/LMDA/EI Only Reference Group
(Inverse Propensity Weighting estimates)

	APE Start Year	1 Year Post	2 Years Post	3 Years Post	Total
Benefits (Discounted employment earning impacts)	-\$1,204*	\$1,553***	\$1,218***	\$1,552***	\$3,120
Costs from the social perspective (average cost per participant based on total project expenditures)	\$16,484				\$16,484
Costs from the government perspective (average cost per participant based on HRSDC's contribution)	\$9,705				\$9,705
Source: Administrative data, Aboriginal Affairs Directorate documentation Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001					

Table 13 shows the results of the second component of the analysis. As indicated previously, the average total cost of delivering the 2003 ASEP projects was \$16,484 per participant based on total project expenditures and \$9,705 per participant based on HRSDC's contribution. The average cost of delivering AHRDA/ASETS was \$6,382. As a result, the incremental or additional cost of delivering ASEP relative to AHRDA/ASETS was \$10,102 per participant from the social perspective and \$3,232 per participant from the government perspective. In comparison, participation in ASEP EBs relative to participation in AHRDA EBs led to a total incremental benefit of \$2,833 over the four year period.

From the social perspective, the incremental benefit of ASEP relative to AHRDA did not exceed the incremental cost of delivering ASEP. However, from a government perspective, the incremental cost of \$3,323 for delivering ASEP was almost neutral.

Table 13: Cost-Benefit of ASEP EB Participation Based on AHRDA EB Reference Group
(Inverse Propensity Weighting estimates)

	APE Start Year	1 Year Post	2 Years Post	3 Years Post	Total
Benefits (Discounted employment earning impacts)	\$1,426***	\$696	\$733	-\$22	\$2,833
Incremental costs from the social perspective (average ASEP cost per participant based on total project expenditures minus AHRDA cost)	\$10,102				\$10,102
Incremental costs from the government perspective (average ASEP cost per participant based on HRSDC's contribution minus AHRDA cost)	\$3,323				\$3,323
Source: Administrative data, Aboriginal Affairs Directorate documentation Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001					

While, in most cases, the benefits of participating in ASEP did not exceed the costs of delivering the program within the four years following the start of participation, it should be noted that a longer timeframe would be required to evaluate the cost-benefit ratio of such types of programming, especially since a program like ASEP is expected to generate longer term benefits that may last as long as the industry project it is targeting (e.g. a mine).

3.3.2 Evaluation component 2: Cost analysis (2007 and 2009 projects) and cost comparison

For HRSDC, the average total cost of delivering ASEP was \$8,011 per participant. When taking into account the contribution from both HRSDC and the partners, the average total cost was \$13,894 per participant. These costs, however, varied greatly across ASEP projects.

Conducting a cost-benefit analysis for the 2007 and 2009 projects was not possible because at the time of the evaluation, for most participants and especially those from the 2009 projects, the period of time that elapsed since the end of participation was not sufficiently long to observe net impacts. As well, the administrative data available did not cover a sufficiently long period of time to allow assessing net impacts for the participants from the 2007 projects. An analysis of the cost of delivering the projects per participant was, however, carried out using program information on the expenditures and participants served as of March 31, 2011 for the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects covered by the evaluation.

Costs per participant served were calculated based on HRSDC's contribution to the projects as well as based on the total project's expenditures, which included HRSDC's and the partner's contribution.

When looking only at the contribution made by HRSDC, the average total cost was \$8,011 per participant. However, the cost varied greatly across ASEP projects. These ranged from \$2,406 to \$20,489 per participant. When considering the total project expenditures (HRSDC and partner's contribution combined), the average total cost was \$13,894 per participant served. There were also important variations in the costs across projects, which ranged from \$3,458 to \$24,879 per participant. A breakdown of cost per participant for each ASEP project is provided in annex B.

In order to obtain a better understanding of where the cost of delivering ASEP stands relative to the cost of delivering another HRSDC employment program for Aboriginal individuals, the cost per participant incurred by HRSDC to deliver AHRDAs/ASETS was calculated for the 2004–2005 to 2010–2011 period. Based on this calculation, the average cost to HRSDC for delivering AHRDAs/ASETS was \$6,382 per participant. While useful, this information should be interpreted carefully since ASEP and AHRDA/ASETS program costs are not directly comparable as these programs are different in nature and have different delivery structures.

3.4 Other Evaluation Questions

In addition to questions related to relevance, performance and cost-effectiveness, the evaluation looked at questions pertaining to funding leveraged from partners, as well as overlap and duplication. Findings on these questions are presented in the following section.

Q18. To what extent have ASEP projects leveraged additional investments from project partners?

3.4.1 Leveraging of funds

As of March 31, 2011, the partners in the 2007 and 2009 projects contributed to 42% of the total project funding. Under these projects, the partners had to contribute to at least 50% of the total funding and had until March 31, 2012 to make their contribution.

Partners under the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects had to contribute at least 50% of the total project funding. A preliminary assessment of the extent to which funds were in the process of being leveraged from other partners as of March 31, 2011 was made using data transferred by 16 of the 22 ASEP projects, as well as administrative data provided by the program. Based on these two sources of information, the partners in the 22 projects funded in 2007 and 2009 contributed 42% of the total project funding. It is, however, noted that this is only a preliminary assessment as the funding period terminated on March 31, 2012.

3.4.2 **Overlap and duplication**

Q19. How has this program worked within the suite of other HRSDC and Federal Government programs?

Extent to which ASEP complements/duplicates other federal government programs

According to documentation reviewed and key informants interviewed, the ASEP program was complementary to other federal programs offered to Aboriginal individuals such as ASETS, SPF, LMDAs and the Post-secondary Education funding for First Nations offered by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

The documentation reviewed indicated that relative to AHRDAs/ASETS, which is a community based human resource development service and program delivery, ASEP filled a gap in programming by supporting significant skills training demands of large scale economic development in geographic areas where and when they occur. Moreover, the 2009 *Summative Evaluation of the ASEP Program* indicated that there was a small amount of duplication between AHRDA and ASEP.²⁸

All (5/5) HRSDC program representative key informants also identified gaps that ASEP filled and ways it complemented other federal programs. These included the following (mentioned by one or two key informants in each case):

- ASEP was a nationally-delivered program for human resource development for major projects with a focus on longer-term, sustainable jobs. It was larger in scope and more targeted than other programs. It was able to complement economic development projects of other federal departments with training funds;
- It provided multi-year funding with the capacity to carry forward funds under Treasury Board exclusion for First Nations communities;
- Industry partners were required to make a commitment to being engaged and making a financial or in-kind contribution;
- It was flexible, not client-eligibility based (as are youth programs and Employment Insurance funded programs such as AHRDAs/ASETS and LMDAs). For example, ASEP could have invested in training employed workers for advancement and funded workplace interventions like job coaches to support employment retention;
- The program was open to the implementation of innovative and practical approaches by ASEP partners. For example, the program allowed projects to determine what the demand was, what the ideal candidate was, and then let potential candidates try out the job and meet the supervisor before deciding if the job was right for them; and
- Some ASEP projects had the lead time to prepare people for jobs in the next five years and put in place the proper equipment for training and job coaches.

²⁸ HRSDC. (2009). *Summative Evaluation of the Aboriginal Skills and Partnership (ASEP) Program*.

Collaboration and mechanisms in place to avoid overlap and duplication

Both the documents reviewed and the key informants interviewed identified various collaboration processes and other mechanisms that were put in place at the program and project levels to ensure ASEP remained complementary to other programming for Aboriginal individuals.

As an example of mechanisms put in place, when reviewing ASEP project proposals, HRSDC Aboriginal Affairs Directorate consulted internally with the HRSDC Office of Literacy and Essential Skills and the Sector Councils Program, as well as externally with other federal departments, to seek their input to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication of funding.

At the project level, the collaboration and mechanisms in place included having AHRDA/ASETS agreement holders (AHRDAs) as part of the formal partnerships and often being the service delivery arm of the ASEP projects. Other federal departments and provincial/territorial governments were also partners in some projects. Key informants also identified other mechanisms such as working with AHRDA/ASETS and other funding agencies to coordinate funding and/or the purchase of training that was outside the ASEP mandate or having processes in place to case manage participants and avoid overlap in funding.

3.5 Follow-Up on Issues Identified in the Previous Formative and Summative Evaluations

This section presents the findings from a follow-up of some of the key issues identified in the previous formative and summative evaluations.

Q20. To what extent have the issues identified in the previous formative and summative evaluations been addressed?

3.5.1 Case management and financial data

Formative and Summative Evaluations Issue: significant gaps in the case management and financial data required for evaluation and accountability. The most significant gaps are no electronic case management data available for a significant proportion of clients, data stored in case management systems are miscoded in the majority of cases and client contact information is missing in 19.4% of the cases. Work is required to link project costs to individual clients.

Overall, the assessment of participants' administrative data from the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects showed that the quality of the case management and financial data required for evaluation and accountability has significantly improved since the previous formative and summative evaluations. However, areas that required further improvements were also identified.

Project case management data

The issue found in the formative evaluation around participants not being recorded in the case management system was resolved. However, some aspects of the case management data still required improvements, such as ensuring consistency in information collected on participant's application form; collecting alternate phone numbers and updating contact information; recording the end date and results of action plans; and linking financial information to individual participants and their interventions.

The formative evaluation of ASEP found that a significant proportion of participants were not recorded in the case management system. Based on the data assessment, this issue was resolved. Projects recorded their participants in their case management system and a completed or partially-completed application form was found on file in virtually every case. In addition, funded interventions identified in hard copy files were generally identified in case management systems and would have been uploaded to the HRSDC Standard Data File. Aspects of the data collection and management that required further improvements include:

- **Consistency in information collected:** Application forms were often not well designed, making it easy for some questions to be missed. Projects often used client information from the existing applications of partners (e.g. training institutions). While this had the advantage of reducing the burden on participants, there was some variation in questions and even the purpose of collecting the information. For example, data collected on number of dependents by the training institution aimed at identifying the individual's housing requirements during the training and not the actual number of dependents an individual had. In addition, projects often failed to collect data on number of dependents or disability status on their application forms or participants often omitted to provide this information. Also, it is not always clear how the number of dependents was defined. For example, it could have been defined as including dependent adults or only the children under 18 living with the participant. Finally, the data assessment found little evidence of follow-up with participants to deal with errors and omissions in the application forms.
- **Contact information:** Alternate phone numbers were found in approximately 37% of the cases reviewed in the data assessment. In addition, clearly defined processes for processing updates to contact information did not appear to exist.
- **Recording of non-participants:** In at least six instances across two ASEP projects, interventions that did not take place were identified in electronic case management systems. In the cases encountered, it was explained in the notes that the client was not accepted or chose not to participate. All of these interventions were uploaded to the HRSDC Standard Data File. The extent to which non-participants were recorded in the case management systems and uploaded to the HRSDC Standard Data File is, however, unknown. It is noted that a significant proportion (23%) of the cooperative contacts made for the survey conducted for this evaluation were with individuals who considered themselves ineligible to answer the questionnaire. An examination of a sample of explanations provided by these individuals showed that one of the reasons most frequently provided was that they did not receive programs and services from ASEP projects.

- **24 week rule:** Some interventions appear to have been created in order to prevent the loss of an “employed” result when an Action Plan was closed with an “employed” result, but did not meet HRSDC’s 24 week rule, which states that results for participants employed do not count when an Action Plan is closed more than 24 weeks after the end date of the last intervention received by the participants. According to documentation and interviews with ASEP project staff, in some instances HRSDC advised the project to create artificial interventions in order to allow “employed” results that were not counted in either the previous fiscal year or the current fiscal year due to the 24 week rule to be counted in the current year. The data assessment identified at least 15 instances where projects applied this or a similar strategy of creating an intervention which did not represent any actual service to participants and which may or may not have represented a follow-up with a participant. However, it is not possible to quantify the number of instances where this has occurred as the interventions added were not funded and were not usually recorded in the hard copy file in detail.

This rule also involved changing the dates on which action plans were closed and employed results were recorded. In most cases the actual dates when action plans were closed and employment had started were not apparent from the hard copy files. As a consequence, it is impossible to tell the extent to which this strategy was used as a “correction” for the fact that the action plan was not closed in a timely fashion or if it was used to allow a project to receive credit for employment which had not started within 24 weeks of the last intervention.

- **Missing end dates:** In many cases, the action plans reviewed had no end date. This undoubtedly resulted in failure to count some participants as employed in the program accountability results.
- **Subsidized versus unsubsidized employment:** In some cases, action plans of individuals who participated in a targeted wage subsidy, or similar type of apprenticeship placement, were probably closed as “employed” based on the subsidized employment. In many of these cases, neither information in the hard copy file nor information in the case management system clearly established that the individual was employed after the end of the subsidy.
- **Financial data:** Project financial data were generally not linked to individual participants and their interventions. Some projects have allocated costs to interventions and participants in the electronic case management system, but not consistently.

Result measurement, reporting and data management at HRSDC

The data held in HRSDC's Standard Data File also improved significantly but some challenges remained. These included a lack of clarity in the contribution agreements around the accountability processes applied to the data at HRSDC and the lack of timeliness in providing feedback to projects with respect to employed results and in uploading the data transferred by the projects to the Standard Data File.

Overall, the ASEP administrative data held by HRSDC in the Standard Data File have improved significantly. In addition, in response to the ASEP formative evaluation findings, two resources within the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate were dedicated to monitoring administrative data. However, according to the key informants and the review of documentation, some challenges remained. Those identified include:

- Data uploaded by ASEP projects to HRSDC went through a set of accountability processes which could have been confusing to ASEP projects and were not clearly identified in contribution agreements.
- Due to a technicality in the way employed results were calculated, if an action plan was closed as being employed, those employed results were not counted if another action plan was started in that same calendar month. This was a problem, as some of the ASEP projects helped participants to become employed and then opened a new action plan to track employment maintenance activities.
- The timeliness and process of providing feedback to projects with respect to employed results was an issue. There was frequently a lag of 3 months or more between the time data were uploaded to HRSDC and employed results were available for review and transferred into the Standard Data File. The ASEP projects typically uploaded their data to HRSDC once a month or at least quarterly. However, on March 20, 2011, for the 21 projects covered by the data assessment, the Standard Data File contained only one intervention with a start date in 2011, and only 81 interventions with a start date between October 1, 2010 and March 20, 2011. Data from ASEP case management systems showed in excess of 10,500 interventions with a start date in that same time period. According to key informants, this delay in processing data at HRSDC made the monitoring and feedback process difficult and could have caused significant delays with respect to identifying and addressing data issues.
- Employed results were reported in aggregate form and were not readily available by client. This could have caused delays and made addressing data issues more resource intensive for HRSDC.

3.5.2 Other issues

Evidence from this evaluation showed that ASEP projects and the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate had implemented measures to address other issues raised in the previous formative and summative evaluations.

Formative evaluation issue: There was the acknowledgement that the ASEP projects could not accommodate some issues such as providing services for those who had very low education levels who requested training, and some contextual issues such as participants having to leave the community to find work until the large projects are underway.

According to most key informants, providing services to individuals with low levels of education was a significant issue for the ASEP projects which have addressed this (at least for some participants) mainly by referring individuals to ASETS for academic upgrading and providing academic upgrading or essential skills training. Most key informants also indicated that the need for participants to leave their home to find work due to delays in the start-up of the target industry still represented a challenge. Most key informants adopted practices to mitigate this issue, such as providing counselling and financial assistance for travel and living expenses.

Formative evaluation issue: challenges were identified with respect to ensuring that targeted communities are reached, with the main challenge identified as the relatively rapid turnover of staff within the various communities, which requires ongoing promotional and training activities to keep them adequately informed.

Most of the key informants interviewed on this question felt that communicating with communities was no longer a challenge. Key informants who felt that communication was still an issue pointed to challenges such as difficulties in reaching remote communities, turnover in community contacts, and lack of support for ASEP from Aboriginal partners (a sense of entitlement to funds).

Formative evaluation issue: There were a few examples provided during the evaluation that demonstrated how new knowledge generated from ASEP projects was beginning to be transferred and potentially incorporated into other related services.

The Management Response to the *2009 Formative Evaluation of ASEP* indicated that the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate (AAD) had developed a comprehensive communication strategy that incorporated the identification of best practices within the ASEP projects and the sharing of these best practices through various media and forums. In this regard, copies of presentations at annual meetings of ASEP partners reviewed for this evaluation included reference to effective practices and are evidence that this knowledge was being shared. As another example of efforts undertaken, VanAsep, with HRSDC funding, developed a Job Coach manual, a Partnership manual, and an online essential skills assessment tool, which were made available via their website. However, it should be noted that at the time of undertaking the evaluation, it was not possible to obtain analyses of lessons learned from ASEP from the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate.

All of the five HRSDC program representatives interviewed identified various methods that were used to gather information on effective practices from projects and to share this information. These included annual conferences of ASEP project staff and partners, informal networks among ASEP projects, success stories presented on the HRSDC website, ASEP project annual reports and Website, and the development of a suite of products to facilitate the close-out of projects.

4. Conclusions

This section provides an overview of the main conclusions in relation to questions examined in this summative evaluation.

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 *Continued need for the program*

There is an ongoing need for Aboriginal labour market programming, similar to ASEP, that helps to address systematic barriers which impede the full participation of Aboriginal people in the labour market, particularly in major economic development projects. The documentation reviewed confirmed that Aboriginal people have the potential to be an important supply of workers for the Canadian labour market. However, Aboriginal individuals face significant labour market barriers and programs that aim to address these barriers can contribute to facilitate their participation in the Canadian labour market. Barriers faced by Aboriginal individuals include: higher unemployment rates (14.8% compared to 6.3% for the general population),²⁹ lower individual incomes and lower levels of education than the general population.³⁰ In this context, 58% of ASEP participants in the 2007 and 2009 projects earned less than \$10,000 in the year before participation.

4.1.2 *Consistency with federal government Aboriginal policy*

The consistency of ASEP with the federal government Aboriginal policy is confirmed in various policy documents which articulate the federal government's commitment to enhance the well-being of Aboriginal Canadians through measures designed to enable them to participate in the labour market. These documents include *Advantage Canada* (2006), the *Speech from the Throne* from 2006 to 2008, as well as the *Budget* from 2007 to 2010.

ASEP's particular approach influenced the design of other employment programs delivered by HRSDC. The SPF has a similar objective to ASEP of encouraging innovation and partnerships to increase Aboriginal skills development and participation in the labour market. ASETS has similarities with ASEP as it requires funded organizations to form partnerships with employers to deliver demand-driven skills training programs. Unlike ASEP, these two programs do not have a targeted focus on major resource development projects in specific sectors.

²⁹ Statistics Canada, Census 2006.

³⁰ Ibid.

4.2 Success

4.2.1 Evaluation component 1: Impacts from participating in the 2003 projects

Incremental impacts from participating in the 2003 ASEP projects

Over the four year period following the start of participation, ASEP increased the employment earnings of participants. The cumulative incremental gains in employment earnings were in the \$3,567 to \$5,170 range. These incremental earning gains were higher for participants in projects focusing on a specific industrial development (such as a mine) than for participants in projects with a broader industry focus (e.g. construction or forestry). The cumulative incremental gain for ASEP projects with a strong focus on a specific industrial development project was \$8,500.

ASEP also had positive impacts on the incidence of employment of participants. While, a decrease of -3.6 percentage points was found in the program start year, annual increases of 4.0, 3.0 and 2.5 percentage points were respectively found in the three years following the participation start year. Participants increased their use of EI benefits by \$647 in the third year following the participation start year. Estimates for all other years were statistically non-significant. Similarly, none of the impacts on use of Social Assistance were statistically significant.

Incremental impacts relative to the AHRDA EBs reference group

The particular focus of ASEP on more direct involvement of the private sector in the programming and matching of program delivery to the labour market was more effective at increasing employment earnings of participants than the delivery approach used under AHRDAs. Relative to AHRDA EB participants, ASEP EB participants had a cumulative earnings gain of \$3,000 over the four year period.

The incremental impacts on the incidence of employment of ASEP participants were negative (i.e. -2.4 percentage points in the participation start year and -2.9 percentage points in the third year following the beginning of participation). Estimates for the other years were statistically non-significant. A statistically significant impact on the mean EI benefits was only found in the program start year (-\$380). None of the estimates pertaining to the use of Social Assistance were statistically significant.

4.2.2 *Evaluation component 2: Outcomes from participating in the 2007 and 2009 projects*

Profile of participants and interventions

Overall, ASEP participants in the 2007 and 2009 projects were young (63% under age 35) single (68%) and male (76%). Sixty-six percent were registered Status Indians. The highest level of education of the majority of respondents (67%) was high school or less. Programs and services offered by ASEP projects were mainly Skills Development and Employment Assistance Services (respectively received by 63% and 57% of participants). The majority of participants (74%) received at least one Employment Benefits and their Action Plan Equivalent had an average duration of 2.6 months.

Satisfaction and perceived program effects

Most of the survey respondents (80%) were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the quality of employment services and programs received from ASEP projects. Most survey respondents (between 62% and 78%) indicated that ASEP programs and services were quite useful or very useful in providing them with job-related skills or skills they could use in the targeted industry and in helping them to find employment as well as to improve their career planning, their ability to participate in the community, and various quality of life indicators.

Employment experience post-program

The statistical analysis of administrative data of a sample of 406 participants from the 2007 projects shows that their employment earnings rose from \$16,729 in the year prior to participation to \$19,872 in the year following the participation start year, which represents a gain of \$3,143. The incidence of employment of these same participants decreased slightly between the year preceding participation (83%) and the year following participation (81%).

From one year preceding participation to one year preceding the survey interview, the survey respondents decreased the amount of time spent unemployed by -0.7 months and the amount of time spent on Social Assistance by -0.3 months. They also increased their average number of hours employed per week from 42 hours to 47 hours; their hourly wage from \$18.44 to \$21.33; and their average annual employment income from \$20,107 to \$24,668.

Eighty-five percent of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the longest job they held in the 12 month period prior to the survey. About half of the respondents (49%) rated the employment services and programs provided to them by the ASEP project as being either very important or quite important in helping them to obtain their longest job.

ASEP participant employment in the major economic development projects

Overall, the target for participants served by the nine ASEP projects funded in 2003 was exceeded by 20% (final result of 7,533 compared to a target of 6,245) and the target for participants employed was exceeded by 9% (final result of 3,575 compared to a target of 3,288). Based on final results available as of June 2012, projects funded in 2007 and 2009 exceeded their targets for participants served by 71% (18,885 actual compared to a target of 11,071) and their target for participants employed by 3% (6,424 actual compared to a target of 6,263).

The evidence from key informant interviews showed that ASEP projects had positive impacts on the employment of participants in major economic development projects – in terms of entry to employment, moving to better jobs, job retention and advancement.

After the end of their participation in ASEP, half (50%) of the survey respondents worked at some point in the industry targeted by the ASEP project from which they had received programs and services. On average, respondents had 12 months of full time work (i.e. more than 30 hours per week) and 3 months of part time work (i.e. less than 30 hours per week) in the targeted industry between the end of their participation and the survey. Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they needed to have some educational certificates for the job they were hired for in the targeted industry and 69% of these said that they obtained some of these educational certificates from ASEP. Similarly, 58% of the respondents indicated that they needed specific skills (other than formal educational certificates) for the job they were hired for in the targeted industry and 65% of these respondents mentioned having obtained these necessary skills from the employment programs and services provided by ASEP. Overall, 69% of respondents thought the ASEP employment programs and services were either very important or quite important in obtaining employment in the targeted industry.

4.2.3 Impact of ASEP's collaborative approach

Based on key informant interviews, ASEP contributed to an increase in partners' ability to provide participants with useful employment training. Similarly, most key informants reported that ASEP funding increased the partners' ability to address employment barriers that Aboriginal individuals are facing, such as lack of transportation, lack of child care, fear of leaving the community, low education, or lack of essential employment and academic skills.

Key informants cited various examples of best practices and innovations put in place by partners in terms of human resources development, skills development and training initiatives. These were related to the collaboration of partners in ensuring that both the industry's and the participants' needs were well understood and were applied to client assessment and to the design of training and supports. Other best practices identified pertain to the service delivery approach used in ASEP projects (e.g. job coaches, community-based training or training approach that followed a progression, such as pre-employment, classroom and then on-the-job trainings).

Overall, the majority of key informants felt the partners worked well together in developing training and employment plans linked to job opportunities. Most key informants interviewed also believed that ASEP contributed to meet employers' needs and positively impacted the workplace of industry partners. Examples of changes induced by ASEP included increased cultural sensitivity in the workplace and improved integration of Aboriginal individuals in jobs offered by the industry. Finally, key informants confirmed that the partnership formed under ASEP contributed to increase the partners' understanding of the targeted industry.

Many key informants felt the partnership would continue at least on an informal basis after the program termination. However, the vast majority indicated that the continuation of the partnership, either formally or informally, was contingent on obtaining funding from other sources. At the time of the interviews, all project representatives interviewed were seeking post-ASEP funding from either SPF or other provincial/territorial governments.

4.2.4 *Influence of ASEP on other labour market programs for Aboriginal individuals*

HRSDC program representatives interviewed confirmed that ASEP influenced other programs, such as SPF, ASETS and the Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development. Based on these interviews there are various lessons learned and features from ASEP that can be applied to the design and delivery of other programs, such as: the centralized delivery and streamlined delivery approach of ASEP; the requirement for incorporated partnerships, which led to effective relationships and partnerships; the requirement for a 50% contribution from partners, which helped establish commitments in terms of sustaining the projects; tying each ASEP project to one industry, which created risks for projects when there were delays in start-up or a reduction in the workforce due to the economy and markets; and the national approach, which helped to create synergy and connections among ASEP projects.

4.3 Cost-Effectiveness

4.3.1 *Evaluation component 1: Cost-benefit analysis for 2003 ASEP projects*

A limited cost-benefit analysis was conducted for the 2003 ASEP projects over a period of four years following start of participation. Within that time period, the total benefit from participating in ASEP (\$3,120) did not exceed the costs from both the social perspective (\$16,484) and the government perspective (\$9,705). Similarly, from the social perspective, the incremental benefit of participating in ASEP EBs relative to AHRDA EBs (\$2,833) did not exceed the incremental cost of delivering ASEP relative to AHRDAs (\$10,102). However, the incremental cost from the government perspective (\$3,232) almost equaled the incremental benefit.

4.3.2 Evaluation component 2: Cost analysis for 2007 and 2009 projects

According to the cost analysis for the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects, the average total cost of delivering ASEP for HRSDC was \$8,011 per participant. At the project level, this average cost varied from \$2,406 to \$20,489 per participant. When looking at the total project expenditures (HRSDC and partner's contributions), the average total cost was \$13,894 per participant. At the project level, it ranged from \$3,458 to \$24,879 per participant.

4.4 Other Evaluation Questions

4.4.1 Leveraging of funds

As of March 31, 2011, the actual contribution from partners in the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects represented 41% of the total project funding received. However, these partners had until the end of the funding period, which was on March 31, 2012, to provide their mandatory 50% contribution to the total project expenditures.

4.4.2 Overlap and duplication

According to documentation reviewed and key informants interviewed, ASEP was complementary to other federal programs for Aboriginal individuals, such as ASETS, SPF, LMDAs and the Post-secondary Education funding for First Nations offered by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Both the documents reviewed and the key informants interviewed also confirmed that various mechanisms were put in place at the program and project levels to avoid duplication with other programs.

4.5 Follow-Up on Issues Identified in the Previous Formative and Summative Evaluations

4.5.1 Case management and financial data

Overall, the assessment of participants' administrative data from the 2007 and 2009 ASEP projects showed that the quality of the case management and financial data significantly improved since the previous formative and summative evaluations. However, some aspects of the case management data at the project level still required improvement, such as ensuring consistency in information collected on the application form; collecting alternate phone numbers and updating contact information; recording the end date and results of action plans; and linking financial information to individual participants and their interventions.

The data held in HRSDC's Standard Data File also improved significantly. In that regard, it is noted that in response to the ASEP formative evaluation, two resources within the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate were dedicated to monitoring administrative data. According to key informants and documents reviewed, some challenges remained. These included a lack of clarity in the contribution agreements around the accountability processes applied to the data at HRSDC and the lack of timeliness in providing feedback to projects with respect to employed results and in uploading the data transferred by the projects to the Standard Data File (i.e. there was frequently a lag of 3 months or more between the time data were uploaded to HRSDC and transferred to the Standard Data File and when employed results were available).

4.5.2 *Other issues*

Evidence from this evaluation showed that ASEP projects and the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate had implemented measures to address other issues raised in the previous formative and summative evaluations.

5. Lessons Learned

5.1 Overview of Lessons Learned from the Evaluation

The findings from this evaluation include lessons learned and best practices in terms of design, delivery and accountability. Although the ASEP program terminated on March 31, 2012, such lessons learned are applicable to other labour market programming delivered by HRSDC and especially to SPF and ASETS.

In light of the results from the incremental impact analysis, three key lessons can be identified about the ASEP approach. First, these results showed that ASEP was effective at increasing the employment earnings and the incidence of employment of participants. Second, participants in ASEP projects focused on a specific industrial development project achieved better results than those who participated in projects with a focus on a broader industry. Third, the ASEP approach was found to be more effective at increasing the earnings of participants than the AHRDA delivery approach.

Also, various examples of best practices and innovations put in place by partners in terms of human resources development, skills development and training initiatives were identified by the key informants. These were related to the collaboration of partners in ensuring that both the industry's and the participants' needs were well understood and were applied to client assessment and to the design of training and supports. Other best practices identified pertain to the service delivery approach used in ASEP projects (e.g. job coaches, community-based training or training approaches that followed a progression, such as pre-employment, classroom and then on-the-job trainings). Finally, among the best practices identified in terms of sustaining partnerships, the key informants mentioned communications with partners to share resources and information about the project as one important factor. Other best practices reported by key informants include establishing relationships up front with clear expectations; having good governance structure with documented policies and director having clear authorities and having partners work collaboratively.

5.2 Lessons Learned for Current and Future Programs

In light of the evaluation findings, it is recommended that the following lessons learned be applied to the design and delivery of current and future programs delivered by HRSDC:

- Programs and services currently delivered under ASETS should place a higher priority on targeted programming toward occupations in demand (i.e. meeting the needs of the demand side of the labour market). Through consultations and partnership building, the approach for planning and delivery should take into consideration the current and emergent needs of the local labour market in general and employers in particular.

- Where relevant, funding granted by future and current programs, and especially SPF, should favor projects focusing on specific industrial development rather than projects with a focus on a broader industry.
- The following improvements should be made in the data collection for Aboriginal programming:
 - Standard intake and exit forms for participants should be used by all service delivery organizations. These forms should also clearly define what information is requested (mandatory) from both participants and the delivery organization.
 - Alternate phone numbers or alternate contact information should be collected in a consistent way from the participants, particularly through exit forms.
 - Only individuals who received programs and services should be recorded as participants in the electronic case management system. Individuals who were applicants but were not accepted in the program or those who chose not to participate should not be captured as participants in the system.
 - Processes should be in place to ensure that interventions, results and start and end dates are consistently recorded.
 - Financial data should be linked to individual participants and interventions.
 - Clear roles and responsibilities should be assigned to contribution agreement signatories and to HRSDC regarding the quality and integrity of data.
 - A specific unit should be tasked with the responsibility to ensure that program data are complete, accurate and capable of supporting monitoring and evaluation activities.
 - HRSDC should maintain internal capacity to provide direct support to contribution agreement signatories on data collection, data systems and to address issues associated with data upload.
 - The timeliness of the process for reviewing data transferred by service delivery offices to HRSDC and for transferring these data to HRSDC databases (e.g. the Standard Data File) should be improved in order to allow for timely monitoring of the programs.

Annex A

Descriptive Analysis of Outcomes of 2003 ASEP Projects

This annex presents the results from the descriptive outcome analysis by projects/areas. The tables below do not refer to project titles but to areas related to each of the nine projects funded in 2003. The projects were categorised based on the following project areas:

Project Title	Project Areas
Wood Buffalo Partners in Aboriginal Training	Alberta Oil Sands
NWT Industrial Mining Skills Strategy	NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas
NWT Oil and Gas Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership: Skills Development Strategy	NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas
Nunavut Fisheries Training Consortium	Nunavut Fishing Industry
Trade Winds to Success Project	Alberta Construction
Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative	Manitoba Hydro
VanAsep Construction Careers Project	Vancouver/BC Construction
JBET Training Society	Northern Ontario Diamond Mining
People, Land and Opportunities	NB Forestry

Employment Earnings

The increase in employment earnings between the year prior to participation and the third year following participation start was not evenly distributed across the ASEP projects but was substantial in all projects. The smallest increase was \$3,253 and was found for the NB Forestry project. The largest increases were found for Alberta Oil Sands (\$30,048); NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas (\$10,246) and Northern Ontario Diamond Mining (\$10,650).³¹

**Table A1: Mean Employment Earnings of 2003 ASEP
EB Participants by Project Area**

Project Areas	3 Year Prior	2 Year Prior	1 Year Prior	Start Year	1 Year Post-Start	2 Year Post-Start	3 Year Post-Start	Number of Participants
Alberta Oil Sands	\$13,934	\$17,343	\$16,509	\$12,845	\$21,263	\$30,715	\$46,557	77
NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas	\$14,354	\$15,222	\$16,483	\$19,128	\$23,240	\$25,525	\$26,729	656
Nunavut Fishing Industry	\$8,697	\$9,202	\$9,006	\$7,280	\$9,372	\$13,128	\$13,929	70
Alberta Construction	\$5,226	\$7,476	\$9,679	\$9,193	\$15,319	\$16,679	\$14,404	147
Manitoba Hydro	\$6,232	\$6,971	\$7,194	\$8,047	\$8,664	\$10,740	\$11,739	916
Vancouver/BC Construction	\$7,330	\$8,096	\$8,652	\$10,614	\$14,188	\$17,088	\$15,613	449
Northern Ontario Diamond Mining	\$2,178	\$2,947	\$2,715	\$1,188	\$2,423	\$12,991	\$13,365	20
NB Forestry	\$9,124	\$9,162	\$9,653	\$9,196	\$12,314	\$13,269	\$12,906	239
Total	\$8,971	\$9,842	\$10,480	\$11,560	\$14,406	\$16,869	\$17,610	2,574
Source: Administrative data								

³¹ The Northern Ontario Diamond Mining outcomes should be interpreted with caution as the number of participants from this project is very low (i.e. 20 participants).

Incidence of Employment

The incidence of employment of participants in all ASEP projects three years after the start of participation was identical (79.9%) to the incidence of employment in the year preceding participation (80%). Participants in most ASEP projects only had a small decrease or increase (less than 5 percentage points) in their incidence of employment from the year before participation to the third year following the start of participation. However, participants in the following three projects experienced larger changes:

- Vancouver/BC Construction: increase of 8 percentage points;
- Northern Ontario Diamond Mining: increase of 50 percentage points;³²
- Alberta Construction: decrease of 14 percentage points.

Table A2: Incidence of Employment of 2003 ASEP EB Participants by Project Area								
Project Areas	3 Year Prior	2 Year Prior	1 Year Prior	Start Year	1 Year Post-Start	2 Year Post-Start	3 Year Post-Start	Number of Participants
Alberta Oil Sands	83.1%	89.6%	89.6%	90.9%	93.5%	94.8%	90.9%	77
NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas	88.9%	92.1%	93.9%	94.2%	94.7%	92.4%	91.3%	656
Nunavut Fishing Industry	84.3%	81.4%	78.6%	78.6%	75.7%	77.1%	78.6%	70
Alberta Construction	73.5%	87.8%	93.9%	93.2%	94.6%	95.2%	79.6%	147
Manitoba Hydro	67.8%	72.7%	73.8%	76.6%	71.6%	71.7%	71.2%	916
Vancouver/BC Construction	64.4%	66.1%	73.0%	79.5%	88.2%	85.7%	81.1%	449
Northern Ontario Diamond Mining	25.0%	20.0%	15.0%	25.0%	50.0%	65.0%	65.0%	20
NB Forestry	73.2%	71.1%	72.8%	72.4%	79.1%	79.1%	78.2%	239
Total	74.0%	77.5%	80.0%	82.2%	83.0%	82.2%	79.9%	2,574
Source: Administrative data								

³² This result should be interpreted with caution as the sample for this project contained only 20 participants.

Use of EI

The largest amount of EI benefits received three years after the start of participation was for the NB Forestry participants, who collected an average of \$5,161. Participants in all other projects received, on average, \$2K less during that same year. In proportional terms, the largest increase in EI benefits received between the year prior to participation and the third year following the beginning of participation was found for participants in Northern Ontario Diamond Mining³³ (increase of \$1,127 or 1,238%) and Alberta construction (increase of \$1,108 or 332%).

Table A3: Mean EI Benefits Received of 2003 ASEP EB Participants by Project Areas

Project Areas	3 Year Prior	2 Year Prior	1 Year Prior	Start Year	1 Year Post-Start	2 Year Post-Start	3 Year Post-Start	Number of Participants
Alberta Oil Sands	\$1,013	\$872	\$1,215	\$1,433	\$530	\$517	\$851	77
NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas	\$1,475	\$1,468	\$1,657	\$1,941	\$1,838	\$1,560	\$1,977	656
Nunavut Fishing Industry	\$898	\$1,547	\$1,313	\$561	\$1,109	\$1,671	\$1,866	70
Alberta Construction	\$424	\$580	\$334	\$412	\$746	\$863	\$1,442	147
Manitoba Hydro	\$1,144	\$1,362	\$1,556	\$1,479	\$1,907	\$1,695	\$1,709	916
Vancouver/BC Construction	\$1,118	\$1,063	\$1,156	\$879	\$898	\$996	\$1,601	449
Northern Ontario Diamond Mining	\$707	\$0	\$91	\$929	\$0	\$0	\$1,218	20
NB Forestry	\$3,450	\$3,819	\$4,123	\$3,991	\$4,648	\$4,677	\$5,161	239
Total	\$1,383	\$1,500	\$1,652	\$1,634	\$1,824	\$1,719	\$2,039	2,574
Source: Administrative data								

³³ This outcome should be interpreted with caution as the number of participants from this project is very low (i.e. 20 participants).

As shown in Table A4, the mean number of weeks spent on EI by participants in all projects combined increased very slightly from the year before participation (5.4 weeks) to the third year following the beginning of participation (5.6 weeks). The average number of weeks spent on EI in the third year following the start of participation by participants in various ASEP projects ranged from 2.1 weeks for the Alberta Oil Sands to 15.2 weeks for the NB Forestry.

**Table A4: Mean Weeks EI Benefits Received
of 2003 ASEP EB Participants by Project Area**

Projects Areas	3 Year Prior	2 Year Prior	1 Year Prior	Start Year	1 Year Post- Start	2 Year Post- Start	3 Year Post- Start	Number of Participants
Alberta Oil Sands	3.0	2.4	3.8	3.8	1.3	1.3	2.1	77
NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas	4.3	4.3	4.8	5.3	4.8	3.9	4.8	656
Nunavut Fishing Industry	3.2	4.1	3.5	1.5	3.1	4.3	4.7	70
Alberta Construction	1.8	2.0	1.3	1.3	2.1	2.3	3.8	147
Manitoba Hydro	4.3	5.0	5.6	5.2	6.4	5.3	5.0	916
Vancouver/ BC Construction	3.6	3.6	3.7	2.9	2.8	2.8	4.3	449
Northern Ontario Diamond Mining	1.8	0.0	0.3	2.3	0.0	0.0	2.9	20
NB Forestry	11.7	12.5	13.5	12.4	13.7	13.8	15.2	239
Total	4.7	5.0	5.4	5.1	5.5	4.9	5.6	2,574
Source: Administrative data								

As presented in Table A5, the change in the percentage of participants receiving EI benefits between the year prior to participation and the third year following participation start ranged across ASEP projects from a decrease of 9.1 percentage points for the Alberta Oil Sands to an increase of 16.4 percentage points for the Alberta Construction and an increase of 12.8 percentage points for the Nunavut Fishing Industry project.

Table A5: Percent of 2003 ASEP EB Participants with EI Benefits by Project Area								
Project Areas	3 Year Prior	2 Year Prior	1 Year Prior	Start Year	1 Year Post-Start	2 Year Post-Start	3 Year Post-Start	Number of Participants
Alberta Oil Sands	16.9%	19.5%	20.8%	18.2%	10.4%	10.4%	11.7%	77
NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas	22.1%	20.6%	22.7%	25.2%	22.9%	20.6%	22.0%	656
Nunavut Fishing Industry	17.1%	15.7%	14.3%	11.4%	24.3%	27.1%	27.1%	70
Alberta Construction	9.5%	8.8%	8.8%	8.8%	15.6%	17.0%	25.2%	147
Manitoba Hydro	20.0%	23.7%	23.9%	25.5%	26.1%	24.0%	23.4%	916
Vancouver/BC Construction	19.6%	20.5%	19.8%	19.4%	20.5%	21.4%	28.5%	449
Northern Ontario Diamond Mining	10.0%	0.0%	5.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	20
NB Forestry	50.2%	50.2%	53.1%	51.9%	53.6%	53.6%	55.6%	239
Total	22.4%	23.4%	24.2%	25.1%	25.5%	24.5%	26.7%	2,574
Source: Administrative data								

Use of Social Assistance

The largest increase in Social Assistance benefits received between the year preceding participation and the third year following participation start was found for participants in Alberta Construction, who saw their average amount of Social Assistance benefits collected increase by \$1,531 from the year before participation (\$1,223) to the third year following the start of participation (\$2,754). In contrast, participants in some projects had small decreases in their amount of Social Assistance benefits collected during that same period of time. The largest decrease was found for participants in the Alberta Oil and Sands, who had a decrease of \$220. These participants reduced their use of Social Assistance benefits from \$428 in the year preceding participation to \$208 in the third year following the beginning of participation.

**Table A6: Mean Social Assistance Benefits
of 2003 ASEP EB Participants by Project Area**

Project Areas	3 Year Prior	2 Year Prior	1 Year Prior	Start Year	1 Year Post-Start	2 Year Post-Start	3 Year Post-Start	Number of Participants
Alberta Oil Sands	\$703	\$690	\$428	\$242	\$371	\$549	\$208	65
NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas	\$241	\$215	\$280	\$334	\$328	\$487	\$592	595
Nunavut – Fishing Industry	\$1,428	\$2,106	\$2,088	\$2,561	\$2,666	\$1,651	\$1,906	58
Alberta Construction	\$1,294	\$1,155	\$1,223	\$978	\$1,193	\$2,374	\$2,754	99
Manitoba Hydro	\$424	\$409	\$360	\$320	\$383	\$380	\$354	810
Vancouver/BC Construction	\$1,357	\$1,062	\$832	\$869	\$995	\$1,004	\$1,031	349
Northern Ontario Diamond Mining	\$701	\$725	\$38	\$0	\$55	\$142	\$199	19
NB – Forestry	\$185	\$115	\$128	\$218	\$92	\$154	\$95	185
Total	\$580	\$523	\$480	\$490	\$532	\$626	\$650	2,180

Source: Administrative data

As shown in table A7, the change in percentage of participants receiving Social Assistance benefits from the year preceding participation and the third year following participation start ranged from a decrease of 6.9 percentage points for the Nunavut Fishing Industry (i.e. from 58.6% to 51.7%) to a gain of 6.2 percentage points for the NWT Diamond Mining and NWT Oil and Gas projects (from 10.9% to 17.1%).

Table A7: Percent of 2003 ASEP EB Participants with Social Assistance Benefits by Project Area

Project Areas	3 Year Prior	2 Year Prior	1 Year Prior	Start Year	1 Year Post-Start	2 Year Post-Start	3 Year Post-Start	Number of Participants
Alberta Oil Sands	8.3%	14.5%	12.5%	13.6%	7.1%	11.6%	9.2%	65
NWT Diamond Mining/Oil and Gas	12.7%	10.4%	10.9%	11.8%	11.1%	14.4%	17.1%	595
Nunavut – Fishing	50.8%	56.4%	58.6%	60.7%	75.0%	50.8%	51.7%	58
Alberta Construction	32.8%	26.4%	30.1%	28.2%	28.1%	29.9%	33.3%	99
Manitoba Hydro	9.7%	7.9%	8.3%	6.1%	8.6%	8.9%	6.2%	810
Vancouver/BC Construction	30.6%	27.3%	22.8%	20.9%	22.0%	20.4%	19.5%	349
Northern Ontario Diamond Mining	16.7%	10.5%	5.0%	0.0%	5.0%	5.3%	5.3%	19
NB Forestry	5.0%	2.5%	1.9%	4.3%	2.0%	2.0%	1.6%	185
Total	15.6%	13.5%	13.2%	12.6%	13.3%	13.8%	13.4%	2,180

Source: Administrative data

Annex B

Project Cost per Participants

Table B1: ASEP 2003 Projects – Cost per Participants				
	Location	Industry	Average Cost per Participant (HRSDC Contribution)	Average Cost per Participant (Total Including HRSDC and Partners Contributions)
JBET Training Society	ON	Mining	\$10,611	\$16,543
Trade Winds to Success Project	AB	Construction	\$8,841	\$14,103
VanAsep Construction Careers Project	BC	Construction	\$5,896	\$17,670
Nunavut Fisheries Training Consortium	NU	Fishing	\$24,355	\$39,682
Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative	MB	Construction	\$9,020	\$11,357
NWT Oil and Gas Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership: Skills Development Strategy	NWT	Oil and Gas	\$8,057	\$11,217
People, Land and Opportunities	NB	Forestry	\$4,959	\$11,692
NWT Industrial Mining Skills Strategy	NWT	Mining	\$21,143	\$40,114
Wood Buffalo Partners in Aboriginal Training	AB	Oil Sands	\$17,438	\$30,638
All Projects			\$9,705	\$16,484

Table B2: ASEP 2007–2009 Projects – Cost per Participants

Project Title	Location	Industry	Average Cost per Participant (HRSDC Contribution)	Average Cost per Participant (Total Including HRSDC and Partners Contributions)
Aboriginal Workforce Development of NB	NB	Energy/ Construction/ Manufacturing	\$11,813	\$19,337
Prince Rupert Aboriginal Skills Employment Partnership Project	BC	Transportation	\$4,336	\$5,069
Training for Nunavut's Development Fishing Industry	Nunavut	Fishery	\$9,647	\$20,059
Building on Success: New Directions for Mine Training in the Northwest Territories	NWT	Mining	\$13,999	\$25,090
<i>Création d'un centre de formation professionnelle autochtone pour les métiers de la construction</i>	QC	Construction	\$5,009	\$11,043
NorthEast Aboriginal Skills and Employment Program	BC	Oil and Gas/Trades	\$14,977	\$19,671
An'onwentsa	QC	Tourism	\$11,394	\$24,879
Aboriginal Aerospace Employment Initiative	MB	Aviation/Aerospace	\$9,482	\$17,224
Van ASEP 2008-2012 Hydro Project	BC	Construction/ Energy	\$6,683	\$12,602
Whitefeather Forest Training Initiative	ON	Mining/Tourism/ Forestry	\$14,618	\$16,670
Trade Winds to Success II	AB	Construction/ Trades	\$4,326	\$7,895
Matachewan's Aboriginal Access to Mining Jobs Training Strategy Inc.	ON	Mining	\$6,091	\$14,703
Unama'ki Partnership for Prosperity	NS	Commercial Construction	\$7,579	\$14,819
Northern Career Quest Partnership	SK	Mining/Oil and Gas	\$7,103	\$15,161
Partnership, People, Production: Get into it	YK	Mining	\$7,708	\$14,211
PTP ASEP Training Society	BC	Natural Gas	\$9,266	\$14,233
Seven Generations	NS	Tourism Construction	\$3,355	\$8,786
Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership	NL	Hydro Construction	\$20,489	\$24,730

Table B2: ASEP 2007–2009 Projects – Cost per Participants				
Project Title	Location	Industry	Average Cost per Participant (HRSDC Contribution)	Average Cost per Participant (Total Including HRSDC and Partners Contributions)
BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association	BC	Mineral/Mining Exploration	\$4,445	\$9,105
Building Inuvialuit Potential Society	NWT	Construction/ Marine/ Transportation	\$8,959	\$10,383
Our People, Our Future	NWT	Oil and Gas/ Construction	\$5,217	\$8,876
Bridges & Foundations for Aboriginal Development	SK	Construction	\$2,406	\$3,458
Average (all projects combined)			\$8,011	\$13,894

