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December 2009

Summative Evaluation of the Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Development Agreement

Final Report
March 2009

Strategic Policy and Research Branch

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Canada 

*Summative Evaluation of the
Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market
Development Agreement*

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

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations and Terms	i
Executive Summary	iii
Management Response	ix
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Canada-Saskatchewan LMDA.....	1
1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Summative Evaluation	1
1.3 Guide to the Report.....	2
2. Evaluation Methodologies	3
2.1 Evaluation Strategy.....	3
2.1.1 Quantitative Methods	3
2.1.2 Qualitative Methods	5
2.2 Key Strengths and Limitations.....	5
3. Alignment and Program Participation	9
3.1 Consistency of PPSs with the EI Act and CS-LMDA	9
3.2 Characteristics of Participants.....	11
3.2.1 EI Part I and Part II Clients	11
3.2.2 Characteristics of Participants of Various PPSs.....	12
3.3 Participation under the CS-LMDA	13
3.3.1 Government Partners under the CS-LMDA.....	14
3.3.2 Client Targeting, Client Service and Relevance	15
3.3.3 Employer Participation and Relevance	18
3.3.4 Community Involvement and Relevance	18
3.4 A Review of Progress in Areas Identified by the Formative Evaluation.....	19
4. Impacts	21
4.1 Impacts on Participants	21
4.1.1 Impacts on Earnings and Hours of Work	21
4.1.2 Impacts on EI Weeks and the Amount of EI Received.....	23
4.1.3 Impacts on Skills and Employability	26
4.1.4 Participant Satisfaction.....	29
4.2 Impacts on Employers.....	30
4.2.1 Perceived Impacts on Hiring and Meeting Skill Shortages.....	30
4.2.2 Employer Satisfaction	31
4.3 The Apprenticeship Program	32
5. Overall Conclusions	35
5.1 Alignment of PPSs with the <i>EI Act</i> and CS-LMDA.....	35
5.2 Impacts on Participants	35
5.3 Impacts on Employers.....	37
5.4 Areas Identified for Consideration/Improvement.....	38

List of Tables

Table 1	Summary of Program Impacts by Type of Client.....	v
Table 3.1	Alignment of Provincial Programs and Services with Federal Employment Benefits and Support Measures.....	10
Table 4.1	Program Impacts on Annual Earnings and Average Hours Worked Following PPS Participation.....	22
Table 4.2	Program Impacts on EI in the Twelve Months Following PPS Participation.....	24
Table 4.3	Program Impacts on EI in the Twelve Months Following PPS Participation by Type of Program and Client Group.....	26

List of Abbreviations and Terms

List of Abbreviations

APE	Action Plan Equivalent
CBO	Community Based Organization (non-government organization)
CS-CESC	Canada-Saskatchewan Career Employment Services Centre
CS-LMDA	Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Development Agreement
EAS	Employment Assistance Services
EBSM	Employment Benefits and Support Measures
EI	Employment Insurance
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
LMDA	Labour Market Development Agreement
LMI	Labour Market Information
OCSM	One Client Service Model
PPS	Provincial Programs and Services
PTA	Provincial Training Allowance
RC	Regional College
SIAST	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
STB	Skills Training Benefit

List of Terms

<i>Action plan equivalent:</i>	A series of interventions strung together within six months of each other.
<i>Active EI clients:</i>	Individuals in receipt of EI Part I benefits.
<i>EI clients:</i>	Individuals in receipt of EI Part I or EI Part II benefits.
<i>EI Part I benefits:</i>	Financial assistance provided under Part I of the <i>EI Act</i> . These benefits provide income support to people who lose their jobs. The income benefits provided under EI Part I are temporary and vary in amount and duration according to various criteria (e.g. the person's wage rate and hours worked in the qualifying period, and the regional unemployment rate). Eligibility for EI Part I benefits is based on the number of hours that the person has worked.

<i>EI Part II benefits:</i>	EBSMs or PPSs provided under Part II of the <i>EI Act</i> . These benefits, also referred to as active employment benefits, are designed to help individuals obtain work. These benefits are only available to eligible participants (active and former/reachback EI claimants) and generally involve medium or long-duration interventions with clients. The support measures (e.g. Employment Assistance Services) generally consist of short-duration interventions or services offered through external organizations and are available to all unemployed individuals.
<i>Reachback EI clients:</i>	Individuals no longer on an active EI Part I claim, but still eligible for Part II benefits under the <i>EI Act</i> .
<i>Three-year reachback client:</i>	An individual having an EI claim that ended in the last three years.
<i>Five-year reachback client:</i>	An individual who left the labour market to start a maternity or parental claim in the last five years and is now re-entering the labour market.
<i>Program period:</i>	The period during which EI Part II clients under study participated in PPSs (i.e. length of the APE).
<i>Post-program period:</i>	The time frame following the program period.
<i>Pre-program period:</i>	The time frame preceding the program period.

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the summative evaluation of the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) between the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan under Part II of the *Employment Insurance (EI) Act*. The evaluation examined program impacts in the case of program participants with a participation end date between April 1, 2003 and December 31, 2004.

The *Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Agreement* (CS-LMDA) is a full transfer agreement. Under the CS-LMDA, Saskatchewan provides a variety of provincial employment programs and services (PPSs) for EI eligible clients. The PPSs are funded through the EI Account and are considered to be similar to Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs) under EI Part II. The PPSs are delivered jointly by Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services Centres (CS-CESCs), the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIASST), Regional Colleges (RCs), and community based organizations.

The most broadly used client-oriented PPSs may be grouped into four categories.

- **Group 1 (self service)** consists of various self-service activities. Under this type of intervention, clients visit a CS-CESC to use a computer for job search, to browse other posted material (such as job postings) and to access labour market information. Group 1 has no counterpart under EBSMs.
- **Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy)** consists of Work Placement, Community Works and work experience placements under components of Job Start/Future Skills. This type of intervention combines on-the-job training and wage subsidies to employers. Group 2 aligns with Targeted Wage Subsidies under EBSMs.
- **Group 3 (formal counselling)** consists of career counselling. This type of intervention provides services such as action planning, assessment, life skills and employability training. Group 3 aligns with Employment Assistance Services under EBSMs.
- **Group 4 (financial assistance for training)** includes the Skills Training Benefit (STB) which is a financial subsidy program for EI clients. Group 4 aligns with Skills Development under EBSMs.

Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The summative evaluation was focused on determining program impacts on clients, particularly program impacts on annual earnings, average hours of work per week and EI benefits received. The evaluation also assessed whether the objectives inherent in the principles and guidelines of the *EI Act* and CS-LMDA have been met.

The impact analysis focused on estimating net/incremental program impacts (i.e. changes that would not have occurred in the absence of the programs and services) for PPS

participants with a participation end date between April 1, 2003 and December 31, 2004. The impacts were examined using EI administrative data, a survey of program participants and a survey of individuals selected as members of a comparison group. The comparison group was selected using a two stage matching process: (i) propensity score matching (based on administrative data) was used to select the sample of comparison cases that would be contacted for the comparison group survey; and (ii) a second round of matching (based on administrative data plus survey data) was used to make the final selection of the most appropriate comparison cases for the impact analysis.

Program impacts were measured in terms of the difference-in-differences¹ estimation technique. Program impacts on annual earnings were assessed as of the current job at the time of the survey. Program impacts on average hours of work per week were estimated with respect to the first job following the completion of the program. The EI impacts were measured for a period of 52 weeks following the end of program participation.

The summative evaluation used multiple lines of evidence to validate/corroborate findings by cross-referencing a number of sources. This includes evidence obtained from twelve focus groups consisting of participants and non-participants, and surveys of service providers. This also includes two employer surveys: one designed for employers who had used only the labour market information and labour exchange elements (posting jobs), and the other designed for employers who had participated directly in other types of labour market programming funded by the CS-LMDA (such as wage subsidy and training programs).

Main Findings

PPSs are consistent with the EI Act and the CS-LMDA. Prior to the implementation of the CS-LMDA, the federal and provincial governments entered into negotiations to align PPSs with EBSMs under EI Part II. Key informant interviews with senior provincial and federal managers confirmed that the alignment of PPSs with EBSMs was done successfully and that PPSs are consistent with the principles, guidelines and intent of the *EI Act* and the CS-LMDA.

A number of improvements have been made in design and delivery under the CS-LMDA since the formative evaluation (completed December 2001). RCs and SIAST have become more active in the delivery of services under the CS-LMDA and have provided an additional pathway for clients to participate in PPSs. Progress has also been made in addressing many of the initial difficulties encountered in the collection and sharing of program data by orders of government. There is, however, room for additional improvements. For example, room still exists to increase/improve awareness of the availability and usefulness of PPSs among EI clients and employers. As well, room still exists to improve the referral process and the use of back-to-work plans. The data capture of interventions pursued by EI clients needs improvement. As well, privacy issues continue to limit information sharing between the federal and provincial governments.

¹ Measuring impacts in terms of difference-in-differences involves comparing the mean differences between the pre- and post-program values of the participants and comparison group outcome variables, while the matching algorithm controls for other factors that could affect the outcome variables.

PPSs under the CS-LMDA have produced statistically significant² net³ impacts for participants in relation to annual earnings, average hours worked per week and EI. There is also evidence of impacts on levels of education, skills and employability.

Type of Client	Type of Impact (Net Change)			
	Annual Earnings	Average Hours of Work Per Week	Number of Weeks of EI Benefits	Amount of EI Benefits Received
All PPS participants (overall program level)	\$3,958* (0.08)	3.77 (0.12)	-1.20*** (<0.001)	-\$316*** (<0.001)
Active clients	\$5,026** (0.03)	4.55* (0.08)	-0.85*** (<0.001)	-\$207*** (<0.001)
Reachback clients	1,426 (0.23)	1.87 (0.27)	-1.63*** (<0.001)	-\$453*** (<0.001)

Note: p-values are shown in brackets. A p-value of "<0.001" indicates that the confidence level is greater than 99%. In other words, the p-value of "<0.001" indicates that the likelihood that a point-estimate is due to chance is less than 1%.

* statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.
 ** statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
 *** statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

- Table 1 shows that at the overall program level, on average, *PPS participants* had a statistically significant gain (at the 90% confidence level)⁴ in annual earnings of \$3,958 per person and an estimated (but not statistically significant) gain of 3.77 in average hours worked per week. Table 1 also shows that PPS participants had a statistically significant decrease of 1.20 weeks in EI benefits received and a statistically significant decrease of \$316 in the amount of EI received in the twelve months following program participation.
 - In the case of *active clients*, there was a significant gain in annual earnings of \$5,026 and a significant gain (at the 90% confidence level) of 4.55 in average hours worked per week. As well, there was a significant decrease of 0.85 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$207 in the amount of EI received.
 - In the case of *reachback clients*,⁵ there was a significant decrease of 1.63 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$453 in the amount of EI received.

² Impacts describes as “statistically significant” or “significant” are statistically significant at the standard 95% confidence level or more, unless otherwise indicated. Significance at the 95% confidence level means that we can say with 95% confidence that there is a true impact, and the likelihood that the difference in the observed outcome happened by chance is less than 5%.

³ Net or incremental impacts refer to impacts on individuals over and above what would have occurred without the assistance of the program. The net impacts are from Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

⁴ The estimate is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level, rather than at the standard 95% confidence level. This means that we can say with 90% confidence that there is a true impact, and the likelihood that the difference in the observed outcome happened by chance is less than 10%.

⁵ Individuals who had an EI Part I claim that ended in the last three years or had an EI Part I maternity or paternal claim in the last five years resulting from their exit from the labour force to care for a child.

The estimated impacts on annual earnings (\$1,426) and on average hours worked per week (1.87 hours) were not significant.

- For clients participating in **Group 1 (self service) interventions**, on average, there was a statistically significant decrease of 1.33 weeks in EI benefits received and a statistically significant decrease of \$347 in the amount of EI received in the twelve months following participation. The estimated impacts on annual earnings (\$2,218) and on average hours worked per week (3.76 hours) were not significant.
- The samples for the Group 2, Group 3 and Group 4 interventions were not large enough to estimate the impacts on earnings and hours of work. The use of the larger pre-survey sample to estimate EI impacts found that in the twelve months following program participation, on average, PPS participation resulted in a statistically significant decrease in the weeks and amount of EI received in the case of Groups 3 and 4.
 - For participants with **Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy) interventions**, the estimated impacts on the weeks (an increase of 0.2 weeks) and amount of EI received (a decrease of \$138) were not significant.
 - Participants with **Group 3 (formal counselling) interventions** had a significant decrease of 1.58 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$381 in the amount of EI received.
 - Participants with **Group 4 (financial assistance for training) interventions** had a significant decrease of 1.98 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$494 in the amount of EI received.
- The pre-survey sample was also used to examine EI impacts for the PPS groups by type of client in the twelve months following PPS participation. The analysis found that PPS participation resulted in some statistically significant impacts by type of client in the case of Group 1, 3 and 4.
 - For **Group 1 (self service) and Group 3 (formal counselling) interventions**, there were significant decreases in weeks of EI benefits received in the case of active clients (a decrease of 0.62 weeks for Group 1, and a decrease of 0.94 weeks for Group 3) and reachback clients (a decrease of 2.37 weeks for Group 1, and a decrease of 1.99 weeks for Group 3). For Groups 1 and 3, there was also a significant decrease in the amount of EI received in the case of reachback clients (a decrease of \$668 for Group 1, and a decrease of \$458 for Group 3). In the case of Group 3, there was also a significant decrease (at the 90% confidence level) in the amount of EI received by active clients (a decrease of \$261).
 - For **Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy) interventions**, the point-estimates suggested a slight increase in weeks of EI benefits received and a decrease in the amount of EI received in the case of both active clients and reachback clients, but none of these estimates were significant.

- For **Group 4 (financial assistance for training) interventions**, there was a significant decrease of 2.75 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$685 in the amount of EI received by active clients. In the case of reachback clients, there was a significant increase of 1.8 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant increase (at the 90% confidence level) of \$436 in the amount of EI received.
- **Education and skill levels increased among PPS participants between the pre- and post-program periods.** The participant survey found that the percentage of PPS participants who were SIAST/regional college graduates increased from 18% to 29%, and the percentage of participants who were university graduates increased from 9% to 12%. In addition, 81% of the surveyed participants felt that their job skills increased following their intervention.
- **Almost half (46%) of the surveyed participants felt that their PPS intervention was important in obtaining their most recent job.** Among all PPSs, participants in the skills/trades training program were the most likely to feel that their intervention positively affected their ability to find employment. For example, most (88%) of the skills/trades training group felt that the training they received provided them with skills that would help them find longer-term employment.

There is some evidence of beneficial employer impacts. For example, the majority of surveyed employers who had used a provincial program within the last three years felt that the program had helped fill job vacancies (67%) and/or met their human resource needs (66%). Over half indicated that they would not have hired an employee without the program (57%) and/or indicated that they would not have provided on-the-job training without the program (54%). At the same time, however, there appears to be room for improvement. Less than half (38%) of the surveyed employers who had used a provincial program within the last three years felt that the program helped meet skill shortages. Similarly, 18% felt that PPSs increased their organization's access to skilled employees. This suggests that future programming could consider whether changes in program design and delivery would make PPSs more effective in helping to meet skill shortages.

Based on the findings that emerged from the summative evaluation, a number of areas were identified for consideration and/or improvement.

- Further improvements are required to address gaps in data capture and information sharing (e.g. work remains to be done to improve the data capture of interventions pursued by EI clients, and privacy issues continue to limit information sharing between the federal and provincial governments).
- There is room to increase/improve awareness of the availability and usefulness of PPSs among EI clients and employers.
- Room still exists to improve the referral process.
- Room still exists to increase/improve the use of back-to-work plans.

- Linkages with employers need to be strengthened. This could include implementing changes in the design and delivery of training programs to be more effective in helping to meet skill shortages.
- As part of the planning processes around PPSs, consider whether there are ways to address other impediments to re-employment that were identified by focus group participants but did not fall within the scope of PPSs (e.g. lack of mobility).

Management Response

Introduction

Saskatchewan Advanced Education, Employment and Labour (AEEL), the Saskatchewan Region of Service Canada (SC) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) would like to thank all those who participated in the Summative Evaluation of the Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Development Agreement (CS-LMDA), and are pleased to provide this Management Response (MR).

Under the CS-LMDA, Saskatchewan is funded to provide an array of provincial programs and services (PPS) that mirror in intent the Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs) previously provided by Canada using Part II funds from the Employment Insurance (EI) account. The CS-LMDA is a “full transfer” Agreement in which Saskatchewan received a transfer of full-time equivalent positions along with funds to assume responsibility to provide services intended to expedite a quick return to work for individuals deemed by Canada to be eligible for EI benefits.

The Summative Evaluation deals with data related to program participants whose intervention ended between April 1, 2003 and December 31, 2004. The Saskatchewan labour market has changed significantly. Saskatchewan is now a “have” province within Canada, making it a contributor to rather than a recipient of transfer payments. Its unemployment rate, (seasonally unadjusted, 5.2% in March 2009), is the lowest in Canada. According to Labour Force Survey, the overall number of people in Saskatchewan who are not in the labour force declined from 128,000 in 1999 to 115,200 in 2008. (*AEEL, April 09*). Any changes to policies would need to be based on current realities as some recommendations may no longer be valid. That acknowledged, Saskatchewan has worked closely with Canada and will continue to do so to identify pertinent findings from this and other research that is jointly managed in an effort to address labour market growth and development.

Key Findings

Program Participants

According to the 2001 Census, which was the most current at the time the evaluation was initiated, EI Part I recipients differed slightly from the general Saskatchewan working-age population and labour force in that they tended to be male, younger and located in northern Saskatchewan. Administrative data (2003-04) reviewed as part of the evaluation indicate 12% of PPS participants were self-declared Aboriginal, close to one-third were between 25 and 34 years of age, slightly over one-quarter (27%) were in northern Saskatchewan and 28% were in Saskatoon. These findings have helped inform provincial determination of the type of service needed and the distribution of human resource capacity to deliver it. Additional capacity for northern Saskatchewan has been addressed by an increase in service delivery to encompass two additional communities on an

itinerant basis, and the addition of two counselling and self-service expertise positions to the overall staff complement on the west side where there is significant oil and gas, mining and Alberta Tar Sands exploration related activity.

Another finding of this Report is that at the 60 month (5 year) point, reachback clients were more often located in southern Saskatchewan and Regina. The province has strengthened its capacity to provide the “group 3” or formal counselling services identified as useful to this group, and enhanced this capacity in southern Saskatchewan, where the report indicates they are most likely to be sought.

According to information generated by this Evaluation, PPS provided services to 8,942 EI Active claimants for the 2003-04 fiscal year. This exceeded the target of 5,200. Regional colleges and Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIASST) have successfully provided PPS, and addressed initial concerns about regional consistency being addressed.

This evaluation identified a need to improve client services by strengthening awareness of PPS among EI eligible clients and others who might benefit from them. This finding, in combination with changing labour force demand generated by its robust economy, led to the creation of Saskatchewan’s premier job site, www.saskjobs.ca, which is linked to the national jobsite (www.servicecanada.gc.ca). Information on PPS is available through the SaskJobs site. As well, job seekers and employers have access to information contained in products such as Saskatchewan Job Futures, a collaborative publication of the two orders of government. SaskJobs is now widely advertised within Saskatchewan and has been highlighted in recruiting missions to other areas of the country that aim to address Saskatchewan’s current need for both general and skilled labour.

Impacts of PPSs on Clients

The Summative Evaluation demonstrates that PPS have generated, “...statistically significant net/incremental impacts for participants in the areas of annual earnings, average hours worked per week and EI. There is also evidence of impacts on levels of education, skills and employability”. Specifically, these include:

EI Use: All groups assessed through the report experienced a decrease in their reliance on EI. At the overall program level, PPS resulted in a net decrease of 1.2 weeks of EI benefits, which translates to a net decrease of \$316 in EI benefits across all PPS.

Earnings: Overall, those who participated in PPS experienced a significant (90% confidence level) gain in annual earnings, up by \$3,958. Active clients gained over \$5,000 in annual earnings. These results are consistent with those of other jurisdictions.

Employment: Almost half (46%) of participants indicated that participation in a PPS was important to obtaining their recent jobs, with nearly eighty percent (78%) saying they were satisfied with the PPS they received.

Changes in Skill Level and Education: The percentage of PPS participants who were graduates of SIASST increased from eighteen to twenty-nine percent (18% to 29%); the

percentage who were university graduates rose from nine per cent to twelve per cent (9% to 12%). Within the Apprenticeship Program, the level of SIAST graduation rose from nine per cent to fifty-five per cent (9% to 55%). The importance of skills-related training to employment and the labour market is indicated by projections such as Saskatchewan Job Futures and other labour market information products. Acknowledging the importance of this area, the province has increased skills training capacity available through SIAST and the regional colleges. It has also introduced a collaborative endeavour between the K-12 system, the post-secondary training sector, industry and government through establishment of the Saskatoon and Regina Trades and Skills Centres. These initiatives do not target EI eligible clients, but rather address the issue of transitions to the labour market for youth, many of whom are of First Nations or Métis ancestry, who live in the province's two largest urban centres.

Access to Service in French

The participant survey demonstrated that clients who requested services in French were able to obtain these services in French. While the demand for French language services remains low, Saskatchewan remains committed to providing French language services wherever there is significant demand, as stipulated in the LMDA.

Impacts of PPSs on Employers

The majority (two-thirds) of employers surveyed for this Report indicated that Saskatchewan's PPS helped them fill job vacancies and/or meet their human resource needs. Over half of employers indicated they would not have hired an employee or provided on-the-job training without the PPS.

Just thirty-eight per cent of employers surveyed as part of the Summative Evaluation felt the PPS they had used had a significant impact on their organization with respect to increasing the skill level of individual program participants. The Evaluation identified a need for enhanced work with employers to assist in the areas of workforce planning, recruitment and retention.

Since the Summative Evaluation was initiated, Saskatchewan has entered into a boom cycle in which the convergence of an ageing and retiring workforce with industry diversification and expansion have led to increased demand for skilled as well as general workers. Assistance to employers to plan human resources, including attraction and retention strategies, has grown. Saskatchewan's Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour (AEEL) has expanded its work with employers to include participation with government on recruitment trips within Canada and to foreign countries. At the regional level, both Saskatchewan and Canada work with industry and relevant sister ministries (Enterprise Saskatchewan; Industry Canada) to target recruitment to address region-specific needs identified through collaborative planning tables that encompass other significant labour market players including Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis organizations, the regionally-based training delivery system, and local community infrastructure.

Data Capture and Information Sharing

Gaps in data capture related to PPS interventions and information sharing between the two orders of government were identified as an issue in this research. Throughout the term of the Summative Evaluation, discussions have occurred and changes put in place to address this issue. Although some progress has been made, more must be accomplished if client-centred services are to be readily available to eligible individuals. Saskatchewan and Canada are working to ensure appropriate protocols are in place to share information about PPS provided and outcomes generated through them without compromising personal information that provincial and federal protection of privacy and freedom of information laws were put in place to protect. Also, continuous improvements to the One Client Service Model (OCSM), the provincial PPS data system, have helped address the issue of data capture and outcome tracking.

Referral Process

Co-location of services helps ensure timely and effective information flow that benefits clients. However, this research has identified a need to provide more consistent and timely information about PPS to EI eligible clients so that they take advantage of the interventions available to manage a quick return to work that can occur before their EI Part I benefits are ended. Ensuring that all EI eligible clients are aware of, and appropriately referred to, PPS will require commitment to on-going collaborative work between the two orders of government at the provincial and regional levels. As mentioned, their participation with other agents (regional college, SIAST, First Nations and Métis organizations) in planning tables at the regional level helps ensure information-sharing. It is also a venue through which information about policy changes that may occur or be warranted in light of continuous monitoring of client uptake, employer needs and other markers of the labour market can flow.

Since the Summative Evaluation data was collected and analysed, AEEL has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the provincial Ministry of Social Services (formerly Department of Community Resources and Employment). This MOU establishes the terms and conditions under which the two provincial ministries collaborate to deliver the Saskatchewan “Jobs First” program in selected communities. Staff of CS-CES work with staff at Social Services to deliver the Jobs First program, which diverts individuals from reliance on Income Assistance (IA) programs by helping them secure an attachment to the labour force through employment. In Saskatchewan’s current economy, most who are able and willing to work are in the labour market. This leads to the circumstance of those who have multiple barriers to firm labour market attachment being among the unemployed who may become reliant on IA. In an effort to address some of the barriers this group has, PPS now include pilots to provide Workplace Essential Skills options through partnerships among industry, the province and the federal government through the Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Agreement (LMA).

Use of Action Plans (Back-to-work Plans)

The research indicated that less than one-third of the program group survey respondents had completed an action plan, the first step in the CS-LMDA intervention process. Since this finding was made, use of a back-to-work plan (action plan) to help guide an individual's plans to return to work during a spell of unemployment, or to help him/her develop additional skills through training prior to returning to work, has been identified by provincial CS-CES staff as a priority. Saskatchewan's changed economic circumstances have resulted in increased employment opportunities and employment. Although there is no specific evaluative evidence base through which to validate or disprove this observation, CS-CES office staff working with job-seekers have observed that these individuals increasingly have multiple barriers to employment and weak labour force attachment history.

Other impediments to re-employment (age discrimination; lack of mobility due to family or other obligations)

The evaluation indicted participants in PPS felt there were other impediments to their swift return to employment. The key impediments cited were discrimination against older workers and the inability of a worker to relocate to a centre where employment existed due to family or other obligations.

Changes in the labour market since conclusion of this evaluation have resulted in an increased demand for both general and skilled workers. Programs such as the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers have come into play since research for this report was done. Combined with the current labour force pressures and Saskatchewan's removal of mandatory retirement in 2007 may be helping to remove the age-discrimination barrier. The province's purchase and deployment of three mobile training laboratories have helped extend skills training capacity throughout the province. However, family obligations, which can include a broad range of considerations running from dual career families with children requiring care through housing availability and care of ageing parents or ill family members, are intricately linked to other areas of social policy. Changes to the Employment Insurance Program were made to include Compassionate Care Benefits, which took effect January 4, 2004, built on its maternity and paternal leave provisions. Collecting and analysing information pertaining to their impact in Saskatchewan would provide some follow up to this concern.

The government of Saskatchewan is committed to economic growth. This commitment is supported by regular review and analysis of the environment within which it exists as well as the array and content of programs and services available to meet the needs of both employers and job-seekers. The evidence from this evaluation will continue to impact programming and budget decisions as we move forward.

1. Introduction

Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) negotiated between the federal government and the provinces/territories are a result of the *Employment Insurance (EI) Act* of 1996. The *EI Act* has two main parts: Part I provides income support to people temporarily out of work, and Part II provides Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs) to help EI Part I clients return to work. Although the federal government is solely responsible for administering Part I benefits, LMDAs can be used to transfer responsibility for the design and delivery of Part II programs and services, along with financial resources and some personnel, to provinces and territories.

LMDAs may be “co-management” agreements or “transfer” agreements. Co-management agreements allow provinces and territories to provide input and share the management of federal programming. Transfer agreements involve provinces or territories designing and managing the delivery of Part II benefits, using either pre-existing or new provincial and territorial programming.

1.1 Canada-Saskatchewan LMDA

The *Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Development Agreement* (CS-LMDA) was signed in February 1998. The CS-LMDA is a full transfer agreement that uses pre-existing Saskatchewan programs and services as well as new initiatives, such as the Skills Training Benefit, to support the full range of Part II benefits and support measures. The employment programs under the CS-LMDA include wage subsidy and training programs. The service elements include a range of career and employment counselling and services. These programs, which are considered to be similar to the EBSMs of the *EI Act*, are funded through the EI Account and are commonly referred to as provincial programs and services (PPSs).

With the exception of the first year, when federal officials moved to the provincial government to deliver services not yet offered provincially, provincial bodies have delivered all CS-LMDA programs and services. Currently, PPSs are delivered jointly by the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services Centres (CS-CESCs), the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), Regional Colleges (RCs), and community based organizations (CBOs).

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Summative Evaluation

The CS-LMDA includes an evaluation strategy. As part of that strategy, a formative evaluation was completed in December 2001.⁶ The formative evaluation examined operational effectiveness and conducted a preliminary review of program outcomes.

⁶ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Formative Evaluation of the Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Development Agreement, 2001*.

The summative evaluation was undertaken to measure the extent to which PPSs are successful in achieving the objectives of the CS-LMDA. Specifically, the summative evaluation was focused on determining program impacts on clients by examining PPS participants with a participation end date between April 1, 2003 and December 31, 2004. The summative evaluation also assessed whether the objectives inherent in the principles and guidelines of the *EI Act* and CS-LMDA have been met.

The summative evaluation was managed by a Joint Evaluation Committee comprised of representatives from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Service Canada, Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment,⁷ and the Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources.

1.3 Guide to the Report

This overview report provides a summary of the summative evaluation and includes the following sections:

- Section 2 presents the evaluation methodology;
- Section 3 examines the alignment of the programs and services in Saskatchewan with the *EI Act* and the CS-LMDA (i.e. by comparing PPSs to EBSMs under Part II of the *EI Act*), and also examines issues related to the participation of government partners (i.e. federal and provincial government personnel), clients, employers and communities under the CS-LMDA;
- Section 4 presents the main findings regarding program impacts on participants and employers; and
- Section 5 highlights the main conclusions.

The information presented in this overview report is based on the final technical report of the summative evaluation⁸ and additional impact analysis that was conducted as part of the internal validation process.⁹

⁷ Formerly Saskatchewan Learning and the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training.

⁸ *Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Development Agreement Summative Evaluation Final Report*, prepared for the Joint Evaluation Committee, April 26, 2007.

⁹ An internal review and validation of the initial estimates of program impacts led to the revision of those estimates to address several types of bias (as discussed in Section 2.2). The revised estimates are presented in this overview report.

2. Evaluation Methodologies

This section presents the approach used to conduct the summative evaluation. It also highlights the key strengths and limitations of the evaluation strategy.

2.1 Evaluation Strategy

The approach developed for the summative evaluation was based on the use of multiple lines of evidence drawn from both quantitative and qualitative methods.

2.1.1 Quantitative Methods

The main focus of the summative evaluation was on measuring whether PPSs under the CS-LMDA have produced net/incremental impacts on participants (i.e. produced changes that would not have occurred in the absence of the programs and services). This measurement was undertaken primarily through quantitative analysis.

Administrative data analysis was used to help examine program participation, develop the sample frame for the survey of participants, choose the best possible comparison group sample frame and support the impact analysis. The range of administrative data included EI administrative files, and the T1 tax file and T4S files maintained by Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).¹⁰

A *participant survey* was undertaken to collect additional data on socio-economic characteristics, perceptions and experiences required to examine program impacts (leading to a post-survey sample of 1,485 participants).

A *non-participant survey* of individuals selected as members of a comparison group was undertaken to provide a basis for estimating the program impacts on participants. Propensity score matching was used to select the sample of comparison cases that would be contacted to complete the non-participant survey questionnaire.¹¹ Once the survey was completed, a second stage matching process was conducted to select the most appropriate comparison cases for the impact analysis¹² (leading to a sample of 1,079 non-participants).

¹⁰ With masked personal identifiers to protect privacy.

¹¹ An individual's propensity score (i.e. their propensity or statistical probability to participate in the program) is estimated by running a logit regression model. The regression model incorporates attributes, or conditioning variables, that are used for the purposes of matching such as gender, age, income, occupation group, location and reason for job separation. Participants are then matched to non-participants based on their propensity scores. The propensity score for any participant or non-participant provides a measure of the likelihood of program participation, based on the conditioning variables. The aggregate of matched non-participants forms the matched comparison group.

¹² Second stage matching uses the conditioning variables that are available from the administrative data plus those collected by the surveys. As a result, the second stage matching is able to expand the list of conditioning variables to include education, more details on marital status, number of dependents and household income.

Econometric modelling was conducted to provide estimates of net/incremental program impacts of PPSs on participants. The methodology relies on data derived from the participant survey, the non-participant (i.e. comparison group) survey as well as administrative data.¹³ A quasi-experimental approach was used to estimate program impacts because it was not possible to undertake a randomized experiment. The quasi-experimental approach aims to reproduce the conditions of a randomized experiment through matching participants with non-participants holding similar attributes and/or characteristics. Through the matching process, observable variables that theoretically condition program participation were used to establish whether program participants and non-participants were similar in terms of their propensity (i.e. likelihood) to participate. Typical examples of these conditioning variables include an individual's gender, age, income, marital status, spousal income, and number of dependents. In this way, each program participant was "matched" to a non-participant with a similar likelihood of program participation,¹⁴ and the aggregate of non-participants constituted the comparison group.¹⁵ In order to adjust for pre-existing differences between participants and the selected non-participants, program impacts were measured in terms of the difference-in-differences¹⁶ estimation technique. Program impacts on annual earnings were assessed as of the current job at the time of the survey. Program impacts on average hours of work per week were estimated with respect to the first job following the completion of the program. The EI impacts were measured for a period of 52 weeks following the end of participation.

Pre- and post- analysis was conducted to assess the effects of program participation on skills and employability. This line of evidence is based on simple comparisons of the pre- and post-program periods and/or based on subjective judgement gathered through the surveys, rather than on the econometric estimation techniques used to examine net/incremental program impacts.

A survey of apprentices collected information on the perceptions and employment activities of apprentices whose training was funded under the CS-LMDA. Unlike other PPS participants, apprentices are generally working before their participation in programming and most are assured of a job after training. Therefore the Joint Evaluation Committee decided that it would be beneficial to conduct a separate survey of this group. Four hundred and nine apprentices participated in the survey, which was conducted during November and December of 2005.

Surveys of service providers gathered information and perceptions from staff at CS-CESCs and those involved with the SIAST, RCs and CBOs. As key partners in the delivery of PPSs, these individuals are important contacts for EI clients participating in PPSs. A total

¹³ Analysis of administrative records is done only for survey respondents who provided their consent.

¹⁴ That is, using a kernel matching approach, each program participant was "matched" to a weighted average of non-participants. The most similar non-participants (in terms of likelihood of participation) received the highest weights, and those who were dissimilar received very small or zero weights. Further details on the matching and methodology used to measure impacts can be found in the final technical report and in the documentation for the additional impact analysis.

¹⁵ As noted in Section 2.2, because non-participants had no APE's (by definition), they were assigned pseudo-APEs from the participants they were matched with during the first round of matching.

¹⁶ Measuring impacts in terms of difference-in-differences involves comparing the mean differences between the pre- and post-program values of the participant and non-participant group outcome variables, while the matching algorithm controls for other factors that could affect the outcome variables.

of 105 service providers completed their survey, which was conducted between February and June of 2005.

Two employer surveys gathered information on employer perceptions of PPSs. One survey involved employers who had used the labour market information and labour exchange elements (posting jobs) of the CS-LMDA. The other survey targeted employers who had participated directly in other types of labour market programming funded by the CS-LMDA, such as wage subsidy and training programs. A total of 217 employers took part in the surveys, which were conducted between February and June of 2005.

2.1.2 Qualitative Methods

Key informant interviews were conducted with federal and provincial program officials to support the planning process for the summative evaluation and to provide information on how Saskatchewan's labour market and training environment had changed since the formative evaluation.

A *document review* provided background information on the delivery context of PPSs, including a description of the Saskatchewan labour market and key features of the CS-LMDA.

A total of twelve *focus groups* with EI clients¹⁷ (six with PPS participants and six with non-participants) added important insights to the quantitative measures of impacts. These focus groups explored the role of PPSs in the outcomes experienced by participants. They also supported the analysis of client service under the CS-LMDA.

2.2 Key Strengths and Limitations

The use of *multiple lines of evidence* serves to validate/corroborate findings by cross-referencing a number of sources. This approach also ensures that all issues are explored in depth.

At the core of the summative evaluation methodology is the measurement of net¹⁸ program impacts on participants. The quantitative methodology used to measure these impacts was carefully designed to ensure scientific rigour and to use state of the art matching and econometric techniques. Key strengths of the quantitative methodology are noted below.

- Every effort was made to use available administrative data. For example, administrative data were used to provide a sound basis for the propensity score matching used to identify non-participants (e.g. tax data provided certain demographic and income-related information that could be used for pre-survey matching). Administrative data were also

¹⁷ A total of 108 PPS EI Part I clients attended the focus groups. Each of the PPS participants attending a focus group experienced a "major" intervention (i.e. an intervention other than (or in addition to) a self-service intervention).

¹⁸ Net or incremental impacts refer to impacts on individuals over and above what would have occurred without the assistance of the program. Net or incremental impacts differ from "gross" effects because gross effects do not take account of what would have happened in the absence of the program and implicitly ascribe all changes to the program.

used to minimize recall errors associated with survey methodology. As well, for purposes of analysis, administrative data were used to develop an action plan equivalent (APE) for each participant. An APE indicates the start and end date of program participation and includes the PPS interventions that an individual takes during the program period. Since the comparison cases had no APE (by definition), they were assigned pseudo-APEs from the participants they were matched with during the first round of matching.

- Every effort was made to identify and (where possible) address potential sources of bias. For example, the internal validation process identified two potential types of bias in the case of estimating program impacts on EI benefits: (i) a systematic bias occurring when individuals are “lost” between the pre- and post-survey samples (either because survey candidates cannot be contacted¹⁹ or because there is “item non-response” on the part of survey respondents who failed to provide information for certain questions); and (ii) a bias created by an inappropriate choice of the base period against which post-program EI activity is compared. To address systematic bias due to the “loss” of individuals between the pre- and post-survey samples, the evaluation team examined the possibility of using data on EI activity that was available for the pre-survey samples (from EI administrative data).²⁰ As a result, the pre-survey samples of the participant group and the non-participant (i.e. comparison) group were used to produce the final estimates of the program impacts on EI.
- Ensuring the validity of the conclusions of the quantitative research involved the use of expert advisors to validate the quantitative methodology.

Key limitations of the quantitative methodology are noted below.

- The size of the post-survey samples was reduced by survey non-response. As well, incomplete cases (i.e. cases of item non-response) were dropped from analysis when using the post-survey samples. Because the post-survey samples were quite small, they lacked the power to detect statistical significance in the case of certain key impact variables (e.g. earnings, hours of work) and certain subgroups.²¹
- A number of steps were taken to minimize recall errors. For example, questions were carefully worded and respondents were reminded of relevant dates. It is generally recognized, however, that recall error remains a substantial source of systematic bias and/or measurement error in the use of survey-based data.

¹⁹ For example, if the non-participant survey was more likely to contact EI recipients than those who were away at work, then the comparison cases that were actually contacted would be systematically biased towards EI recipients. As a consequence, the measurement of post-program EI impacts would be biased.

²⁰ The potential disadvantage of using pre-survey data was that survey-related information was not available when matching participants with non-participants. Tests showed, however, that this had virtually no effect on the estimates of impacts.

²¹ Estimates based on smaller samples tend to have large standard errors.

- Some sources of bias could not be addressed. For example, data on earnings and hours of work were only available from the survey and, therefore, program impacts on these variables could only be estimated from the post-survey samples.²²

²² In other words, the situation for calculating program impacts on earnings and hours of work was quite different from the situation in the case of EI activity because (as discussed above) the evaluation team had the option of using EI administrative data to obtain EI information for individuals in the (unbiased) pre-survey sample.

3. Alignment and Program Participation

This section examines:

- to what extent PPSs are consistent with the *EI Act* and the CS-LMDA;
- the characteristics of PPS participants;
- participation under the CS-LMDA; and
- recent progress made in certain areas identified by the formative evaluation.

3.1 Consistency of PPSs with the *EI Act* and CS-LMDA

As noted in Section 1, EBSMs were introduced as part of the *EI Act* of 1996.

- **Employment Benefits** are designed to assist individual clients to develop and implement a plan to return to work. Employment benefits under EI Part II include Skills Development, Job Creation Partnerships, Targeted Wage Subsidies and Self Employment.
- **Support Measures** are designed to facilitate community-based delivery of employment services and to assist community level partners to enhance employment prospects in their areas. For example services provided under Employment Assistance Services (EAS) are offered through agreements with sponsors (i.e. organizations and community groups) to help unemployed individuals become employed.

In broad terms, the *EI Act* defines eligibility for Part II EBSMs based on receipt of Part I benefits.

- **Active clients** are currently unemployed and have a current EI Part I claim.
- **Reachback clients or three-year reachback clients** had an EI Part I claim that ended in the last three years.
- **Maternal reachback or five-year reachback clients** had an EI Part I maternity or paternal claim in the last five years resulting from their exit from the labour force to care for a child.

In addition, any unemployed individual not qualifying as an active or reachback client (referred to as a non-insured client) may access EAS or the equivalent under the LMDA.²³ In fiscal year 2003–04, these non-insured clients represented slightly more than 5% of all clients served.

Saskatchewan provides a variety of PPSs under the CS-LMDA. Prior to the implementation of the CS-LMDA, the federal and provincial governments entered into negotiations to align

²³ The Canada Employment Insurance Commission. (2004). *Employment insurance 2003 monitoring and assessment report*. Gatineau. Annex 3. Section 3.2.

PPSs with EBSMs common to co-managed LMDAs. The goal of this alignment was to ensure that PPSs were consistent with the intent of the *EI Act* and the CS-LMDA. Table 3.1 provides a brief description of Saskatchewan’s PPSs and demonstrates how these programs align with EBSMs under EI Part II. Key informant interviews with senior provincial and federal managers confirm that the alignment of PPSs with EBSMs was done successfully and that PPSs are consistent with the principles, guidelines and intent of the *EI Act* and the CS-LMDA.

Table 3.1 Alignment of Provincial Programs and Services with Federal Employment Benefits and Support Measures	
Federal Employment Benefits and Support Measures	Provincial Programs and Services
<i>Targeted Wage Subsidies</i> encourage employers to hire individuals they would not normally hire in the absence of a subsidy.	<i>Work Placement</i> and <i>Community Works</i> provide wage subsidies to employers for work experience and work placement that will lead to long-term employment. Components of <i>Job Start/Future Skills</i> provide unemployed people with work experience placements (which can include skill development) that lead to permanent employment.
The <i>Self-Employment</i> benefit helps EI eligible clients to create jobs for themselves by starting a business.	The <i>Self-Employment Program</i> provides assistance to help clients become self-employed. The assistance can include business plan development, mentoring and ongoing advice through contact with people experienced in local business development. A flexible range of financial support is available during the business development phase.
<i>Job Creation Partnerships</i> provide individuals with opportunities through which they can gain work experience leading to ongoing employment.	Unsubsidized work placements are pursued as an alternative within the scope of the employment programs provided by the province.
<i>Skills Development</i> helps individuals to obtain skills (ranging from basic to advanced skills) through direct assistance.	<i>Skills Training Benefit (STB)</i> was implemented in January 1, 1999 and was similar to the original Skills, Loans and Grants. It is used in conjunction with the Provincial Training Allowance and Canada Student Loans programs to help clients gain skills needed for employment by providing support to clients to help them access/participate in programs offering short-term skills training and basic education (including employability skills and work experience).
<i>Employment Assistance Services</i> assist organizations in the provision of employment services to unemployed persons.	<i>Bridging to Employment</i> provides a range of career and employment programs, services, and supports to assist individuals to become job ready. The programs, services and supports are provided through the use of alternate delivery partners/providers. This type of assistance includes (but is not limited to) assessments, employment counselling, assisted job placement, job search assistance, job readiness training and the provision of labour market information. Career and Employment Services Development involves contacting employers and agencies to identify job opportunities for clients, and working with training institutions, non-governmental organizations,

	municipalities and the private sector to prepare clients for employment. Alternate partners/providers may be used for career and employment services development.
<i>Labour Market Partnerships</i> encourage and support employers, employee and/or employer associations, and communities to improve their capacity for dealing with human resource requirements and implementing labour force adjustments.	<i>Sector Partnerships</i> is a component of Job Start/Future Skills. It supports industry sectors to work with training institutions and communities of interest to design and implement sectoral human resource planning and development strategies to decrease skill mismatches in the labour market. <i>Regional Planning Partnerships Program</i> is designed to support communities, employers, employees and other groups to expand their local employment base and develop initiatives to respond to the employment needs of their community.
<i>Research and Innovation</i> supports activities that identify better ways of helping persons prepare for or keep employment and be productive participants in the labour force.	Saskatchewan may provide funding for research and innovation projects and activities that identify better ways of helping persons to prepare for or keep employment and to be productive participants in the labour force.
Source: Annex 1, Memorandum of Understanding (signed March, 2000) to amend the CS-LMDA.	

In addition, Saskatchewan’s apprenticeship program receives funding through the CS-LMDA for Apprenticeship Training Allowances and Apprenticeship Technical Training delivered to apprentices at public post-secondary institutions. As noted in Section 2.1.1 the summative evaluation administered a separate survey to clients of the apprenticeship program. The results are discussed in Section 4.3.²⁴

3.2 Characteristics of Participants

3.2.1 EI Part I and Part II Clients

Census 2001 data indicate that EI Part I clients in Saskatchewan differ slightly from the general Saskatchewan working-age population²⁵ and labour force. Compared to the Saskatchewan working-age population and labour force, EI Part I clients are more often male,²⁶ younger²⁷ and located in Northern Saskatchewan.²⁸ The proportion of EI Part I clients who are Aboriginal (13%) is larger than the proportion of Aboriginal people in the Saskatchewan labour force (9%).

²⁴ Although apprentices are in a different employment situation from other PPS participants (i.e. they are generally working before participating in the programming and most are assured of a job after the training), the apprenticeship program resembles PPSs that combine training and a wage subsidy to employers (and could be characterized as representing a more intensive and targeted form of these types of interventions).

²⁵ Consists of all individuals 15 to 65 years of age.

²⁶ More than half (56%) of EI Part I clients were male. This is similar to the Saskatchewan labour force (53% were male), but slightly larger than in the Saskatchewan working-age population (50% were male).

²⁷ Almost one-third (32%) of EI Part I clients were age 25 to 34, compared to 20% of the Saskatchewan labour force and 18% of the Saskatchewan working-age population.

²⁸ More than one-quarter (28%) of EI Part I clients were located in Northern Saskatchewan, compared to 21% of the Saskatchewan labour force and 22% of the Saskatchewan working-age population.

In many ways, EI Part II participants are quite similar to EI Part I clients in Saskatchewan. Administrative data (2003-2004) indicate that over half (58%) of the PPS clients were male, 12% were Aboriginal, and approximately one-third (34%) were age 25 to 34. More than one-quarter (27%) were located in Northern Saskatchewan, and 28% were located in Saskatoon.

Among EI Part II clients, administrative data showed little difference between the demographic characteristics of active and three-year reachback clients.²⁹ However, five-year reachback clients had quite different characteristics from other EI Part II clients. As would be expected, because of the likelihood that five-year reachback clients were on maternity or parental leave, almost all of these reachback clients were female (95%) and approximately two-thirds (67%) were age 25 to 34. Additionally, while active and three-year reachback clients were often located in Northern Saskatchewan (30% of active clients, and 26% of three-year reachback clients) and Saskatoon (29%), five-year reachback clients were more often located in Southern Saskatchewan (29%) and Regina (20%).³⁰

3.2.2 Characteristics of Participants of Various PPSs

Although the CS-LMDA offers a range of PPSs, the most broadly used client-oriented PPSs may be grouped into four categories:

- **Group 1 (*self service*)** consists of various self-service activities. Under this type of intervention, clients visit a CS-CESC to use a computer for job search, to browse other posted material (such as job postings) and to access labour market information.³¹ Although key informants indicated that participants in this intervention may proceed to other interventions, the available intervention data was unable to provide a picture of the extent to which this occurs. Group 1 has no counterpart under EBSMs.
- **Group 2 (*training plus wage subsidy*)** consists of Work Placement, Community Works and work experience placements under components of Job Start/Future Skills.³² This type of intervention combines on-the-job training and wage subsidies to employers.
- **Group 3 (*formal counselling*)** consists of career counselling.³³ This type of intervention provides services such as action planning, assessment, life skills and employability training.

²⁹ The main difference was that three-year reachback clients included slightly more Aboriginal people.

³⁰ These differences are likely due to the eligibility criteria for these reachback clients, which may over represent women age 25 to 34. Nationally, for fiscal year 2003-04, there were 182,000 parental claims made by women and 29,100 made by men. As well, this group's return to the workforce is more likely to take place in regions where job prospects are better and, consequently, where other types of PPS clients are less heavily represented.

³¹ This intervention posed challenges for the evaluation. In some cases, the duration of participation will be recorded as a few days, and in others the intervention may appear to last for months. In a few cases, an extended duration appears simply because a file is closed administratively due to non-activity. This would impose an upward bias on the intervention period.

³² As shown in Table 3.1, this group aligns with Targeted Wage Subsidies.

³³ As shown in Table 3.1, this group aligns with Employment Assistance Services.

- **Group 4 (financial assistance for training)** includes the Skills Training Benefit (STB) which is a financial subsidy program for EI clients.³⁴

Clients participating as Group 1, 2 or 4 generally had similar demographic characteristics. In contrast, the Group 3 (formal counselling) participants were generally older, more heavily concentrated in urban centres, and more often Aboriginal. Specifically, more than half (55%) of the Group 3 clients were age 35 or older and approximately half (51%) resided in Regina or Saskatoon. The higher proportion of older individuals in urban centres is not surprising given the nature of Group 3 interventions. Career and employment services provide job information and assistance with job searches. These services are more likely to be successful in urban centres where job availability is higher. As well, older individuals nearing the end of their careers may be less interested in long-term re-skilling and education programs because the pay-off over the remainder of their careers may not justify the time and financial investment.

The administrative data indicate that Group 1 (self service) interventions are the most commonly used among all client groups. Most (83%) active clients participated in self-service activities, as did many three-year (61%) and five-year (61%) reachback clients. The high representation of clients in this group may be the result of the often short-term nature of these interventions.

Group 2, 3 and 4 interventions were evenly used by active clients, while reachback clients were more likely to use Group 3 (formal counselling) interventions. A similar percentage of active clients participated in Group 2 (28%), Group 3 (25%), and Group 4 (20%) interventions. By contrast, many three-year and five-year reachback clients used Group 3 interventions (42% of three-year and 36% of five-year reachback clients) and fewer participated in Group 2 and Group 4 interventions.³⁵

Less than one-third of PPS participants participated in multiple interventions, although active claimants were more likely to have multiple interventions. More than one-third (36%) of active clients participated in multiple interventions, compared to 25% of three-year and 15% of five-year reachback clients.

3.3 Participation under the CS-LMDA

The section examines certain issues related to the participation of government partners, clients, employers and communities under the CS-LMDA.

³⁴ As shown in Table 3.1, this group aligns with Skills Development.

³⁵ Group 2 interventions were used by 20% of three-year and 17% of five-year reachback clients. Group 4 interventions were used by 5% of three-year and 3% of five-year reachback clients.

3.3.1 Government Partners under the CS-LMDA

Understanding Roles and Responsibilities

At the time of the summative evaluation, key informants felt that the roles and responsibilities of government partners (i.e. federal and provincial government personnel) were clear under the CS-LMDA. The key informants noted that federal and provincial representatives met regularly to maintain an understanding of their respective roles. They emphasized that extensive communication between government partners was important to the administration of the CS-LMDA.

Data/Information Sharing

Progress has been made in addressing some initial problems in the collecting and sharing of program data, but further improvements are needed. The sharing of program data by orders of government has proven to be a major challenge for the CS-LMDA. Initially, privacy legislation prevented the convenient sharing of EI eligibility status information between the federal and provincial governments. Also, the provincial data base known as the One Client Service Model (OCSM) encountered implementation problems that produced incomplete and inaccurate information on the interventions pursued by clients. At the time of the summative evaluation, key informants reported satisfaction with the progress made in data sharing. As well, CS-CESC staff noted that eligibility determination is simplified by:

- improvements to the OCSM system providing eligibility information;
- increased staff experience (at CS-CESCs and RCs) with eligibility criteria;
- HRSDC's ability to confirm eligibility quickly;
- increased clarity in eligibility criteria; and
- easier access to relevant client information.

Regarding areas where further improvements are needed, provincial key informants noted that privacy issues continue to limit information sharing between governments. As well, work remains to be done to improve the data capture of interventions.

Labour Market Information (LMI)

As part of the CS-LMDA, the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan agreed to develop a joint labour market information (LMI) strategy. Projects in this area include Government of Saskatchewan Websites such as SaskNetWork and SaskJobs. The LMI component also includes maintaining a link with the National LMI System. Satisfaction with LMI services is examined in Section 4.1.4 and Section 4.2.

Overlap and Duplication

The close alignment of PPSs with EBSMs under the CS-LMDA has removed the possibility of federal-provincial service delivery duplication and overlap. In addition, since the formative evaluation was completed, RCs and SIAST have worked closely with CS-CESCs to deliver PPSs to EI clients. The improved/close coordination of provincial delivery agents has limited the degree of program overlap among these agents.

Public Awareness of the Federal Government's Contribution

Bilingual signage at CS-CESCs highlights the joint sponsorship of the CS-LMDA by the provincial and federal governments. There is, however, little evidence of other considerable efforts to inform the public about the federal government's contribution to the CS-LMDA. A common theme in the focus group discussions was that many EI clients receiving PPSs were generally unaware of the source of funding or its connection to EI. Most simply viewed the source as "government".

3.3.2 Client Targeting, Client Service and Relevance

Client Targeting and Client Service under the CS-LMDA

*The CS-LMDA appears to have reached much of its targeted client base.*³⁶ In fiscal year 2003-04, PPSs targeted 5,200 active clients and exceeded this target by serving more than 8,500 clients. PPSs also provided services for 2,806 reachback clients and 640 non-insured clients. Most (80% to 90%) of the respondents to the participant survey reported no difficulty in obtaining employment benefits, programs or services. Among the respondents who reported access issues,³⁷ 23% cited difficulty accessing EI Part I benefits, 21% cited difficulty accessing Skills Training Benefit, 14% cited difficulty accessing EI funding for training/education, 11% cited difficulty accessing counselling services, 4% cited difficulty accessing Work Placement and 3% cited difficulty accessing Job Start/Future Skills.

Changes in client services have been implemented since the formative evaluation to better reflect the principles of the CS-LMDA.

- Since the formative evaluation, RCs and SIAST have become more active in the delivery of services under the CS-LMDA and have provided an important additional pathway to PPSs beyond referrals from HRSDC, social assistance services offered by the Department of Community Resources, and the CS-CESCs.

³⁶ The targeted client base refers to all individuals eligible for services under program regulations. For the CS-LMDA, this includes active, reachback and non-insured clients.

³⁷ A total of 266 respondents to the participant survey reported access issues. They could give more than one response when indicating which programs and services they had difficulty accessing.

- Regional variations in types of clients and types of PPSs used have been addressed. During the early phase of the CS-LMDA, services to northern communities and clients were limited because the province was still constructing the network of CS-CESCs. This network is now complete and service to northern communities has improved.³⁸ The distribution of EI clients using the PPSs reflects the patterns of actual EI clients, and key informants are satisfied that no regional deficiencies exist. Regional differences in client types and intervention use also suggest that the CS-LMDA is supporting regionally specific and relevant services.

It appears that the co-location or proximate location of HRSDC offices (which handle EI Part I claims) and CS-CESCs has simplified service delivery. For example, federal staff are often able to direct clients to appropriate PPSs. Not all CS-CESCs are co-located with HRSDC offices, however.

Regarding the provision of services in both official languages, the participant survey indicated that those requesting service in French were able to obtain it.³⁹ At the same time, however, the demand for services in French remains very low in Saskatchewan.

Despite the recent improvements in client service, further improvement can be made to the referral process and information on the availability of PPSs.

- Key informants noted that reachback clients eligible for PPSs were being identified when applying for social assistance. Where possible, these clients should be brought into the PPS system before they exhaust their Part I benefits.
- Similarly, the focus group discussions indicated that the process of informing EI clients about PPSs is uneven. Some EI clients receive explicit direction, while others do not. For example, some focus group participants remarked that they had not been directed to a CS-CESC. Others remarked that they had not been told about Part II PPSs when applying for their Part I benefits. Others stated that they received services when they decided on their own to drop in.
- Some clients felt the service level of direct services at CS-CESCs could be improved. For every story about excellent service, there was one about indifferent service.
- There was general agreement among focus group attendees that more should be done to inform EI recipients about the opportunities for job search and training. Most agreed that they did not know about all the programs and services offered. For example, only a few of the non-participants who were focus group attendees could recognize the programs offered under the CS-LMDA. Most of those who suggested improvements said the available programs needed to be more visible and information on services needed to be clearer about what is available.

³⁸ This finding was based on views expressed by key informants and was generally supported by the geographic distribution of EI clients by type of intervention.

³⁹ The sample of participant survey respondents was insufficient to assess whether services were accessed in areas with francophone residents including Regina, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw.

- Some clients appear not to be directed to appropriate PPSs. For example, nearly half (46%) of the 85 employers using a training or work placement program in the last three years indicated that some participants failed to complete their program. The employer survey indicated that the most common reasons for non-completion were personal issues (44%) and work-related behavioural issues (41%), suggesting that programming with additional or alternative supports would have better served these clients.

The focus groups and participant survey indicated that there is room to increase/improve the use of back-to-work plans. Although back-to-work plans are intended to serve as a first step in the CS-LMDA intervention process, less than one-third (29%) of the respondents to the participant survey indicated that they had prepared a back-to-work plan. Of those who had prepared a back-to-work plan, less than half (45%) indicated that they had completed their plan, just over one-third (35%) indicated that they were still working towards completing it, and 19% said they had stopped part way through or never started their plan.

Relevance of PPSs to the Needs of Participants

PPSs are aligned with many of the common barriers to re-employment identified by the focus groups, such as lack of training or not having the right education. At the same time, however, the focus groups identified other impediments to re-employment that do not seem to fall within the scope of PPSs such as age discrimination, lack of mobility, family obligations and a slow economy. For example, some older individuals (n=5) believed that employers discriminated against them. Others, especially in northern areas, recognized that their job prospects would improve in other parts of the province, but family obligations prevented their relocation.

Evidence from service providers on the rate and range of referrals indicated that PPSs are perceived to be relevant by client counsellors.

- The survey of CS-CESC staff indicated that, in the six months prior to the survey, most reported that they “often” referred EI clients to specific PPSs such as Skills Training Benefit (85%), Labour Market Exchange (73%), Labour Market Information (61%), Community Works (28%), Self-Employment Program (24%), Provincial Training Allowance (18%), and Job Start/Future Skills (6%).
- Similarly, the survey of SIAST/RC/CBO staff reported that many “often” referred EI clients to specific PPSs such as Provincial Training Allowance (38%), Labour Market Exchange (24%), Skills Training Benefit (21%), Job Start/Future Skills (18%), and Bridging to Employment (18%), Labour Market Information (18%), Community Works (6%) and Self-Employment Program (3%).

3.3.3 Employer Participation and Relevance

Employer Participation under the CS-LMDA

The CS-LMDA attempts to support return to work by also using PPSs to assist employers with human resources needs. Provincial key informants stated that employers were informed about PPSs through advertising, career fairs, focus groups, mail-outs and telephone calls. However, when the surveyed employers were asked whether employers are adequately informed about PPSs to assist them with their human resource needs, only 25% felt that employers were adequately informed about PPSs.

Although most of the surveyed employers had contact with CS-CESCs,⁴⁰ there appears to be limited communication among government, employers and program delivery agents to facilitate program development. Only 14% of the surveyed employers indicated that in the last three years they had been involved with government, community groups or training institutions to develop a human resource or training strategy for their industry or sector.

Relevance of PPSs to the Needs of Employers

The surveyed employers highlighted the relevance of PPSs. They cited numerous staffing and human resource needs and viewed PPSs as helpful in meeting those needs. For example, 25% of the surveyed employers noted that potential employees lack training and experience, and 21% noted that the supply of employees did not meet their demand. Forty-one percent of the surveyed employers said they either always (10%) or sometimes (31%) relied on some form of government training (such as Job Start/Future Skills, Community Works) to address their training and skills concerns.

3.3.4 Community Involvement and Relevance

Community Involvement Under the CS-LMDA

Coordination between community partners, employers and government appears to be limited. Among the surveyed employers involved in a human resource or training strategy planning process for their industry or sector (n=30), less than half (43%) indicated that the process involved collaboration/working with community groups. Similarly, less than half (40%) indicated that their planning process involved collaborating with Aboriginal groups.

⁴⁰ Only 17% indicated that they had not contacted a CS-CESC within the last three years.

Relevance of PPSs to Communities

Provincial key informants highlighted the relevance of CS-LMDA programming to communities. Provincial key informants noted that the type of PPSs needed changed over time and varied between communities. In a tight labour market, for example, job information served to link individuals seeking work to available positions. In a loose labour market, re-skilling and education play an important role. Key informants also noted that needs were more pronounced in more remote areas with limited employment opportunities.

3.4 A Review of Progress in Areas Identified by the Formative Evaluation

Although some progress has been made on implementing recommendations from the formative evaluation regarding design and delivery under the CS-LMDA, there is room for continued improvement in certain areas. In particular, the summative evaluation found that further improvements are needed to address certain information gaps.

- Not all EI-eligible clients receive information about PPSs at the optimal time (i.e. upon participation in or starting to receive Part I benefits).
- Although key informants identified efforts made to inform clients and employers about CS-LMDA programming, there is little evidence (aside from signage in CS-CESCs) of increased efforts to inform individuals of the federal government's contribution to the PPSs through the CS-LMDA.
- Information sharing between federal and provincial governments needs further improvement. In particular, provincial key informants noted that privacy issues continue to limit information sharing between governments, affecting many aspects of the CS-LMDA including the provision of PPS information to potential and current clients.

4. Impacts

This section summarizes the main findings regarding the impacts of PPSs on participants and employers. This section also examines the results of the apprenticeship program.

4.1 Impacts on Participants

As discussed in Section 2.1.1, comparison group analysis was used in combination with the difference-in-difference technique to provide estimates on the net/incremental program impacts on earning, hours of work and EI. Program impacts on annual earnings were assessed as of the current job at the time of the survey. Program impacts on average hours of work per week were estimated with respect to the first job following the completion of the program. The EI impacts were measured for a period of 52 weeks following the end of program participation.

4.1.1 Impacts on Earnings and Hours of Work

Table 4.1 shows that many of the estimated net program impacts for annual earnings and hours worked per week are statistically significant (at the 95% confidence level or more, unless otherwise indicated).⁴¹ The estimates show the incremental changes that can be attributed to PPS participation (i.e. changes that would not have occurred in the absence of PPS participation).

Annual Earnings

At the overall program level, on average, PPS participants had a statistically significant gain (at the 90% confidence level) in annual earnings of \$3,958 per person after PPS participation (as shown in Table 4.1).

- On average, active clients experienced a significant gain in annual earnings of \$5,026 per person.
- In the case of reachback clients, on average, there was an estimated (but not significant) gain in annual earnings of \$1,426 per person.

Only the sample for *Group 1 (self service)* was large enough to allow estimation of net/incremental programs impact on earnings. The point-estimate indicated that Group 1 participants had an average gain in annual earnings of \$2,218 following PPS participation

⁴¹ Impacts described as “statistically significant” or “significant” are statistically significant at the standard 95% confidence level or more, unless otherwise indicated. Significance at the 95% confidence level means that we can say with 95% confidence that there is a true impact, and the likelihood that the difference in the observed outcome happened by chance is less than 5%.

as a result of participating in the program, but this estimate was not statistically significant (as shown in Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Program Impacts on Annual Earnings and Average Hours Worked Following PPS Participation				
	Estimated Impact	Level of Significance	p-Values⁴²	Sample Size
<i>Net Change in Annual Earnings:</i>				
Overall program level	\$3,958	*	0.08	647
Active clients	\$5,026	**	0.03	455
Reachback clients	\$1,426		0.23	192
Group 1 (self-service activities)	\$2,218		0.32	318
Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Group 3 (formal counselling)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Group 4 (financial assistance for training)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Net Change in Average Hours per Week:</i>				
Overall program level	3.77		0.12	712
Active clients	4.55	*	0.08	498
Reachback clients	1.87		0.27	214
Group 1 (self-service activities)	3.76		0.19	332
Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Group 3 (formal counselling)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Group 4 (financial assistance for training)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Impact estimates are measured in terms of difference-in-differences using data from the post-survey sample. n/a indicates sample size too small to estimate impact. * statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. ** statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Source: administrative data plus the surveys of participants and non-participants.				

Average Hours Worked Per Week

At the overall program level, on average, PPS participants had an estimated (but not statistically significant) gain of 3.77 in average hours worked per week after PPS participation (as shown in Table 4.1).

- In the case of active clients, on average, there was a significant gain (at the 90% confidence level) of 4.55 in average hours worked per week.
- In the case of reachback clients, on average, there was an estimated (but not significant) gain of 1.87 in average hours worked per week.

Once again, only the sample for **Group 1 (self service)** was large enough to allow estimating the program impact on hours of work. The results showed that, on average, Group 1

⁴² The p-value is used to determine the confidence level of each estimated impact.

participants had an estimated (but not statistically significant) gain of 3.76 in average hours worked per week as a result of participating in the program.

4.1.2 Impacts on EI Weeks and the Amount of EI Received

As noted in Section 2.2, data for EI was available from EI administrative data. Therefore, the pre-survey sample (which was an unbiased sample and larger than the post-survey sample) was used to estimate the program impacts on EI. Using the pre-survey sample made it possible to obtain estimates for the different types of interventions free of non-response bias. In addition, the larger sample size increased the power of the sample to detect significant impacts.

Table 4.2 shows the estimates of net/incremental program impacts on EI benefits in the twelve months following program participation. The twelve month period was used because the EI records were available for this time period for every client in the sample. These estimates show the incremental changes that can be attributed to PPS participation.

At the overall program level, on average, PPSs resulted in a statistically significant decrease (at the 99% confidence level) in weeks of EI benefits received (a decrease of 1.20 weeks) and the amount of EI received (a decrease of \$316) in the twelve months following PPS participation (as shown in Table 4.2).

- In the case of active clients, on average, there was a significant decrease of 0.85 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$207 in the amount of EI benefits.
- In the case of reachback clients, on average, there was a significant decrease of 1.63 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$453 in the amount of EI benefits.

PPS participation resulted in a statistically significant decrease (at the 99% confidence level) in weeks of EI benefits received and in the amount of EI received in the case of Group 1, 3 and 4 in the twelve months following PPS participation (as shown in Table 4.2).

- For participants with Group 1 (self service) interventions, on average, there was a significant decrease of 1.33 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$347 in the amount of EI received.
- For participants with Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy) interventions, the estimated impacts on weeks of EI benefits received (a slight increase of 0.20 weeks) and on the amount of EI received (a decrease of \$138) were not significant.
- For participants with Group 3 (formal counselling) interventions, on average, there was a significant decrease of 1.58 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$381 in the amount of EI received.
- For participants with Group 4 (financial assistance for training) interventions, on average, there was a significant decrease of 1.98 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$494 in the amount of EI received.

Table 4.2
Program Impacts on EI in the Twelve Months Following PPS Participation

	Estimated Impact	Level of Significance	p-Values ⁴³	Sample Size
Net Change in Number of Weeks of EI Benefits:				
Overall program level	-1.20	(***)	<0.001	8,039
Active clients	-0.85	(***)	<0.001	4,471
Reachback clients	-1.63	(***)	<0.001	3,568
Group 1 (self-service activities)	-1.33	(***)	<0.001	4,372
Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy)	0.20		0.37	910
Group 3 (formal counselling)	-1.58	(***)	<0.001	1,709
Group 4 (financial assistance for training)	-1.98	(***)	<0.001	812
Net Change in Amount of EI Benefits Received:				
Overall program level	-\$316	(***)	<0.001	8,039
Active clients	-\$207	(***)	<0.001	4,471
Reachback clients	-\$453	(***)	<0.001	3,568
Group 1 (self-service activities)	-\$347	(***)	<0.001	4,372
Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy)	-\$138		0.21	910
Group 3 (formal counselling)	-\$381	(***)	<0.001	1,709
Group 4 (financial assistance for training)	-\$494	(***)	<0.001	812
Impact estimates are measured in terms of difference-in-differences using EI administrative data corresponding to individuals in the pre-survey sample.				
*** significant at the 99% confidence level.				
Brackets denote that a statistically significant estimate carries a negative sign.				
Sources: administrative data.				

Table 4.3 shows the estimates of EI impacts for the PPS groups by type of client in the twelve months following PPS participation. The analysis shows that PPS participation resulted in some statistically significant impacts by type of client in the case of Group 1, 3 and 4.

- For Group 1 (self-service), on average, there was a significant decrease in weeks of EI benefits received in the case of active clients (a decrease of 0.62 weeks) and reachback clients (a decrease of 2.37 weeks). In the case of reachback clients, there was also a significant decrease, on average, in the amount of EI received (a decrease of \$668). For active clients, the point-estimate suggested a decrease of \$131 in the amount of EI received, but the estimate was not significant.
- For Group 2 (training plus was subsidy), the point estimates suggested a slight increase in weeks of EI benefits received in the case of both active clients (an increase of 0.04 weeks) and reachback clients (an increase of 0.31 weeks), but the estimates were not significant. The point-estimates also suggested a decrease in the amount of EI received in the case of both active clients (a decrease of \$226) and reachback clients (a decrease of \$82), but the estimates were not significant.

⁴³ A p-value of “<0.001” indicates that the confidence level is greater than 99%. In other words, the p-value of “<0.001” indicates that the likelihood that a point-estimate is due to chance is less than 1%.

- For Group 3 (formal counselling), on average, there was a significant decrease in weeks of EI benefits received in the case of active clients (a decrease of 0.94 weeks) and reachback clients (a decrease of 1.99 weeks). As well, on average, there was a significant decrease in the amount of EI received in the case of active clients (a decrease of \$261 that was significant at the 90% confidence level) and reachback clients (a decrease of \$458).
- For Group 4 (financial assistance for training), on average, active claimants had a significant decrease in the number of weeks of EI benefits received (a decrease of 2.75 weeks) and a significant decrease in the amount of EI received (\$685). Reachback clients had, on average, a significant increase in the number of weeks of EI benefits (an increase of 1.8 weeks) and a significant increase (at the 90% confidence level) in the amount of EI received (an increase of \$436).

Table 4.3
Program Impacts on EI in the Twelve Months Following PPS Participation
by Type of Program and Client Group

	Estimated Impact	Level of Significance	p-Values ⁴⁴	Sample Size
Net Change in Number of Weeks of EI Benefits:				
Group 1 (self-service activities)				
• active clients	-0.62	(**)	0.02	2,612
• reachback clients	-2.37	(***)	<0.001	1,760
Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy)				
• active clients	0.04		0.48	358
• reachback clients	0.31		0.30	552
Group 3 (formal counselling)				
• active clients	-0.94	(**)	0.04	669
• reachback clients	-1.99	(***)	<0.001	1,040
Group 4 (financial assistance for training)				
• active clients	-2.75	(***)	<0.001	674
• reachback clients	1.80	**	0.03	138
Net Change in Amount of EI Benefits Received:				
Group 1 (self-service activities)				
• active clients	-131		0.08	2,612
• reachback clients	-668	(***)	<0.001	1,760
Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy)				
• active clients	-226		0.14	358
• reachback clients	-82		0.29	552
Group 3 (formal counselling)				
• active clients	-261	(*)	0.05	669
• reachback clients	-458	(***)	<0.001	1,040
Group 4 (financial assistance for training)				
• active clients	-685	(***)	<0.001	674
• reachback clients	436	*	0.05	138
Impact estimates are measured in terms of difference-in-differences using EI administrative data corresponding to individuals in the pre-survey sample.				
* statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.				
** statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.				
*** statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.				
Brackets denote that a statistically significant estimate carries a negative sign.				
Sources: administrative data.				

4.1.3 Impacts on Skills and Employability

As discussed in Section 2.1.1, pre- and post- analysis was conducted to assess the effects of PPS participation on skills and employability.

⁴⁴ As noted earlier, a p-value of “<0.001” indicates that the confidence level is greater than 99% (i.e. the p-value of “<0.001” indicates that the likelihood that a point-estimate is due to chance is less than 1%).

Education and Skills

Survey evidence indicates that education levels increased among PPS participants between the pre- and post-program periods. Comparing education levels before and after program participation, the participant survey results indicated that the percentage of PPS participants who were SIAST/regional college graduates increased from 18% to 29%, and the percentage of participants who were university graduates increased from 9% to 12%.⁴⁵ At the same time, the percentage with some high school decreased from 16% to 11%, and those with only a high school diploma decreased from 35% to 24%. In addition, 79% of the participant survey respondents stated that they are more interested in improving their skills through further training in the post-program period.

Most of the surveyed participants agreed that PPSs increased their job-related skills. For example, 81% either agreed or somewhat agreed that their job skills increased following their intervention.

The evidence suggests that financial assistance was important for skills training. Survey respondents reported that the average cost of the skills training (including all training-related expenses) was approximately \$8,500. Two-thirds of these respondents (66%) received at least some funding directly from government.⁴⁶ Other sources included bank loans, or loans or gifts from family or friends. Of those who received government funding (n=156), nearly two-thirds (63%) said they would not have taken the training if income support had not been available. Focus group attendees who were program participants also indicated that financial assistance for education was very helpful.

Ability to Obtain and Keep a Job

Almost half (46%) of the surveyed participants felt that their PPS intervention was either very important (27%) or somewhat important (19%) in obtaining their most recent job. Similarly, 40% indicated that their PPS intervention was either very important (25%) or somewhat important (15%) in obtaining the first job after their intervention. Of those indicating that their intervention helped them to obtain their most recent job, approximately half indicated that their intervention assisted them by:

- providing general work skills or work habits (56%);
- teaching them how to look for or find work (47%); and
- providing them with financial assistance (58%).

⁴⁵ In the case of the non-participant group, these increases were smaller (i.e. the percentage who were SIAST/regional college graduates increased from 23% to 28%, and the percentage who were university graduates increased from 8% to 10%). It should be noted that no net impacts can be inferred by comparing pre-program to post-program percentage differentials for the participant and non-participant groups because this approach does not control for other factors that could affect the observed changes in education profiles.

⁴⁶ The average direct government contribution to skills training expenses was 53%.

Although the majority of participants in various types of PPSs found their intervention to be useful, participants in the skills/trades training program were most likely to feel that their intervention positively affected their ability to find employment.

- Most (88%) of the skills/trades training group felt either strongly (71%) or somewhat strongly (17%) that the training they received provided them with skills that would help them find longer-term employment. Most (82%) felt either strongly (66%) or somewhat strongly (16%) that the training they received provided them with skills that would help them attain higher wages or more income. As well, the majority (69%) felt either strongly (50%) or somewhat strongly (19%) that taking their training course helped them decide to go back to school to help find the job they wanted.
- The majority (77%) of the respondents who received a wage subsidy, earning supplement or job creation intervention agreed that the work they did while in the program provided them with skills that would help them to find long-term employment. Less than half (44%) felt that their participation helped them decide to get more training and education.
- Of the small number of respondents involved in the Self-Employment Program (n=40), approximately 60% felt that their intervention assisted them in getting their most recent job by teaching them self-employment skills. However, 25% of the respondents involved in the Self-Employment Program felt that receiving information on starting a business was not important to their ability to keep a business running. Similarly, 22% felt that receiving financial support during a business's start-up period was not important to their ability to keep a business running.
- Among participants who received Group 3 (formal counselling) interventions, 50% agreed with the statement "the employment assistance services I participated in helped me to find longer-term employment." Less than half (44%) felt that their participation helped them decide to get more training or education.

When the participant survey data were used to compare types of employment in the pre- and post-program periods, the analysis found little change in the proportion of individuals working full-time, part-time, seasonal or casual.⁴⁷ For example, the participant survey data indicated no change in the percentage of respondents working in full-time jobs (57%)⁴⁸ and only a slight increase in the percentage working in part-time jobs (from 11% in the pre-program period to 13% in the post-program period). Looking at seasonal employment, the percentage of respondents working in full-time seasonal jobs decreased slightly (from 16% in the pre-program period to 13% in the post-program period) and there was no change in the percentage working in part-time seasonal jobs (4%) between the pre- and post-program periods.

When the participant survey data were used to compare types of employers in the pre- and post-program periods, the analysis indicated a shift towards the government sector.⁴⁹ For example, the participant survey indicated an increase in the percentage of respondents

⁴⁷ A similar result was found for the non-participant group.

⁴⁸ Refers to the most recently held job in the post-program period.

⁴⁹ A similar result was found for the non-participant group.

working in the government sector (from 14% in the pre-program period to 18% in the post-program period).⁵⁰ At the same time there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents working for a private company (from 74% in the pre-program period to 67% in the post-program period). There was little change across other types of employers (e.g. non-profit businesses, community organizations, First Nations Band or Tribal Council, or schools/universities) between the pre- and post-program periods.

When the participant survey data were used to compare sources of income in the pre- and post-program periods, the analysis indicated a decrease in the percentage of respondents citing employment as a source of income (from 78% in the pre-program period to 68% in post-program period). There was also a decrease in the percentage citing EI payments as a source of income (from 33% in the pre-program period to 12% in the post-program period) and a decrease in the percentage citing social assistance as a source of income (from 5% to 3%). At the same time there was an increase in the percentage of respondents citing self-employment as a source of income (from 1% to 3%). This simple comparison analysis indicated little change across other sources of income (e.g. savings, child support, disability/ Workers Compensation, and farm income) between the pre- and post-program periods.⁵¹

*Among the survey participants who were unemployed or not looking for work (n=340), more than one-quarter (27%) indicated it was due to a lack of available or desirable jobs.*⁵² Other reasons included being between seasonal jobs (13%), lack of education/training/ skills/work experience (12%), health issues (11%), going back to school/currently in school (11%), being in transition between school and work (9%), and age or age discrimination (4%). Approximately one-third of CS-CESC service delivery agents (38%) and SIAST, RC and CBO delivery agents (30%) indicated that unwillingness or inability among clients to relocate to work was a barrier to re-employment.

4.1.4 Participant Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with PPSs among participants was high. The participant survey indicated that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the employment programs and services they received (78%), and with the career and employment counselling services they received (75%) in terms of their usefulness in helping them identify and meet their employment and career goals.

⁵⁰ Refers to the most recently held job in the post-program period.

⁵¹ The respondents could provide multiple responses with regards to sources of income. Compared to program participants, the non-participant group experienced a greater decrease in the percentage of respondents citing employment as a source of income (from 86% in the pre-program period to 69% in the post-program period), a smaller decrease in the percentage citing EI payments (from 29% to 15%), no change in the percentage of respondents citing Social Assistance (2%), and no change in the percentage of respondents citing self-employment (1%). As noted earlier, however, no net impacts can be inferred by comparing pre-program to post-program percentage differentials between participants and the non-participant group.

⁵² Job desirability is an individual and subjective job assessment that may be conditioned by a job's pay, hours, job-related activities, or other characteristics. The participant survey did not attempt to provide a uniform definition of a desirable or preferable job to respondents.

The majority of participants indicated that they completed their PPS programming. The participant survey indicated that 89% of those who took skills/trades training completed their training. Among the respondents who participated in a wage subsidy, earning supplement or job creation initiative but did not complete their interventions (24%), more than half (57%) indicated that this was because they went back to school or continued training (37%), or found other employment (20%). Approximately three-quarters (74%) of the respondents who received employment assistance services completed the activities as planned. The common reasons for not completing those activities included going back to work (22%), not participating in any specific programs (15%), health or personal issues (15%) or financial issues (12%).

The participant survey indicated that most respondents considered the LMI component and information services provided at CS-CESCs to be helpful.

- The most commonly used information service involved job searches/ postings/available employment opportunities (used by 64% of the participant survey respondents). Similarly, 61% of the respondents used a Government of Saskatchewan Website such as SaskNetWork or SaskJobs. Approximately half (54%) used a federal government Website such as HRSDC Job Bank, Labour Market Information, or Electronic Labour Exchange.
- Most participant survey respondents indicated that at least some of their employment service needs were met by either the CS-CESCs or by federal or provincial employment-related Websites such as the HRSDC Job Bank, Labour Market Information, Electronic Labour Exchange, or SaskNetWorks/SaskJobs. For example, between 30% and 44% of the respondents indicated that these services met all of the needs, and another 46% to 56% stated that these services met at least some of their needs.⁵³
- The participant survey asked respondents to rate the helpfulness of services at the CS-CESC. Between 81% and 98% of the respondents rated the various services at the CS-CESC as very helpful or somewhat helpful.⁵⁴ The most useful services were “using the multimedia products at the Centre to write a résumé”, and “using a computer at the Centre to search Websites for a job”.

4.2 Impacts on Employers

4.2.1 Perceived Impacts on Hiring and Meeting Skill Shortages

Although the surveyed employers provided some evidence of beneficial employer impacts, future programming could consider whether changes in program design and delivery would make PPSs more effective in helping to meet skill shortages. The findings

⁵³ Respondents were asked to rate each service separately.

⁵⁴ Respondents were asked to rate each service separately.

presented below suggest that PPSs are perceived by employers to be more successful in providing basic skills that would fill a job vacancy, rather than higher-end skills that would fill skill shortages.

- The majority (67%) of surveyed employers who used a provincial program within the last three years either strongly agreed (20%) or agreed (47%) that the program helped fill job vacancies. Similarly, the majority (66%) either strongly agreed (11%) or agreed (55%) that the program met their human resource needs. Over half indicated that they would not have hired an employee without the program (57%) and/or indicated that they would not have provided on-the-job training without the program (54%).
- Less than half (38%) of surveyed employers who used a provincial program within the last three years felt that PPSs had a significant impact on their organization in the form of increasing the skill levels of program participants, increasing the number of employees being hired (26%) and/or increasing the wages of program participants (21%).
- Less than half (38%) of surveyed employers who used a provincial program within the last three years either strongly agreed (12%) or agreed (26%) that the program helped meet skill shortages. Similarly, 18% felt that PPSs had a significant impact on increasing their organization's access to skilled employees.

4.2.2 Employer Satisfaction

Many of the surveyed employers indicated that some of the CS-CESC services met employer needs, while other services (e.g. finding labour market information and obtaining information about an education or training program) tended not to meet employer needs.

- 72% felt that posting a job vacancy (through SaskJobs) met employer needs either completely (39%) or somewhat (33%).
- 65% felt that locating potential employees (through SaskJobs) met employer needs either completely (20%) or somewhat (45%).
- 58% felt that applying for a training program met employer needs either completely (34%) or somewhat (24%).
- 50% felt that obtaining information about an education/training program met employer needs either completely (23%) or somewhat (27%), while 23% said “not at all”.
- 40% felt that finding labour market information met employer needs either completely (21%) or somewhat (19%), while 35% said “not at all”.

Although 50% of the surveyed employers with a program contact in a CS-CESC in the last three years rated the overall quality of service as excellent, some specific service areas were rated lower. For example, only 33% rated program staff awareness of PPSs as excellent, and 39% rated the usefulness of the information provided as excellent.

Employers indicated considerable satisfaction with employment programming, particularly in the case of work-placement programs, work-based training, and employment supports. For each of these three types of programming, at least half (ranging from 50% to 55%) of the surveyed employers felt that the program completely met their needs, and another 33% to 43% said the program met their needs somewhat. The surveyed employers expressed less satisfaction in the case of the apprenticeship component of Job Skills/Future Skills and Community Works and in the case of the apprenticeship program (i.e. fewer indicated that the program completely met their needs (20% and 25%, respectively) and most indicated that the program met their needs somewhat (70% and 63%, respectively)).

4.3 The Apprenticeship Program

At the time of the survey, most (94%) of the surveyed apprentices had either completed the program (76%) or were still working on completing the program (18%). Only 6% indicated that they did not finish the program. Few of the surveyed apprentices participated in other employment programs or services. Among those who took other programs and services, about 11% indicated receiving financial assistance to take training.

Most of the surveyed apprentices felt that the apprenticeship gave them the skills (90%) and job experience (87%) needed to find long-term employment. Similarly, 88% felt that the work experience and job skills obtained while in the apprenticeship program helped them to attain higher wages or income. Many (70%) indicated that their apprenticeship work experience helped them decide to go back to school for more training or education.

When the survey data were used to compare pre- and post- program education levels, the analysis found that the percentage of surveyed apprentices who were SIAST/regional college graduates increased from 9% to 55%. In addition, the percentage of respondents with completed apprenticeship certification increased from 0% to 14%. Similarly, the percentage with only a high school diploma decreased from 56% to 8%.

Most (82%) of the surveyed apprentices indicated that they were employed after the apprenticeship program and another 6% indicated they were self-employed. Only 10% indicated that they were unemployed or not looking for work.

- Approximately three-quarters (72%) of the respondents indicated that the apprenticeship program was either very important (52%) or somewhat important (20%) in obtaining their most recent job. Most (70%) of these respondents indicated that the apprenticeship program assisted them in getting their most recent job by “providing general work skills or good working habits”. Fewer felt that the program assisted them in getting their most recent job by providing them with financial assistance (33%) or by teaching them how to look for and find work (23%).
- On average, the survey respondents indicated that their income had gone up approximately 60% since they left the apprenticeship program.

- Only a small percentage (10%) of the surveyed apprentices was not working at the time of the survey. The most common reasons provided by respondents for not working at the time of the survey were: going back to school/currently in school (19%), in transition between school and work (16%), lack of jobs (16%), between seasonal jobs (14%), and health issues (12%).

5. Overall Conclusions

The section highlights the main conclusions of the summative evaluation and identifies some areas for further consideration and/or improvement.

5.1 Alignment of PPSs with the *EI Act* and CS-LMDA

PPSs are consistent with the EI Act and the CS-LMDA. Key informant interviews with senior provincial and federal managers confirmed that the alignment of PPSs with the EI Act and the CS-LMDA was done successfully. In addition, key informants felt that roles and responsibilities of CS-LMDA government partners (i.e. federal and provincial government personnel) were clear at the time of the summative evaluation.

A number of improvements have been made in design and delivery under the CS-LMDA since the formative evaluation. RCs and SIAST have become more active in the delivery of services under the CS-LMDA and have provided an additional pathway for clients to participate in PPSs. Progress has also been made in addressing many of the initial difficulties encountered in the collection and sharing of program data by orders of government. There is, however, room for additional improvements. For example, room still exists to improve the referral process, the use of back-to-work plans and information on the availability of PPSs. As well, the data capture of interventions needs improvement and privacy issues continue to limit information sharing between the federal and provincial governments.

5.2 Impacts on Participants

PPSs under the CS-LMDA have produced statistically significant net/incremental impacts for participants in the areas of annual earnings, average hours worked per week and EI. There is also evidence of impacts on levels of education, skills, and employability.

- At the overall program level, on average, *PPS participants* had a statistically significant gain (at the 90% confidence level)⁵⁵ in annual earnings of \$3,958 per person and an estimated (but not statistically significant) gain of 3.77 hours in average hours worked per week. As well, they had a statistically significant decrease of 1.20 weeks in EI benefits received and a statistically significant decrease of \$316 in the amount of EI received in the twelve months following participation.

⁵⁵ The estimate is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level, rather than at the standard 95% confidence level.

- In the case of *active clients*, on average, PPS participation resulted in a statistically significant gain in annual earnings of \$5,026 per person and a statistically significant gain (at the 90% confidence level)⁵⁶ of 4.55 hours in the average number of hours worked per week. As well, they had a statistically significant decrease of 0.85 weeks in EI benefits received and a statistically significant decrease of \$207 in the amount of EI received in the twelve months following participation.
- In the case of *reachback clients*, on average, there was a statistically significant decrease of 1.63 weeks in EI benefits received and a statistically significant decrease of \$453 in the amount of EI received in the twelve months following participation. The estimated impacts on annual earnings and on average hours worked per week were not statistically significant.
- For clients participating in *Group 1 (self service) interventions*, on average, there was a statistically significant decrease of 1.33 weeks in EI benefits received and a statistically significant decrease of \$347 in the amount of EI received in the twelve months following participation. The estimated impacts on earnings and hours of work were not statistically significant.
- Although the samples for the Group 2, Group 3 and Group 4 interventions were not large enough to estimate the impacts on earnings and hours of work, the pre-survey sample could be used to estimate EI impacts for these groups. On average, in the twelve months following program participation, PPS participation resulted in a statistically significant decrease in the weeks and amount of EI received in the case of Group 3 and 4.
 - For participants with *Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy) interventions*, the estimated impacts on the weeks and amount of EI received were not significant.
 - Participants with *Group 3 (formal counselling) interventions* experienced a significant decrease of 1.58 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$381 in the amount of EI received.
 - Participants with *Group 4 (financial assistance for training) interventions* experienced a significant decrease of 1.98 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$494 in the amount of EI received.
- The pre-survey sample was also used to examine EI impacts for the different types of programs and services by type of client group in the twelve months following PPS participation.
 - *For Group 1 (self service) and Group 3 (formal counselling) interventions*, there were significant decreases in weeks of EI benefits received in the case of active claimants (a decrease of 0.62 weeks for Group 1, and a decrease of 0.94 weeks for Group 3) and reachback claimants (a decrease of 2.37 weeks for Group 1, and a decrease of 1.99 weeks for Group 3). For Group 1 and 3 interventions, there was also

⁵⁶ The estimate is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level, rather than at the standard 95% confidence level.

a significant decrease in the amount of EI received in the case of reachback clients (a decrease of \$668 for Group 1, and a decrease of \$458 for Group 3). In the case of Group 3 interventions, there was also a significant decrease (at the 90% confidence level) in the amount of EI received by active clients (a decrease of \$261).

- *For Group 2 (training plus wage subsidy) interventions*, the estimated impacts on the weeks and amount of EI received were not significant.
- *For Group 4 (financial assistance for training) interventions*, there was a significant decrease of 2.75 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant decrease of \$685 in the amount of EI received in the case of active clients. In the case of reachback clients, there was a significant increase of 1.8 weeks in EI benefits received and a significant increase (at the 90% confidence level) of \$436 in the amount of EI received.
- ***Education and skill levels increased among PPS participants between the pre- and post-program periods.*** For example, the participant survey found that the percentage of PPS participants who were SIAST/regional college graduates increased from 18% to 29%, and the percentage of participants who were university graduates increased from 9% to 12%. In addition, 81% of the surveyed participants felt that their job skills increased following their intervention.
- ***Almost half (46%) of the surveyed participants felt that their PPS intervention was important in obtaining their most recent job.*** Participants in the skills/trades training program were most likely to feel that their intervention positively affect their ability to find employment. For example, most (88%) of the skills/trades training group felt that the training they received provided them with skills which would help them find longer-term employment.

5.3 Impacts on Employers

Although the surveyed employers provided some evidence of beneficial employer impacts, future programming could consider whether changes in program design and delivery would make PPSs more effective in helping to meet skill shortages.

- The majority of surveyed employers who had used a provincial program within the last three years felt that the program had helped fill job vacancies (67%) and/or met their human resource needs (66%). Less than half of the surveyed employers who used a provincial program within the last three years felt that PPSs had a significant impact on their organization in the form of increasing the skill levels of program participants (38%), increasing the number of employees being hired (26%) and/or increasing the wages of program participants (21%).
- Thirty-eight percent of the surveyed employers who had used a provincial program within the last three years indicated that the program helped to meet skill shortages. Similarly, 18% felt that PPSs increased their organization's access to skilled employees.

5.4 Areas Identified for Consideration/Improvement

Based on the findings that emerged from the summative evaluation, a number of areas were identified for consideration and/or improvement.

- ***Further improvements are required to address gaps in data capture and information sharing.*** Work remains to be done to improve the data capture of interventions pursued by EI clients. Privacy issues continue to limit information sharing between federal and provincial governments.
- ***There is room to increase/improve awareness of PPSs among EI clients and employers.*** The process of informing EI clients about PPSs is uneven. More needs to be done to increase the visibility and clarity of information on the availability of PPSs and the ways in which PPSs can assist EI clients. In particular, more should be done to inform EI recipients about the opportunities for job search and training. As well, there is room to increase/improve employer awareness about how PPSs can assist them with their human resource needs. More also needs to be done to inform individuals of the federal government's contribution to PPSs through the CS-LMDA.
- ***Room still exists to improve the referral process.*** There is room to improve the timing of referrals. For example, some clients eligible for PPSs were identified when applying for social assistance. Where possible, these clients should be brought into the PPSs system before EI Part I benefits are ended. In addition, some clients appear not to be directed to appropriate PPSs.
- ***Room still exists to increase/improve the use of back-to-work plans.*** Although back-to-work plans are intended to serve as a first step in the CS-LMDA intervention process, less than one-third of the program group survey respondents indicated that they had prepared a back-to-work plan.
- ***Linkages with employers need to be strengthened.*** This could include implementing changes to the design and delivery of training programs to make these programs more effective in helping to meet skill shortages.
- Focus group participants identified other impediments to re-employment that did not fall within the scope of PPSs such as age discrimination, family obligations and lack of mobility. As part of future planning processes around PPSs, it would be useful to consider whether there are ways to address these other identified impediments to re-employment.