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April 2009

Summative Evaluation of the Canada-Alberta Labour Market Development Agreement

Final Report
April 2009

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

Final Report

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

April 2009

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List of Abbreviations

AEII	Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (presently Alberta Employment and Immigration (AEI))
AISH	Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
CEAS	Career and Employment Assistance Service
CPP	Canada Pension Plan
EAS	Employment Assistance Services
EBSM	Employment Benefits and Support Measures
EI	Employment Insurance
ESL	English as a Second Language
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
JP	Job Placement
LMDA	Labour Market Development Agreement
LMI	Labour Market Information
SDS	Skills Development – Skills
SDU	Skills Development – Upgrading
SE	Self-Employment
SFI	Supports for Independence: Alberta’s social assistance program, also referred to as Social Assistance or Income Support
SW	Skills for Work
TOJ	Training on the Job
WCB	Workers’ Compensation Board
WORP	Work Outcome Reporting Project

Executive Summary

This report presents highlights of the summative evaluation of the Canada-Alberta Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA), a study designed to identify the outcomes and net impacts of programs and services on the labour market prospects of participants.

Approximately 3,650 clients were surveyed in 2004, more than a year after participating in an LMDA-funded intervention. To account for variables such as fluctuations in the local economy, a matched comparison group of similar size was also surveyed. Survey results were combined with focus group, interview and pre-existing administrative data sources, bringing the total number of study participants to 9,253. This report highlights estimates of program net impacts on client employability – specifically on employment, earnings, Employment Insurance (EI) use, Support for Independence (SFI) use as well as client outcomes with respect to changes in skill level and education.

Programs Evaluated

- Career and Employment Assistance Service (CEAS)
- Skills Development
 - Skills (SDS)
 - Upgrading (SDU)
- Training on the Job (TOJ)
- Skills for Work (SW)
- Self-Employment (SE)
- Job Placement (JP)

The six LMDA-funded programs in this study represent a range of interventions. To compare the results or costs of one program with another does a disservice to their intent. Each program was designed to meet the needs of specific client groups and this is reflected in the results.

For example, Skills Development – Upgrading (SDU) clients faced a variety of obstacles to employment, including language barriers. Forty percent were engaged in English as a Second Language training. Although a lower than average percentage of clients was employed at the time of the survey, a notably high percentage went on to further education, which is a stated goal of the program. Self-employment (SE) clients, on the other hand, tended to be better educated and have fewer employment barriers. Employment outcomes for this group were predictably high.

A range of programming is important because it offers flexibility to address local client employability needs and it helps Alberta meet its demand for labour. If the Conference Board of Canada's estimates are accurate, Alberta could face a shortage of 332,000 workers by the year 2025¹. Already, in the year 2008, Alberta is experiencing labour shortages that make headlines across the country. Even after investment in the oil sands decreases, Alberta's

¹ Conference Board of Canada, "Taking sides: Is Alberta's labour shortage a doomsday scenario?" July 17, 2006. Glen Hodgson. www.conferenceboard.ca/press/2006/OpEds/labour-shortage.asp

labour shortage is expected to increase. An aging population and declining participation rates will continue to limit labour supply.

Alberta is capitalizing on opportunities to help clients enter or re-enter the labour market, whether that entails intensive language training or merely an opportunity to refresh job interview skills. Although some clients may not be able to overcome employment barriers with a single intervention, there are new opportunities for many people who have been overlooked in the past. With the help of well-designed programs, they can make an important contribution to Alberta's growing economy and to their own future.

The results of this study must be viewed within the context of Alberta's unusual economic conditions. At the time of this study, the provincial unemployment rate averaged less than 5%, which was well below the national average of 7.4%. The resulting labour market crunch was characterized by rising wages and easy job availability. As a consequence, jobs were more easily accessible to individuals who, in other situations, would have had difficulties finding employment. Hence, those who left the workforce to upgrade their skills paid an "opportunity cost"; they sacrificed the job security and wage increases that they would have experienced if they had remained in the Alberta labour market. These effects of Alberta's unusual economic growth are evident in several of the evaluation results.

Overall, Alberta's LMDA-funded programs had a positive net impact on the labour market readiness of some participants, depending on client type and intervention –particularly for EI Active clients. The more intensive programs, such as Skills Development, had a higher per client cost than did other programs that offered less intensive interventions.

Highlights

The following section provides an overview of overall evaluation results per outcome. The detailed results per intervention are presented in the main body of the report.

Employment

- Participation in a Canada-Alberta LMDA program generally resulted in improved employment outcomes for program participants. Net impact analysis demonstrated a positive impact on the proportion of program participants employed at the time of the survey – 19 to 31 months after participating in the following programs: Skills Development – Skills (SDS), Training on the Job (TOJ), and Self Employment (SE). In addition, the client survey suggests positive outcomes based on pre- and post- analysis from participation in Job Placement (JP).

Earnings

- The overall effect of participation on earnings was positive for EI Active claimants.
 - For EI Active clients, the overall effect of participation was an increase of \$3,512 in annual net earnings in the year before the survey.

EI Use

- Overall, participation in programs resulted in a net decrease in EI use and EI benefits.
 - EI Active clients reduced annual EI benefits by 1.05 weeks in the year before the survey, which yielded savings of \$311 per year.
 - EI Reachback clients reduced EI benefits by 0.47 weeks per year, which yielded an average of \$140 in savings per client.

SFI Use

- Overall, reliance on Support for Independence decreased.
 - The overall effect of participation was a decrease of Supports for Independence (Alberta's social assistance program, also referred to as Social Assistance or Income Support) by 1.7 percentage points for EI Active clients at the time of the survey.

Changes in Skill Level and Education

- Participants generally felt that the specific skills/experience acquired through the programs contributed to current and/or future employability.

Management Response

Introduction

Alberta Employment and Immigration and Industry (AEII), the Alberta/Northwest Territories/Nunavut Region of Service Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) would like to thank all those who participated in the Summative Evaluation of the Canada-Alberta Labour Market Development Agreement, and are pleased to provide this Management Response.

Background

The governments of Alberta and Canada entered into the Canada-Alberta Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) in December of 1996. It gave responsibility to the province for the design and delivery of labour market development programs and services in Alberta.² This Agreement is managed within the context of the Canada-Alberta Liaison Committee (CALC), which is co-chaired by Andy Netzel, Regional Executive Head for Service Canada, and Ellen Hambrook, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Services and Information, Alberta Employment and Immigration.

As part of the LMDA, Alberta and Canada agreed to create and implement an evaluation process. A formative evaluation was completed in 2000, which provided information to improve the design and delivery of the programs. This report presents results of the summative evaluation which measured the overall effectiveness of the programs. Fieldwork took place between January and May 2004 for clients who left an intervention between June 1, 2001 and May 31, 2002. Data were compiled and analyzed in 2004/2005 and further analyses were completed in 2006.

Labour Market Context

This summative evaluation took place as the provincial economy was experiencing substantial growth. Leaving the labour market to pursue training during this time presented a significant economic risk to individuals. As the labour market tightened, those with more severe barriers to employment remained in the unemployed segment of the workforce and many sought employment-related education and training. Such individuals often require longer and more customized training approaches, with employment results being less than ideal due to a variety of observable and unobservable characteristics. Therefore it is not surprising that in some programs, and on some indicators, results were less than expected.

² Canada retains responsibility for the delivery of employment insurance benefits under Part I of the *EI Act*.

Purpose of the MR

AEI is committed to evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement. Ongoing monitoring of labour market programs and services through a provincial Performance Measurement Framework³, regular evaluations of specific programs and services as well as this summative evaluation ensures opportunities to better address client employment/training needs and improve outcomes for Alberta's labour market and for the people of Alberta have been (and continue to be) identified and implemented.

Key Findings and Proposed Actions

The methodology for the research contained in the report is robust. It includes multiple lines of evidence from a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies including surveys, econometric modeling, interviews, focus groups and administrative data. Net impacts were determined for key indicators, including: employment, earnings, EI use, social assistance use, and changes in skill level and educational attainment. The methodology used is consistent with internationally accepted standards in program evaluation, and meets the obligation of Alberta and Canada governments with respect to evaluating Alberta's programs and services under the Canada-Alberta Labour Market Development Agreement. Results realized through the provincial Performance Measurement Framework described above as well as these multiple lines of evidence support the key findings identified by the evaluation.

Key Findings

Alberta Employment and Immigration agrees with the finding of the summative evaluation, "overall, Alberta's LMDA-funded programs had a positive net impact on the labour market readiness of participants, depending on client type and intervention."

Highlights noted in the report include the following:

Employment: Participation in a Canada-Alberta program generally resulted in improved employment outcomes for program participants. Net impact analysis demonstrated a positive impact on the proportion of program participants employed at the time of the survey – 19 to 31 months after participating in the following programs: Skills Development – Skills (SDS), Training on the Job (TOJ), and Self Employment (SE). In addition, the client survey suggests positive outcomes based on pre- and post- analysis from participation in Job Placement (JP).

Earnings: Earnings outcomes for most programs were mixed. For EI Active clients, the overall effect of participation was an increase of \$3,512 in annual net earnings in the year before the survey.

³ The provincial Performance Measurement Framework includes analysis of a suite of skills outcomes and indicators, costs, net impacts, client re-entry rates and training provider compliance.

EI Use: Most programs achieved positive outcomes for EI use and EI Benefits received. EI Active clients reduced annual EI benefits by 1.05 weeks in the year before the survey, which yielded a savings of \$311 per year. EI Reachback clients reduced EI benefits by 0.47 weeks, which yielded an average of \$140 in savings per client.

Use of Social Assistance (SFI): Reliance on government assistance of any type decreased for many of the programs. The overall effect of participation was a decrease in use of Supports for Independence (welfare payments) by 1.7% at the time of the survey for EI active clients.

Changes in Skill Level and Education: Program participants increased their high school completion rate by 10.5%, substantially more than the estimated increase of 5.2% among the matched comparison group. Participants generally felt that the specific skills/experience acquired through the programs contributed to current and/or future employability.

To prepare for the significant labour market shortages forecast for Alberta and in keeping with the findings of this evaluation, Alberta Employment and Immigration is co-chairing a significant Government of Alberta policy realignment entitled Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce: Alberta's 10 Year Strategy which was implemented in 2006. The four themes of the strategic framework: Inform, Attract, Develop and Retain provide a context for AEI's Skill Investment Strategy (SIS) Framework. All programming provided to Albertans under the LMDA are provided within the four program areas of the SIS framework: Career Information, Training for Work, Work Foundations and Workforce Partnerships.

Key policy changes have already been implemented. For example, the maximum duration of funding for training interventions was 12 months at the inception of the LMDA. However, based on evidence that this timeframe was insufficient to assist some individuals to form labour market attachment, the timeframe has been increased to 20 months in one of four learning streams, and up to a maximum of 30 months when two or more streams are accessed. In addition, work has been done with respect to the level of income assistance for LMDA clients.

It is also expected that Alberta will implement changes to the Labour Market Partnerships Program to better work with sectoral, employers and workers groups to address labour and skill shortages.

Conclusion

This summative evaluation afforded an excellent opportunity for AEI to validate their ongoing approaches to evaluation and net impact analysis of labour market programs and services. As a result of this summative evaluation and other on-going program assessment research, AEI has already made changes to their client follow-up questionnaire and net impact methodology. More workplace supports, such as job coaching and post-employment support, have been made available to help clients become competitive in today's labour market by maintaining employment.

Alberta will use the evaluation findings, along with other monitoring and assessment efforts, to continuously make changes to Alberta programs and services to achieve better labour market outcomes for Albertans.

1. Introduction

The governments of Alberta and Canada entered into the Canada-Alberta Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) in December of 1996. The agreement gave responsibility to the province for the design and delivery of labour market development programs and services in Alberta.⁴ In Alberta, there are six LMDA-funded programs and services delivered by Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (AEII)⁵ (see table on Page 2).

The main objective of the labour market development programs offered under Part II of the *Employment Insurance (EI) Act* is to assist individuals to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment as well as reduce dependency on EI and Social Assistance (SA).

The underlying principles of the Canada-Alberta LMDA include:

- Recognizing the importance of integrating the unemployed into the workforce;
- Providing the highest quality labour market development programs and services;
- Measuring, monitoring, assessing and evaluating the success of labour market development programs and services; and
- Attempting to achieve significant economies and quality improvements through co-operation in the development, management and funding of systems infrastructure that meets the objectives of provincial and national labour market programs.

As part of the LMDA, Alberta and Canada agreed to create and implement an evaluation process. A formative evaluation was completed in 2000, which provided information to improve the design and delivery of the programs. This report presents results of the summative evaluation, which measures the overall effectiveness of the programs.

⁴ Canada retains responsibility for the delivery of employment insurance benefits under Part I of the *EI Act*.

⁵ Alberta Employment and Immigration (AEI) was formerly known as Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (AEII).

Table 1
Provincial LMDA Programs and Services and Corresponding HRSDC Categories

AHRE Programs and Services	Corresponding HRSDC Intervention Categories
Employment Benefits	
<p>Skills Development</p> <p>Skills Development – Upgrading (SDU)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term programs to develop basic foundational skills, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and academic upgrading. <p>Skills Development – Skills Training (SDS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term education/skills training programs in a classroom setting. <p>Skills Development – Apprenticeship*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EI Benefits for qualified apprentices who are attending technical training. 	<p>Skills Development</p> <p>Purchase of Training/ Income Support</p> <p>Skills Loans & Grants/ Enhanced Fee Payers</p> <p>Apprenticeship</p>
<p>Training on the Job (TOJ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site training opportunities to gain work experience and transferable skills. 	<p>Targeted Wage Subsidy</p>
<p>Skills for Work (SW)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualized training including life management skills, occupational training, academic upgrading and work experience for jobs in demand. 	<p>Job Creation Partnerships</p>
<p>Self-employment (SE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal instruction to lay the groundwork for business start-up. 	<p>Self-Employment Assistance</p>
<p>Job Placement** (JP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal instruction in job search and retention skills for job-ready clients. Includes placement with employers who have vacancies. 	<p>Employment Assistance Services</p>
Support Measures	
<p>Career and Employment Assistance Services (CEAS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career planning assistance and preparation for employment transitions. Services include: self-directed services (e.g., access to labour market information), directed career assistance (e.g., career advice, group workshops) and client-specific services (e.g., individual counselling). 	<p>Employment Assistance Services</p>
<p>* The LMDA Agreement also provides funding towards full course cost recovery for apprenticeship training. Apprenticeship programs were not included within the scope of this evaluation.</p> <p>** In Alberta, JP is considered to be a program intervention rather than a support measure. JP is funded from CEAS but treated as a program Provincial LMDA Programs and Services and Corresponding HRSDC Categories for evaluation purposes.</p>	

2. Methodology

The summative evaluation used a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to create a well-rounded picture of outcomes and net impacts.

Quantitative Research

- Approximately 7,000 program participants and members of the matched comparison group were contacted by telephone to gather data about their employment and earnings history. Response rates were approximately 60 percent – excluding people who could not be reached because they moved, were traveling, were deceased, etc. (for more detail, please see Appendix III) – and did not vary significantly by intervention type or client characteristics. The quality of the data was influenced somewhat by the participants’ ability to recall their employment and earnings history.
- Relevant information was also gleaned from pre-existing sources, such as administrative data from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.
- Econometric modeling helped researchers determine the relationship between program participation and outcomes.

Qualitative Research

- Interviews were conducted with 45 service providers and AEI/HRSDC representatives.
- Nine focus groups with a total of 55 clients and employers were conducted.
- Pre-existing sources were also reviewed for relevant information. For example, the Work Outcome Reporting Project (WORP) tracks client outcomes and satisfaction for a variety of AEI training and income support programs.
- A literature review was conducted for a more in-depth understanding of the LMDA and the evaluation issues it presented.

Multiple Lines of Evidence

Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods adds rigour to the evaluation by providing more detailed insights into the findings. It also adds corroborating evidence through triangulation. However, the qualitative or self-reported impacts by themselves should not be treated as providing evidence at the same level of rigour as the econometric impact estimates

Geographic Representation

Interviews took place across the province to ensure geographic representation. Because sample sizes were small in some communities, results from regions outside of Calgary and Edmonton were grouped together. Therefore, the summative evaluation reports data in three regions: Calgary, Edmonton and other Alberta.

Participants

With the exception of CEAS and JP, which are available to all Albertans, study results were reported for the following participants⁶:

- EI Active clients – people who were receiving EI benefits when they entered the program. They represent 62% of the participants.
- EI Reachback clients – people who had collected regular or medical EI benefits in the last three years or paternity/maternity benefits in the past five years. They represent 39%⁷ of the participants.

The participant population for the evaluation was defined as all those who took part in and left an LMDA-funded program or service sometime between June 1, 2001 and May 31, 2002. The population included program completers and non-completers. Additional detail about age, gender, education and equity group status of participants is available in Appendix II.

Matched Comparison Group

To allow researchers to measure the net impacts of LMDA-funded interventions while accounting for variables like client characteristics and a fluctuating economy and job market, a matched comparison group was created. The pool of comparison candidates consists of EBSM-eligible individuals who did not participate in a program between June 1, 2001 and May 31, 2002. They were matched based on key demographic characteristics of participants such as age, gender and number of EI claims.

It is important to note that the matching procedure does not take into account unmeasured personal attributes, such as motivation, which can influence the decision to participate in training and/or employment. For example, EI Reachback clients in the participant group took part in an intervention, which may indicate that they were ready and motivated to work. The comparison group was comprised of EI Reachback eligible individuals who did not participate in an intervention. These individuals may or may not be interested and/or available to work. Therefore, caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions regarding the net impacts of an intervention on this group of clients. Because

⁶ Job Placement and Career and Employment Assistance Services also include non-EI eligible participants but the net impact of their participation in programs and services was not included in this study.

⁷ Due to rounding, the total percentage may add up to more than 100%.

unmeasured factors may also have affected participation by EI Active clients, similar cautions apply to this group as well.

Difference-in-Differences Estimates

To make comparisons between the study group and the matched comparison group, researchers used several models. This report highlights “difference-in-differences” estimates, which measure the difference between the pre- and post-program outcomes of the study group and those of the comparison group.

For example, the study group and the comparison group were both asked how much money they made a year before starting their program and a year prior to the survey. If the study group’s earnings increased by \$4,000 and the comparison group’s earnings increased by \$1,000, the difference-in-differences net impact would be +\$3,000 for the study group.

Measuring differences in pre-program/post-program outcome differences is used to adjust for any pre-existing differences between the two groups. This adjustment works as long as the pre-existing differences remain constant over the observation period.

Indicators

LMDA-funded programs and services are designed to improve the labour market readiness of participants. The difference-in-differences net impact of the interventions was examined using four main indicators: employment, earnings, EI use, and Supports for Independence (SFI) use, as listed in the table below.

Table 2
Indicators and Outcome Measures

Employment
% of participants employed at the time of the survey
of weeks worked in the 12 months prior to the survey
of weeks unemployed in the 12 months prior to the survey
Earnings
Total earnings in the 12 months prior to the survey
Weekly wages for the current/most recent job
Average weekly earnings over the full post-program period
Hourly wage for the current/most recent job
Average hourly wage over the full post-program period
EI Use
EI Receipt – weeks in receipt of EI per year since leaving the program
Average weekly EI benefits per year since leaving the program
SFI Use
% of participants in receipt of SFI at the time of the survey
% of participants in receipt of any government assistance in the 12 months prior to the survey

Earnings

Program participants and members of the comparison group were asked how much they earned during specific periods. As their estimates could not be validated by Canada Revenue Agency, results on earnings should be interpreted with some caution due to recall error.

Timeline

The summative evaluation examined the net impacts of programs and services that took place in 2001/2002. Specifically, clients left an intervention between June 1, 2001 and May 31, 2002. Because experts recommend to measure outcomes occurring within at least a 12 to 18 month post-program period, the survey was conducted between January and May 2004 – 19 to 31 months after participation. Data were compiled and analyzed in 2004/2005.

It should be noted that CEAS was not covered by this survey. Data for CEAS were collected from the Work Outcomes Reporting Project (WORP), which involved a follow-up of program participants six months after receiving service. A validation exercise conducted in 2006 allowed for the recalculation of EI net impacts, which increased confidence in the estimates reported.

3. Results

3.1 Career and Employment Assistance Services (CEAS)

Unlike the other programs included in the summative evaluation, it is not possible to attribute changes experienced by CEAS participants to their participation in the program. A matched comparison group was not created for this program and it was not possible to measure net impacts.

The data for CEAS was gleaned from Work Outcomes Reporting Project (WORP) data. WORP parameters were aligned with the reference period for the summative evaluation (i.e., participants left a CEAS intervention between June 2001 and May 2002) and follow-up occurred six months after receiving service, rather than 19 to 31 months later.

Program Description

The primary objective of Career and Employment Assistance Services (CEAS) was to support the career and employment planning needs of Albertans. CEAS consisted of a range of support measures designed to help people make informed career planning decisions and prepare for employment transitions. There were three levels of support:

- Level 1 Self-directed, short-term services
(e.g., access to labour market information)
- Level 2 A range of directed career assistance services
(e.g., career advice, job search assistance, workshops, etc.)
- Level 3 Client-specific services that include individual assessment/career counselling and case management interventions
(e.g., workability assessment prior to referral to a training program)

The summative evaluation examined CEAS Level 2 interventions only, which fall into four streams:

- Job search/shadowing
- Exposure courses (clients receive funding to earn job-specific qualifications such as first aid or driver training)
- Workshops
- Career advice/service needs determination

Participants

CEAS participants tended to be young; 34% of participants were under 30, whereas the under-30 population for other programs averaged 17%. Aboriginal participation (9%) was higher than other LMDA-funded programs (7%). CEAS participants tended to have lower levels of educational attainment; 23% did not have a high school education as compared to an average of 14% for the other programs.

At the time of the study, the CEAS Level 2 sample size was...

- 2,085 individuals

Highlights

Employment increased by 38.3 percentage points among CEAS participants.

At the time they received services, approximately one-quarter (26.1%) of CEAS participants were employed or self-employed. At the time of the survey (i.e., six months following receipt of services), this number increased to 64.4%.

Employment results were highest for job search/shadowing participants.

CEAS participants who received job search/shadowing services found employment most frequently (70.4%) but the numbers were high for all streams: 68.2% for exposure courses, 64.0% for workshops and 63.4% for career advice/service needs determination.

CEAS participants reported comparatively low income levels.

While the majority (80.4%) of respondents reportedly worked full-time (i.e., 30 or more hours per week), nearly three-quarters of respondents reported an income of less than \$30,000 per year from their current or most recent job. This is lower than the provincial average income of \$32,603 per year reported for 2001⁸.

Moreover, the largest proportion (30.4%) of employed CEAS participants reported that their gross annual earnings from their current or most recent job were in the \$10,000 to \$19,999 range. Also evident in the data is the disparity between the income levels of women and men; 14.8% of female CEAS participants earned \$30,000 per year or more as compared to 40.2% of male CEAS participants.

Less than 20% relied on government assistance for their main source of income.

Overall, 14.6% of CEAS clients relied upon EI, SFI, Band funding (money from an individual band or tribal council), AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped), WCB (Workers' Compensation), CPP (Canada Pension Plan) Disability and Child Support six months after receiving service. In addition, 4.7% relied upon student loans/grants.

⁸ Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.

On the whole, CEAS participants felt that CEAS services enhanced their employability.

The majority of participants found CEAS to be most helpful in preparing for a job, and in increasing their feelings of employability (71.3% and 71.1% respectively). In addition, 68.1% also felt that the service increased their ability to find a job.

Clients were very satisfied with the services provided.

Overall, 83.2% of clients were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received. Aboriginal respondents indicated the highest level of satisfaction with services. However, all equity groups were satisfied in the majority of cases.

Respondents were reportedly satisfied or very satisfied with the advice/counselling they received (84.7%), and the information they received (85.3%). Participants also indicated that program service staff were helpful in 88.9% of cases.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported having some further training plans.

Overall, the majority (62.3%) of respondents indicated that they had taken or were planning to take additional training of some kind. Aboriginals (74.6%) and single parent families (73.1%) were most likely to have taken or be planning to pursue further education/training. Nearly two-thirds (66%) of individuals indicated that the training was typically longer than six months in duration.

Conclusion

Overall, most CEAS clients had improved employment outcomes at the time of the survey (i.e. six months post program). They were satisfied with the services they received and the majority of respondents reported having some further training plans. Only about half of the participants had a high school education at the time they participated in CEAS services and they had comparatively low income levels, which may have shaped future plans. Because a comparison group was not available for the CEAS program, the extent to which these results can be attributed to the program is uncertain.

3.2 Skills Development – Skills Training (SDS)

Program Description

SDS was designed to facilitate short-term skills training for unemployed Albertans in order to secure sustainable employment. Training was classroom-based and included a wide variety of programs ranging from basic computer skills to engineering technology. While assistance, in the form of grants, was provided, participants were expected to contribute \$1,350 towards education fees and expenses while they were enrolled in a full-time classroom-based training program of one year or less.

Participants⁹

SDS was most appropriate for individuals with the capacity to learn/develop skills in a formal training environment. Fifty per cent of SDS program participants had already completed some form of post-secondary education, which is the highest percentage of all the programs. Among SDS participants, 64% were EI Active clients. They were also less likely to belong to equity/special groups; 23% were immigrants, 12% were visible minorities, 14% were persons with disabilities, 5% were aboriginals and 20% were single parent families.

At the time of the study, the SDS participant population was...

- 2,573 individuals
- 24% of total program participant population

Highlights¹⁰

The SDS program had a positive effect on employment outcomes for EI Reachback clients but less so for EI Active clients.

EI Reachback clients experienced positive net impacts on all three employment measures. There was an increase of 12.9 percentage points in the proportion of EI Reachback clients employed, an increase of 3.9 weeks worked in the 12 months before the survey and a corresponding 4.3 week decrease in the number of weeks unemployed.

EI Active clients also experienced some positive employment net impacts. The number of weeks unemployed during the 12 months prior to the survey declined (-2.4 weeks). However, there was no significant net impact on the proportion of EI Active clients employed at the time of the survey or the number of weeks worked in the 12 months prior to the survey.

There was a differential effect on employment net impacts for the three areas of the province.

Only SDS participants located in Edmonton realized a positive net impact on employment. There were no net impacts on employment for SDS participants located in Calgary and other regions of Alberta.

Hourly wage improved for SDS participants from before the program to participants' current/most recent job.

The difference-in-differences estimate for hourly wage of the most recent/current job revealed an increase for both EI Active (+\$2.53) and Reachback (+\$1.62) clients.

⁹ For the purpose of the summative evaluation, the participant population is defined as those participants who left an intervention at some point during the evaluation reference period (i.e., June 1, 2000 to May 31, 2002). This is consistent for all programs except CEAS.

¹⁰ A summary table of the net impacts results for all programs except CEAS is provided in Appendix A.

EI Active clients experienced some positive net impacts on total earnings during the 12 months prior to the survey.

EI Active clients earned more in the 12 months prior to the survey than they had in the 12-month pre-program period. Net impact was +\$4,796 annually per client.

EI usage declined for EI Active participants.

EI Active clients experienced a decline in the annual number of weeks (-1.18) in receipt of EI. Accordingly, there was a decline in the annualized amount of EI benefits (-\$348) received during the post-program period.

SDS led to changes in occupations for many participants.

SDS participants developed skills that allowed them to move from employment in sales and service positions (a decline of 6.9 percentage points) and positions in processing and manufacturing (a decline of 4.4 percentage points) to other types of occupations. The most substantial increase in employment for SDS participants occurred in health occupations (+8.3 percentage points). Other notable changes occurred in the natural and applied sciences and related occupations (+7.5 percentage points) and business, finance and administration occupations (+6.4 percentage points).

The training received in SDS appears to have been relevant to participants' interests and career goals.

Close to three-quarters (73.7%) of SDS participants either somewhat or strongly agreed that the SDS program increased their ability to find a job in their field of interest. The diversity of training provided to SDS participants suggests the program was very flexible to suit participant needs and interests/talents.

Conclusion

For EI Reachback clients, SDS was successful in assisting them to obtain employment and increase their hourly wages. Although EI Active clients did not report a positive net impact on employment, their hourly wage and earnings did see a net increase.

Overall, SDS appeared to meet its intended goal of providing training to help participants increase their marketable skills and find and maintain employment. The increase in employment in health and natural and applied sciences occupations, and decline in sales and service occupations, indicate that the SDS program focused on providing training required for the skilled and technical occupations. The positive net increase in the hourly wage from before SDS to participants' current/most recent job suggests that SDS participants eventually moved into higher paying jobs than they held prior to the program.

3.3 Skills Development – Upgrading (SDU)

Program Description

SDU offered short-term tuition-based training programs for EI clients needing basic adult education, academic upgrading and English as a Second Language (ESL) of up to 12 months in order to improve their employability. Training was typically delivered in a classroom setting. Following SDU, participants could then move to SDS for an additional 12 months of training with more of a career orientation. Participants were required to contribute \$720 towards the cost of SDU training for programs under six months and \$1,350 for programs six months to a year in length.

Type of SDU program	% SDU Participants
ESL	40.0%
Academic upgrading	27.5%
Basic/Lifeskills training	14.4%
Integrated training	13.2%
Other	4.9%

Participants

Participants were selected on the basis of their academic and language abilities as well as their employability and essential skill levels. Often clients faced a variety of barriers to education and/or employment, they lacked job experience or they did not have appropriate training. SDU, because of the language training component, attracted a higher than average percentage of immigrants (61% versus 25% for all programs) and visible minorities (32% versus 14% for all programs).

At the time of the study, the SDU participant population was...

- 1,090 individuals
- 10.2% of total program participant population

Highlights

Earnings of EI Active clients were negatively impacted by the program.

Net earnings for EI Active SDU participants were \$4,364 less than the matched comparison group during the 12 months prior the survey. The decrease was not significant for EI Reachback clients.

Non-completion of SDU was relatively high.

Relative to other programs, SDU was characterized by low completion rates. Less than three-quarters (73.3%) of clients completed their training. Non-completers were equally likely to be employed at the time of the survey as completers. The fact that completers and non-completers have the same post-program employment rates provides no evidence on the effect of completion on employment.

Male SDU participants earned more than female SDU participants.

Male SDU participants earned significantly more (\$23,602) than did female participants (\$15,834), possibly due to the types of occupations they held. Unlike female participants in other programs, female SDU participants were not mostly engaged in clerical occupations, possibly due to language/literacy barriers. Rather, female SDU participants held positions in sales and service occupations (40.9%). Men, on the other hand, were employed in a variety of occupations, including sales and services (15.9%); transport trades and intermediate occupations (15.9%); and processing and manufacturing (11.8%).

EI Active clients experienced a decline in EI and SFI usage.

For EI Active clients, there was a significant net decline in the annual number of weeks on EI over the post-program period (-1.31) and a net decrease in the annualized amount of EI benefits received (-\$309). They also experienced a decline in SFI use from the four weeks prior to starting SDU to the time of the survey (-6.7 percentage points). However, student financial assistance increased from 3.0% prior to the program to 9.6% at the time of the survey.

There is evidence to suggest that language barriers exist for some SDU participants, even after the program.

In the survey, language was noted as a barrier to employment for close to one-third (32.6%) of SDU participants who had been unemployed for some time during the 12-month pre-program period. Similarly, focus group participants noted that, even after participating in SDU, English language proficiency continued to present a significant barrier to employment.

A significant portion of clients continued with further education and training after the program.

Unlike the other programs, further employment-related skills training and education was a targeted outcome of SDU. A high number (13.3%) of participants were in the process of completing further education or training at the time of the survey; the average for all programs combined was 4.1%.

Conclusion

The evaluation findings suggest that SDU participants could require additional skill development programs after completing the foundation training provided in SDU. For example, despite participating in ESL programs, many participants felt that they continued to face language barriers. Evaluation results indicate that a relatively high proportion of SDU clients (13.3%) did continue with further education and training after the program.

3.4 Training on the Job (TOJ)

Program Description

Training on the Job (TOJ) programs were designed to help unemployed Albertans improve their employability by acquiring work experience and transferable skills in occupations in demand by local employers through on-site training opportunities. They were also intended to encourage employers to invest in the training and hiring of unemployed Albertans. Participants of the TOJ program could receive on-the-job training for up to 32 weeks (eight months), although the average length of training for participants included in this study was 19.6 weeks. Extended training was available to individuals who faced significant employment barriers or had greater training needs. Participating employers had to demonstrate their ability to provide training and to hire the TOJ participant after the program.

Employers received partial reimbursement for the job training provided, up to 80 per cent, \$300 per week or \$7.50 per hour. Because TOJ participants were paid wages while they were receiving employment-based training, they were considered employed and no longer eligible for EI benefits while in the work experience component of the program. However, the time spent working as part of the TOJ program accrued as EI insurable weeks.

Participants

TOJ participants were individuals who had experienced difficulty in obtaining employment due to a lack of current job-specific or occupation-related skills. In particular, the program focused on job re-entry for individuals who were employment-ready but lacked a recent work history (e.g., parents who had left the workforce for a period). This is reflected in the significantly larger proportion of EI Reachback clients (61%) in TOJ as compared to the total program participant population where 39% were EI Reachback clients. A higher proportion of TOJ participants (29%) were in the 20 to 29 age group compared to 17% for all programs. They were also less likely to have completed post-secondary education.

At the time of the study, the TOJ participant population was...

- 314 individuals
- 4% of total program participant population

Highlights

TOJ participants had mixed results for employment measures but EI Reachback clients appeared to benefit more than EI Active clients.

There was a net increase of 16.2 percentage points in the proportion of EI Reachback clients employed at the time of the survey. Results for EI Active clients were not significant as a result of participation in the program.

TOJ had no effect on the length of employment for either EI Active or EI Reachback clients. However, EI Reachback clients did witness a net decline in the number of weeks they were unemployed (-6.5 weeks) from the 12-month period prior to the survey, as a result of their participation in TOJ.

There was a differential effect on net employment within the province.

Employment net impacts differed across the three regions in Alberta. TOJ participants located in Calgary (+23.6%) and other regions in Alberta (+14.5%) experienced a net increase in employment at the time of the survey, while those located in Edmonton experienced no change.

Hourly wages increased for EI Active clients.

EI Active clients experienced a net increase in the hourly wage of their current/most recent job as compared to members of the comparison group (+\$2.16). Similarly, they experienced a relative net increase in their total earnings (+\$4,180) over the 12 months prior to the survey. EI Reachback clients did not have significant net earning impacts.

EI Active clients reduced their use of EI benefits.

EI Active clients experienced a decline in the annualized amount of EI benefits (-\$527) received during the post-program period. However, no significant effect was found on EI weeks for these clients.

The majority of TOJ participants did not stay with the same employer after the program.

While participants in the TOJ program often remained with their employer for a time after the program, less than one-third (27.1%) were working with the same employer at the time of the survey.

TOJ focused on certain types of training, which led to changes in occupations held by participants.

The most notable change in occupations from the pre-program to the post-program occurred in business and administrative fields, including clerical occupations. Individuals in these occupations almost doubled, moving from 18.0% pre-program to 34.0% post-program. Mainly female participants filled these occupations, transferring from sales-related occupations. In general, occupations in the skilled trades and semi-skilled occupations were more likely to be filled by men.

TOJ participants did not pursue further education.

While 80.7% of TOJ participants felt they were more employable as a result of learning new skills through the program, results indicate that TOJ participants did not have a significant net increase in their level of education at the time of the survey.

Conclusion

The relatively high participation rate by EI Reachback clients is consistent with the program's goals. Although EI Reachback clients could, by definition, have been out of the workforce for a considerable time (i.e., three to five years), TOJ did lead to improvements in employment for this client group. Therefore, the focus on individuals who had been separated from the labour force for a period of time was appropriate.

Although most TOJ participants did not stay with the same employer, this is not necessarily a negative outcome. The survey took place 19 to 31 months after the intervention. Career development opportunities could entail movement to different employers, particularly in markets experiencing high labour demands.

3.5 Skills for Work (SW)

Program Description

Skills for Work offered participants a range of formal, classroom-based training in combination with workplace experience. It was designed to help participants acquire and integrate life management skills, occupational training and basic skills upgrading with work experience in high demand jobs.

Participants typically spent approximate equal proportions of time in the training and in the work experience component. The order and amount of each program component, however, was dependent on the individual participant's needs. Job maintenance support services were also available for six months after successful completion of SW. According to the guidelines, SW could last about 26 weeks (6 months), although extensions to a maximum of 52 weeks (12 months) could be made where warranted. In this study, the average duration was 16 weeks.

Participating employers received partial reimbursement for the work experience provided. SW participants were not paid a wage or salary while on the work experience component of their program. However, these individuals did receive financial support through EI Part I, EI Part II or SFI while in the program. Since no wages were paid during the work experience component, the time worked did not accrue as EI insurable weeks.

Participants

SW targeted individuals who had experienced difficulty entering the labour force for the first time (e.g., individuals with foreign credentials, limited education, etc.) or who had faced employment barriers due to a lack of personal management, occupational or basic foundation skills, in addition to insufficient work experience. Service providers reported that the SW client group tended to be less skilled than participants in other LMDA programs and that they often faced a complex mixture of personal and labour force related challenges. Compared to combined averages for all programs, SW participants were more likely to be over 50 years of

age (33% versus 23%), immigrants (30% versus 25%), members of a visible minority group (20% versus 14%) and/or persons with a disability (22% versus 14%).

At the time of the study, the SW participant population was...

- 1,145 individuals
- 14.5% of total program participant population

Highlights

SW participants, particularly EI Reachback clients, had lower levels of labour force participation as compared to other programs.

In general, SW participants had lower employment and higher unemployment levels at the time of the survey relative to the overall average for total program participants. In addition, more SW participants (11.3%) had left the labour force by the time of the survey than had the total program population (8.1%).

EI Active clients saw a reduction in the number of weeks unemployed and higher earnings in the 12 months prior to the survey.

SW had no net impact on the percentage of participants employed at the time of the survey, nor did participants experience a positive net impact in the amount of time employed during the 12 months prior to the survey. However, in terms of unemployment, EI Active clients saw a net reduction in number of weeks unemployed (-4.2). EI Active clients experienced a net increase in total earnings in the 12 months prior to the survey (+\$3,565).

EI Reachback clients saw a negative impact on earnings in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Although EI Active clients experienced a positive net impact on earnings during the 12 months prior to the survey, EI Reachback clients did not. They saw a net decrease of -\$3,750 during the same period.

Many SW participants did not maintain employment with the same employer beyond the work placement/experience component of the program.

SW service providers indicated that when they hired program participants following their work experience placement, many did not remain with the same employer. 35.1% of EI Active clients and 30.5% of EI Reachback clients were hired by the employer after they completed the program. At the time of the survey, these percentages had decreased to 21.5% (EI Active clients) and 17.4% (EI Reachback clients).

There were no consistent effects on EI use from participating in SW.

EI Active clients experienced a modest net reduction in annual EI benefits received (\$152), but no other estimates of the effect of SW on EI weeks were statistically significant.

EI Reachback clients realized a decline in SFI usage from pre- to post-program.

There was a net decrease in the percentage of EI Reachback clients in receipt of SFI after participating in SW (-8.0 percentage points).

SW often lead to employment where participants could apply the skills developed in the program. However, the relevance of training appeared to decrease over time.

Close to two-thirds (65.7%) of SW participants somewhat or strongly agreed that they had worked at a job where they were able to apply the skills learned in the program. However, the relevance of their training may have diminished over time, with slightly less than half (49.6%) reporting that the training was relevant to their current or most recent job. Some of the service providers interviewed also thought that the relevance of the training declined after completing the program, noting that the nature of the program could make it difficult to transfer skills to future employment.

Conclusion

Many of the findings suggest that SW participants face substantial challenges to becoming and/or remaining employed. Participating employers retained only about one-third of SW participants after the program, despite low unemployment rates in many parts of the province and the employers' intent to provide employment beyond the program. Follow-up or job maintenance support was available to employed SW participants for six months after completing the program. However, the extent to which these supports were used is not known. Given these results, the effectiveness of job maintenance supports is an area that could be examined further.

3.6 Self-Employment (SE)

Program Description

The primary objective of the Self-Employment program was to assist participants to create jobs for themselves by starting their own businesses. A secondary objective was to create additional employment opportunities for other Albertans in the local labour market.

SE was designed to be flexible in order to address the specific needs of participants in terms of entrepreneurial training, business plan development and business start-up. Formal instruction in business plan development was available to participants as well as business counselling, coaching and guidance. Monitoring and follow-up was provided during business plan implementation with a reasonable amount of support and guidance accessible for up to one year after starting the program. Program duration was based on individual participant needs and the amount of time required for business start-up. Under the Canada-Alberta LMDA, SE funds were available for training and supplemental benefits could be provided to SE participants for up to 26 weeks, although extensions could be negotiated for additional assistance up to 52 weeks. Any time spent self-employed during the program did not accumulate as EI insurable weeks.

Participants were selected on the basis of having a viable idea for a business and typically needed to have at least 51.0% ownership of the business as well as access to sufficient cash or capital to start the business. They were also selected according to “personal attributes” that would allow them to be successful in self-employment and their personal commitment to operating a business.

Participants

SE attracted clients with higher levels of education (63% of participants had at least part of a college/university education or higher, as compared to 55% for all programs combined) and fewer were part of the equity/special groups. A higher proportion was EI Active (82%) rather than EI Reachback clients (18%) so they had stronger attachment to the labour market.

At the time of the study, the SE participant population was...

- 908 individuals
- 11.5% of total program participant population

Highlights

The SE program had a positive effect on employment, particularly for EI Active clients.

EI Active clients experienced positive net impacts on all three employment indicators. Participating in SE led to a net increase in the percentage of participants employed at the time of the survey (+12.9 percentage points for EI Active clients and +18.1 percentage points for EI Reachback clients). In fact, SE participants were the only EI Active clients to experience a positive net increase in employment. EI Active clients also experienced more weeks of employment (a net increase of 5.6 weeks of employment in the 12 months prior to the survey), as well as a reduction on the number of weeks unemployed (-5.2) during the same time period.

More than eight out of ten SE participants became self-employed after the program and more than one-half were self-employed at the time of the survey.

The majority (83.7%) of SE participants had been self-employed at some point after participating in the program and approximately one-half cited self-employment as their main activity (55.9%) and main source of income (47.3%) at the time of the survey.

Businesses operated by SE participants created employment for other Albertans.

Approximately one-quarter (25.3%) of SE participants who had started their own business employed at least one individual other than themselves and approximately 14.0% employed three or more workers at the time of the survey.

SE had no net impact on participant earnings.

Despite positive effects on employment, SE participants did not experience a net increase in total earnings 12 months prior to the survey. They also did not see a significant net impact on their hourly wage.

EI Active participants realized a reduction in their use of EI assistance.

EI Active clients who participated in SE experienced a significant net decline in the annual number of weeks in receipt of EI (-1.29) and a corresponding net reduction in the annual average EI benefits received (-\$428).

Conclusion

Results suggest that service providers were successful in targeting clients appropriate for the program and that the program met the needs of the participants. In particular, SE led to improved employment for Active EI Clients and appeared to help them become self-sufficient through starting their own businesses, which provided employment for other Albertans.

Reduction in EI usage and the strong attachment to the labour force could be an artefact of being self-employed. Under EI eligibility criteria, self-employed individuals are not eligible to qualify for EI insurable weeks and would not be paid EI benefits if they became unemployed after operating their own business. SE participants, therefore, would be less likely to be eligible for EI and could be more likely to remain in the labour force as a result. In addition, any time spent working while participating in the program is not accumulated as EI insurable weeks.

3.7 Job Placement (JP)

Program Description

Job Placement programs were designed to help unemployed Albertans enter and re-enter the workforce as quickly as possible and to develop job search skills. It also enabled employers to fill job vacancies and skill shortages in their organizations. JP clients generally had the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for employment, but they required job search skills and help connecting with employers. Job Finding Clubs are one example of a Job Placement Program. Skills assessment, analyzing work options, job search techniques and job placement services were available for up to 12 weeks. JP also included job maintenance services for up to 12 additional weeks, such as job coaching, establishing an on site job mentor, adjusting transportation and childcare arrangements, or mediating with the employer.

JP was available to all Albertans, both EI eligible and non-eligible, and funding was provided under the LMDA for all participants. Although the summative evaluation examined both client groups, this report highlights only the results for EI-eligible participants.

Participants

JP clients were generally considered job-ready. In this study, 61% were EI Active clients, indicating a strong attachment to the labour market. Among total JP participants, 9% were visible minorities (versus an overall program average of 14%) and 16% were immigrants

(versus 25%). Approximately 38% of JP participants had completed college or university or had a higher level of education, as compared to 45%¹¹ for all programs combined.

At the time of the study, the total JP participant population (EI and non-EI) was...

- 4,707 individuals
- 43.8% of total program participant population

Overall, 57.2% of the EI-eligible clients received more than one or a combination of services. However, EI Active clients (62.7%) were more likely to have participated in a variety of JP services, as compared to EI Reachback clients (48.5%). A high proportion (85.5%) of EI-eligible participants completed their program.

Type of Service	Active (n=410)	Reachback (n=260)	Total (n=670)
Résumé Writing	70.7%	68.1%	69.7%
Interviewing	47.8%	35.4%	43.0%
Skill Assessment	36.8%	31.9%	34.9%
Self-marketing	39.0%	23.8%	33.1%
Job Referral/Matching	24.4%	18.5%	22.1%
Job Retention Skills	18.0%	14.6%	16.7%
On-the-job Support	13.7%	8.1%	11.5%

Note: Totals will add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Highlights

Participating in JP led to a decrease in the number of weeks unemployed for EI Active clients.

Although there were no net impacts on any of the three employment indicators for EI Reachback clients, participation had a significant net effect on the number of weeks EI Active clients were unemployed (-3.8 weeks).

Participation in JP led to an increase in earnings for EI Active clients.

The only positive net impact on earnings occurred for EI Active clients. Relative to the comparison group, they experienced an increase in net earnings from the pre-program period to the 12 months prior to the survey (+\$3,773). The increase could be related to the decrease in the number of weeks unemployed over the same period (-3.8).

¹¹ These numbers include participants who have college/university diploma, certificate/diploma/other professional designation, university undergraduate degree, university graduate degree and other.

There were gender differences in earnings with males earning more than females.

As with participants in other programs, employed male JP-eligible participants earned significantly more than employed female participants during the 12 months prior to the survey; males earned an average of \$37,123, while females earned an average of \$24,803 over the same time period. The main reason for the discrepancy in wages appears to be related to the types of occupations held by females as compared to males.

In general, EI Active and Reachback clients experienced decreases in EI use, but these decreases were not always statistically significant.

EI Active clients experienced a small net reduction in the annual number of weeks of EI collected (-0.58). This was accompanied by a net reduction in the annual amount of EI benefits received by EI Active clients over the post-program period (-\$157). Although EI use was relatively low for EI Reachback clients prior to the program (as would be expected, given the definition of a Reachback client), this group also experienced a net reduction in annual EI benefits in the post program period (-\$240).

There was a decline in SFI receipt by EI Reachback clients after participating in JP.

Participating in JP led to a net decline in the percentage of EI Reachback clients receiving SFI (-4.8 Percentage points). Data indicated that the decrease was not the result of transferring to other sources of government assistance (e.g., Worker Compensation Benefits, Canada Student Loans, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, etc.).

JP participants felt the program helped them to develop job-finding skills.

Seven in 10 (69.3%) JP participants felt the program increased their ability to find a job and close to two-thirds (64.8%) considered JP to have helped them develop the job search skills necessary to find employment. Less than one-half (46.4%) felt that they had found a job as a direct result of participating in JP. This result is not surprising given that participants were expected to find employment on their own initiative and only one in five (22.0%) clients reported that they had participated in a job referral/matching service.

Conclusion

JP services were not directed toward improving job-related skills. Rather, participants received assistance in developing their job finding skills. Participant feedback indicates that it was successful in meeting this objective; 70% felt the program increased their ability to find a job and 65% said it helped them develop the job search skills they need. The impact appears to be greatest for EI Active clients who increased their net earnings significantly (+\$3,773). EI Reachback clients saw a net decrease in the use of SFI (-4.8 percentage points).

3.8 Overall Impacts by Outcome

The preceding sections examined outcomes by program. This section looks at overall impact by outcome.

Employment

Employment at the time of the survey

At the overall program level, the proportion of participants employed at the time of the survey was not statistically significant for either EI Active clients or EI Reachback clients.

At the individual program level, however, three of the six programs demonstrated a positive impact on the proportion of program participants employed at the time of the survey – 19 to 31 months after program participation.

- SDS EI Reachback clients: +12.9 percentage points
- TOJ EI Reachback clients: +16.2 percentage points
- SE EI Reachback clients: +18.1 percentage points and EI Active clients: 12.9 percentage points

Number of weeks worked 12 months prior to the survey

At the overall program level, there was no statistically significant impact on the number of weeks employed 12 months prior to the survey for either client group.

At the program level, two programs reported a positive net increase in the number of weeks employed 12 months prior to the survey. The others did not report a statistically significant impact.

- SDS EI Reachback clients: +3.9 weeks
- SE EI Active clients: +5.6 weeks

Number of weeks unemployed 12 months prior to the survey

At the overall program level, there was no statistically significant impact on the number of weeks unemployed prior to the survey for either client group.

At the individual program level, all but one of the programs demonstrated a positive net impact (i.e., there was a decrease in number of weeks unemployed) 12 months prior to the survey for at least one client group. The exception was SDU, where net impact was not statistically significant for either client group.

- SDS EI Active clients: -2.4 weeks and EI Reachback clients: -4.3 weeks
- TOJ EI Reachback clients : -6.5 weeks
- SW EI Active clients : -4.2 weeks
- SE EI Active clients: -5.2 weeks
- JP EI Active clients: -3.8 weeks

Earnings

Total earnings 12 months prior to the survey

At the overall program level, EI Active clients experienced a positive effect (+\$3,512) on their earnings in the 12 months prior to the survey. Results were not statistically significant for EI Reachback clients.

At the individual program level, the net increase for EI Active clients in SDS, TOJ, SW and JP ranged from +\$3,565 (SW) to +\$4,796 (SDS). Participation in SDU resulted in a net decrease in earnings (-\$4,364) for EI Active claimants. SE program reported no statistically significant impact for those clients. For EI Reachback clients, the SW program reported a negative impact (-\$3,750) and the other programs reported no statistically significant impact.

Hourly wage

At the overall program level, there was no statistically significant impact on hourly wage for either EI Active clients or EI Reachback clients.

At the individual program level, a net increase in hourly wage was reported for two programs. The others did not report a statistically significant impact.

- SDS EI Active clients: +\$2.53 and Reachback clients: +\$1.62
- TOJ EI Active clients (+\$2.16)

EI Use

EI Receipt

At the overall program level, there was a net reduction (-1.05 weeks) in EI benefits annually for EI Active clients. Similarly, EI Reachback clients experienced a reduction of -0.47 weeks annually.

At the individual program level, a net reduction in the number of weeks was evident for EI Active clients in four (SDS, SDU, SE and JP) of the six programs. The decrease ranged from -0,584 weeks (JP) to -1.31 weeks (SDU). The other two (TOJ and SW) did not report a statistically significant impact. None of the programs reported a statistically significant impact for EI Reachback clients.

EI Weekly Benefits

At the overall program level, there was a net decrease in EI weekly benefits received per year for EI Active (-\$311) and EI Reachback (-\$140) clients.

At the individual program level, a net decrease was evident for EI Active clients in all programs. It ranged -\$152 (SW) to -\$527 (TOJ) per client annually. For EI Reachback clients, all but one of the programs reported no statistically significant impact. The exception was the JP program, where the net impact was -\$240 per client annually.

SFI Use

At the overall program level, the proportion of EI Active clients in receipt of SFI decreased by 1.7 percentage points. There was no statistically significant impact for EI Reachback clients.

At the individual program level, SDU reported a decrease of 6.7 percentage points for EI Active clients. No other programs reported a statistically significant impact for this client group. Two programs, however, reported a net decrease in SFI use for EI Reachback clients – SW (8.0 percentage points) and JP (4.8 percentage points). None of the other programs reported a statistically significant impact.

Conclusion

At the overall program level, participation in an LMDA program appears to have had a positive net impact on three of the four indicators – earnings, EI use and SFI use.

The results of this study must be viewed within the context of Alberta's unusual economic conditions. At the time of this study, the provincial unemployment rate averaged less than 5%, which was well below the national average of 7.4%. The resulting labour market crunch was characterized by rising wages and easy job availability. As a consequence, jobs were more easily accessible to individuals who, in other situations, would have had difficulties finding employment.

4. Program Costs

All AEI clients are served through a single delivery system, making it difficult to separate administrative costs for LMDA and non-LMDA programs. Without this information, it is not possible to do an accurate return on investment (ROI) and costs related to outcomes (CRO) analysis. However, it is possible to identify actual program expenditures, excluding administrative costs and any costs clients incurred. The table below also includes additional income assistance (e.g., living costs) provided under EI Part II. EI Part I benefits are excluded.

Program	Number of Clients	Total Program Cost (\$M)	Per-Client Cost
Skills Development	3,664	32.317	\$8,820
Training on the Job	314	1.841	\$5,864
Skills for Work	1,145	6.515	\$5,690
Self Employment	908	5.158	\$5,680
Job Placement	4,707	3.986	\$847
Total	10,738	49.817	\$4,639*

Source: AEI, Budget codes BU243, BU095.
 * Note this is an average not a sum (i.e., average cost per client).
 Note: CEAS is not included as some of the services are self-serve and cost per client cannot be estimated.

In general, more intensive programs had a higher per client cost than did other programs with less intensive interventions. For example, Skills Development programs offered formal employment-related skills training in a classroom setting for up to 12 months at a per client cost of \$8,820. In comparison, Job Placement services included short-term workshops to develop job search skills, as these individuals are already considered to have adequate employment-related skills. The average cost per client to deliver Job Placement services was \$847.

Appendix 1

Summary of Significant Net Impacts

Summary of Significant Difference-in-Differences Net Impacts by Program and Client Type								
	Group	SDS	SDU	TOJ	SW	SE	JP	All Programs
Employment								
Proportion Employed at Survey	Active	--	--	--	--	+12.9 percentage points	--	--
	Reachback	+12.9 percentage points	--	+16.2 percentage points	--	+18.1 percentage points	--	--
# of Weeks Worked (12 months prior to the survey)	Active	--	--	--	--	+5.6	--	n/a
	Reachback	+3.9	--	--	--	--	--	n/a
# of Weeks Unemployed (12 months prior to the survey)	Active	-2.4	--	--	-4.2	-5.2	-3.8	n/a
	Reachback	-4.3	--	-6.5	--	--	--	n/a
Earnings								
Total Earnings (12 months prior to the survey)	Active	+\$4,796	-\$4,364	+\$4,180	+\$3,565	--	+\$3,773	+\$3,512
	Reachback	--	--	--	-\$3,750	--	--	--
Hourly Wage (Current/most recent job)	Active	+\$2.53	--	+\$2.16	--	--	--	n/a
	Reachback	+\$1.62	--	--	--	--	--	n/a
EI Use								
EI Receipt (# weeks per year)	Active	-1.18	-1.31	--	--	-1.29	-0.584	-1.05
	Reachback	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.47
EI Weekly Benefits (\$ per year)	Active	-\$348	-\$309	-\$527	-\$152	-\$428	-\$157	-\$311
	Reachback	--	--	--	--	--	-\$240	-\$140
SFI Use								
SFI Receipt (Proportion at survey)	Active	--	-6.7 percentage points	--	--	--	--	-1.7 percentage points
	Reachback	--	--	--	-8.0 percentage points	--	-4.8 percentage points	--
<p>Note: CEAS was not included because net impacts were not available. Data was drawn from a separate source.</p> <p>Note: Estimates are reported as "significant" if they are statistically different from zero at the .05 level on a two tailed-test. If no estimate is reported, the estimate did not reach this level of statistical significance.</p> <p>Note: Due to the size of the sample, the net impact estimates may not be statistically significant at the intervention level; however due to having larger sample, the estimates may be significant at the overall program level.</p>								

Appendix 2

*Study Participant Profile**

	SDS (%)	SDU (%)	TOJ (%)	SW (%)	SE (%)	JP (%)	All Programs (%)
EI Claimant							
Active	64	51	39	52	82	61	62
Reachback	36	49	61	48	18	39	39
Gender							
Male	46	38	35	42	54	51	46
Female	54	62	65	58	46	49	54
Age Groups							
16 - 19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20 - 29	20	20	29	11	10	15	17
30 - 39	32	35	20	25	31	26	29
40 - 49	32	34	27	30	36	31	32
50 - 59	15	10	22	26	20	23	19
60+	2	2	2	7	3	5	4
Highest level of education							
Less than high school	11	16	13	18	11	16	14
High school/GED	13	19	28	19	13	22	17
Partial trade/vocational	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
Trade/vocational certificate	17	10	16	9	11	11	13
Partial college/university	7	10	10	12	14	11	10
College/university diploma	37	16	20	17	25	19	26
Certificate/diploma/other professional designation	0	1	2	1	1	1	1
University undergraduate degree	8	14	7	14	18	14	12
University graduate degree	3	4	0	4	4	3	3
Other	2	8	2	4	1	1	3
Equity/Special Groups							
Single parent family	20	20	17	18	13	16	18
Aboriginal	5	6	6	8	5	8	7
Disability	14	11	12	22	11	13	14
Visible minority	12	32	12	20	8	9	14
Immigrant	23	61	16	30	14	16	25
* Due to rounding total percentages may add up to more or less than 100%.							

Appendix 3

Response Rate

The gross response rate is defined as the proportion of the full sample or population who completed a survey, regardless of the reasons for non-completion. In this study, the gross response rate was 40% for participants and 37% for the comparison group.

A second response was also calculated, which removed respondents who could not be reached through reasonable effort because they were traveling, deceased, could not be traced or had moved to another country. This second response rate was respectively 62% for participants and 5-8% for the comparison group.

A non-response analysis was conducted to identify potential sources of non-response bias and/or low generalizability of results (i.e., sample error higher than $\pm 5\%$ at the 95% confidence level). The analysis was performed for client type and by program.

Findings from the analysis revealed that the sample error was generally low (i.e., less than $\pm 5\%$) with the exception of Training on the Job (TOJ), which had the lowest number of participants (total participants in TOJ = 314; total completions in the survey = 136). For this reason, TOJ results at the level of client type or region should be considered with caution. With such a small sample, the reliability of the results would be questionable due to low power (i.e., the ability to detect a program effect).