Evaluation of Employment Support Services

Final Report

Prepared for:
Policy, Planning and Research/Employment Support Services
Department of Community Services, Government of Nova Scotia

Prepared by:
Goss Gilroy Inc.
Management Consultants
Suite 900, 150 Metcalfe Street
Ottawa, ON K2P 1P1
Tel: (613) 230-5577
Fax: (613) 235-9592
E-mail: ggi@ggi.ca

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GOSS GILROY INC.
Management Consultants
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Executive Summary

This report has been prepared by Goss Gilroy Inc. (GGI) to bring forward the findings of an evaluation of the Employment Support Services (ESS) program of the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. The Request for Proposals from the Department stated that the evaluation is:

- To provide the Department with information on the performance, results and cost-effectiveness of the ESS program;
- To determine whether ESS is consistent with current Nova Scotia Government priorities . . . and addresses the needs of the current caseload; and
- To determine whether ESS is the most appropriate and efficient means to achieve its stated objectives.

The evaluation findings in this report will speak to the outcomes achieved by the ESS program and the impacts the program has had on clients in terms of improving their employability and moving them towards self-sufficiency.

Methodology

The ESS evaluation used multiple lines of evidence, including both qualitative and quantitative methodologies:

- Telephone survey of over 2,000 ESIA clients
- Internet-based staff survey
- 50+ key-informant interview participants:
    - ► Senior management – Head-office and regional
    - ► ESIA staff – ESS and IA caseworkers
    - ► Clients – ESS participants and non-participants
    - ► Other government departments – Education; OED; Service Canada
    - ► Stakeholders – Third-party providers; advocacy groups; employers
- Focus Groups – Staff; clients; third-party
- Analysis of administrative data
- Literature and jurisdictional reviews

In addition to these research directions, the GGI evaluation team engaged both senior management and staff in logic model and methodology workshops and had a findings workshop with senior management.

Highlights of Findings

ESS program successful in improving the employability of individual clients

There have been successes in improving the employability of individual clients, in spite of the complexities of the ESS clientele and the challenges of program delivery. A common observation, across all groups consulted, was the evidence of success in improving the employability of individual clients and in helping clients achieve self-sufficiency.

Participation in the employment programs and services was identified by a majority of ESS clients as being responsible for improvements in job finding skills and on-the-job abilities.

Through a participant survey, respondents indicated their program participation was useful or very useful in:

- increasing their understanding of what they need to do to find employment (65%);
- increasing their ability to find work in the future (65%); and
- gaining job skills (55%).

In addition, clients reported a substantial gain in educational attainment. Prior to involvement in ESS, only 23 percent of participants had at least some post-secondary education. As a result of ESS interventions, this number increased to 41 percent over the course of an eighteen month period, positioning them to better meet the demands of the labour market.

Following their participation in ESS, a majority of clients gained employment experience and generated wage income, while continuing to receive income assistance. A smaller percentage found and maintained employment that allowed them to be independent from income assistance.

ESS clients satisfied with programs and services provided

The survey of participants found 72 percent were satisfied with the quality of service they received – 42 percent were very satisfied and only 11 percent dissatisfied.

However, 24 percent of clients felt the services fell short of their expectations and 18 percent stated they had problems getting the programs and services they felt they needed. Clients indicated there were some gaps in employment programs and services. While 78 percent of clients identified barriers related to academics or specific marketable skills, 36 percent reported participating in an education or training program. In addition, the timeliness of accessing ESS services and accompanying programs was reported by clients as an area for improvement.

ESS program design is consistent with best practices

The rationale underlying the ESS program of supports and services is consistent with current thinking on employability programming. The legislation governing the ESS program – the *Employment Support and Income Assistance Act* – establishes a formal priority of employability and employment for recipients of income assistance where the client is considered able to work. Using a direct delivery approach, the program model was designed to assess an individual's capacity to work and develop and implement an action plan. The evaluation findings suggest that this approach is appropriate for the existing client base.

The complexities of the ESS caseload demand multiple levels of intervention

The size and complexity of the ESS clientele require multiple and long-term interventions. As a result, in the short-term, employability-related outcomes are more frequently obtained than sustained employment. This is consistent with the experience of delivery staff, two-thirds of whom agreed that changes in the employability of clients were more likely to occur than movement to sustainable employment.

In a six month period from June to November 2004, 29 percent (approximately 9,500 clients) of the ESIA caseload was classified as ESS participants. Many of these clients have education and training barriers and/or health and disability issues that either limit job opportunities, or prevent people from holding full-time employment. Depending on the unique situations, some clients may need very little assistance; however, the analysis of the administrative data indicated the vast majority of clients had barriers in multiple employment-readiness areas.

IA and ESS yet to be fully integrated

An unexpected divergence between the design of the ESS program and current program delivery is evident. Tension exists within ESIA between two complementary programs intended to be fully integrated – income assistance and employment assistance. Absence of clarity on the specifics of the ESS program policies and service standards is a likely contributing factor.

While staff stated they intuitively understood the philosophy underpinning ESS, they reported a need for clear elaboration of the rationale, objectives, and policies for ESS. The evaluation findings suggest a need for a coordinated effort to achieve stronger integration of the ESS and IA "silos". A possible re-branding of ESIA would better capture the values around employment services.

Information necessary for on-going program monitoring and service delivery planning is incomplete

A key finding from this evaluation outlines the challenges associated with defining, capturing and accessing information that is necessary for on-going program monitoring, program reporting, and service delivery planning. While data is currently being captured for measuring the performance of ESS, the information is often incomplete, not available electronically or presented in a format that does not readily facilitate analysis.

The Department is undertaking major enhancements to its data collection tools. The case management and information systems that support the program and the development of partnerships with other government departments, community agencies and employers are recommended as areas for review. In order for the program to fully benefit from the development and implementation of new information technologies, ESS will need to articulate its information needs, and have these needs met, in reference to policy objectives and service delivery standards.

Challenges with employability-assessment process

ESS-related client needs and program delivery data are meant to be captured in the Nova Scotia Employability Assessment (NSEA) form and process. However, the inconsistent use of this tool, and the fact that it is completed on hard-copy, contributes to the lack of information available and accessible to report program and client outcomes. The lack of complete NSEA

data stems from the divergent views staff have regarding administrative procedures and systems. Some staff question the appropriateness of using the NSEA assessment process for every ESS client, and as a result, they often exercise discretion in its use. Incomplete NSEA data must be understood by the organization in terms of its impact on the program's ability to capture necessary client profile information, details on the interventions used and report on outcomes.

In the absence of a completed employability assessment, defining who is or is not an ESS client is challenging. As a result, not all clients who could benefit from employability-related programming are being served, and some clients not streamed into ESS are nonetheless receiving services. This is consistent with findings from the client telephone survey, where a large number of non-ESS Income Assistance clients reported participating in some employment-related services or reported not having any barriers to being able to participate in these services. Further investigation of this finding is warranted.

Comprehensive jurisdictional and literature reviews identified employability assessment tools that could serve as a model for Nova Scotia. In Alberta, for example, clients are screened into three different levels – those who are job ready and need virtually no employment services, those who need limited assistance and those requiring a more detailed assessment and program services. Using this screening process to identify clients who require a more intensive assessment may alleviate concerns expressed by staff who questioned the need to complete the NSEA process for all clients.

1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared by Goss Gilroy Inc. (GGI) to bring forward the findings of an evaluation of the Employment Support Services (ESS) program of the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. The Request for Proposals from the Department stated that the evaluation is:

- To provide the Department with information on the performance, results and cost-effectiveness of the ESS program;
- To determine whether ESS is consistent with current Nova Scotia Government priorities . . . and addresses the needs of the current caseload; and
- To determine whether ESS is the most appropriate and efficient means to achieve its stated objectives.

We have worked with Department staff, clients and community groups to develop multiple lines of evidence that can provide answers to the questions derived from these broad statements of evaluation purpose. The report is organized in six chapters:

- Introduction: A chapter that will provide a description of the ESS program as presented in legislation and documents and an introduction to the evaluation mandate and methodologies;
- Program Profile: A chapter that moves from a document to an operational description of the ESS program and develops the evaluation issues and questions that flow from the ESS program logic model;
- Program Implementation: Evaluation Findings for Intake, Assessment and Case Management;
- Program Delivery: Evaluation Findings for Client Participation;
- Program Results: Evaluation Findings for ESS Impact; and
- Conclusions.

1.1 Program Background and Rationale

Employment Support Services is a component of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program that is administered by the Department of Community Services. The

program has evolved over the past decade. The following are highlights of the program development.[1]

Nova Scotia had a two-tier financial assistance system prior to 1995 that included the Provincial Family Benefits Program (financial assistance for those with longer-term needs, persons with disabilities and single parent families) and Municipal Social Assistance (for people in financial need, particularly the unemployed and their families). Concerns with the adequacy of income assistance rates and the absence of province-wide minimum standards led to a movement to consolidate programming.

In 1998, the Department of Community Services took over responsibility for programs previously delivered by municipalities. As a result, there were two new province-wide programs – Family Benefits Program and the Social Assistance Program. The latter provided, among other benefits, employment support services that included assistance with child-care and transportation expenses, Pharmacare and other work-related expenses.

1.1.1   Legislation Establishing Program Direction

The legislation governing Employment Support Services is the *Employment Support and Income Assistance Act.* This Act defines employment services as "services and program to assist recipients in enhancing their employability and quality of life, including programs provided by other departments, agencies, or governments in partnership with the Minister."[2]

On August 1, 2001, the Act integrated two programs, Employment Support and Income Assistance, into one.   Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) is the largest program of the Nova Scotia Department of Community and Services. ESIA provides financial assistance and employment support services to an average caseload of about 32,000 clients and has a budget in excess of $350 million. This new legislation created a standard level of services for clients across the province. It also provided an opportunity to re-design the organization and delivery of services to provide an improved continuum of support.

The merger and program changes were based on the following rationale:

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[1] *Employment Support & Income Assistance Evaluation Framework*, p. 6 and Departmental sources.
[2] Nova Scotia. *Employment Support and Income Assistance Act*, 2000.

- The need for a fair and equitable financial support program of last resort that reinforced mandatory employability enhancement;
- The need to remove barriers to work, through provision of incentives and supports;
- The need for basic support to persons with disabilities and disability-related supports to enhance their employability;
- The need to begin the process of breaking the cycle of poverty by focusing on prevention and supporting children and youth; and
- The need to improve service delivery through flexibility to meet client needs, empowered front line staff and reduction of duplication.

The redesigned program focuses on two principles: income assistance as a safety net of last resort, combined with assistance to help clients make the transition to independence and self-sufficiency. Its key features include:

- Eligibility based on need;
- Introduction of standardized rates applicable to all clients in Nova Scotia;
- Separation of children's benefits from the program;
- Enhanced employment supports, including child care and transportation;
- Equal access to special needs supports;
- Enhanced transitional benefits to support movement towards employability; and
- For persons with a disability, a focus on employability rather than disability.

1.1.2   Program Principles and Objectives

The policy governing Employment Support and Income Assistance is based on the following principles:

- Independence and self-sufficiency, including economic security through opportunities for employment, are fundamental to an acceptable quality of life in Nova Scotia;
- Individuals, government and the private sector share the responsibility for economic security;
- Assistance to develop skills and abilities would be required for recipients to enable them to participate in the economy and in their community as fully as possible;
- Income assistance must be combined with other forms of assistance to provide effectively for Nova Scotians in need; and

- Employment support and income assistance services must be . . . financially and administratively accountable.[3]

The vision of Employment Support Services is to encourage and empower individuals in moving towards employability and increased self-sufficiency. The program objective is achieved through a combination of direct service provision and involvement of the Department in broader government economic strategies. The focus of Employment Support Services is on making longer-term commitments that support individuals to enhance employability skills.[4]

1.1.3   Delivery Structure and Resources

Employment Support Services are delivered by the Department of Community Services through a network of field offices. The head office division is responsible for policy and program development, service standardization and monitoring, and collaboration with regional staff in establishing annual budgets, monitoring and forecasting. Delivery is through four regional offices that provide coordination and oversight for 36 district and satellite offices. In the larger regions, ESS staff is clearly defined or distinct from Income Assistance staff. In some regions, however, staff may have responsibility for both ESS and IA clients.

The evaluation research will seek to document both the staffing resources and the financial resources committed to the ESS program. At this point, the budgetary resources are not broken down into the ESS/IA components of staffing, programs and financial commitments. While the costing of certain employment related services is available from current financial information systems, these figures would represent only a portion of the total ESS program costs.

1.1.4   Program Eligibility and Reach

Participation in Employment Support Services is mandatory for income assistance recipients deemed to be appropriate for participation, i.e., when it is determined that there are no significant personal or medical barriers that would impact on developing and implementing an employability plan. The front-end of ESS eligibility is found in the Income Assistance intake form. Responses to three questions asked of the client or the client's spouse can direct the client to the ESS program for an assessment. These questions are:

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[3] Evaluation of ESS Request for Proposals, p. 1.
[4] Ibid, p. 3.

1. Do you have any health or physical health issues which would prevent you from participating in work, training, upgrading, job search or employment counselling?
2. Do you have any emotional or mental health issues which would prevent you from participating on either a full or part time basis in work, training, upgrading, job search or employment counselling?
3. Are there any other reasons you would not be able to participate in employment / training activities?

A "no" answer to each question directs the client towards ESS for an assessment of the client's employability and, if considered employable, the development of an action plan. The average caseload for ESS in any given month is about 11,000 individuals or approximately one-third of the overall ESIA caseload. Departmental staff estimates that the majority of ESS clients average six or more barriers to employment. This results in the need for longer term and sometimes complex case planning and interventions.

1.2 Evaluation Mandate and Directions

The evaluation mandate as elaborated in the Request for Proposals specified that the evaluation would:

- Consist of a formal assessment of the program's rationale, its process, the achievement of objectives, the impacts on current program participants and of alternatives; and
- Examine how the program operates, what it does and does not do, and whether the way the program is delivered and services offered are producing the intended results in a timely and cost effective way – i.e., increasing participant employability and movement towards self-sufficiency.

The objectives of the ESS evaluation encompass issues ranging from efficiency of program delivery to the effectiveness of the services in achieving expected outcomes. The evaluation design was based on a multiple lines of evidence approach in order to address these diverse issues. A previous Methodology Report described each evaluation methodology, the evaluation objectives addressed with the methodologies, the scope of the tasks associated with these methodologies and the general analysis approach. The methodologies supporting the evaluation research are summarized in the following table.

Table 1.2.1 Overview of Research Supporting This Evaluation	
Administrative database	The ESIA and HOST databases were used to develop a client profile. The ESIA database included all active clients in the ESIA caseload between 1 June 2004 and 30 November 2004. The database included 37,177 clients because it allowed for entry and exit into the system during this time period and, as a result, differs from the "average monthly caseload" figure commonly used to characterize the Department's ESIA caseload. The ESIA database was used to sample ESS (ep-2) and non-ESS (not ep-2) clients for the Client telephone survey. It was also used to draw a sample of 2,496 ESS client files for the NSEA review.
Administrative data capture and analysis – the NSEA analysis	The sample of ESS clients drawn for the NSEA review brought into the evaluation information on the assets, barriers and action plans of ESS clients. Sampled files were pulled in each office and NSEA summary information and information on the three "barriers to employment" questions (pp. 5-6 of the IA application) were forwarded to senior management and conveyed to GGI for data processing. The 2,496 files resulted in 910 usable NSEA forms (36%) from which to record assets, barriers and action plan information.
Client telephone survey	Both ESS (ep-2) and non-ESS (non ep-2) clients were sampled from the ESIA data base. A questionnaire was designed to bring forward information on the intake process to ESS, services and supports received and client assessment of results. A total of 5,724 ESS client and 2,454 non-ESS client telephone numbers were called. When invalid numbers are removed from consideration, the client survey achieved a response rate of 42 percent. A total of 1,533 ESS clients and 512 non-ESS clients were interviewed.
Focus groups	A total of 13 focus groups were completed around the province with ESS clients (4), non-ESS clients (2), ESIA staff (5), community partners (1) and employers (1).
Key Informant Interviews	A total of 25 key informant interviews were completed with senior management and staff from regional offices.
Document, literature and jurisdictional review	The evaluation direction and analysis have been informed by a review of employment support related literature within Canada and, more generally, in the USA and other OECD countries. A review of the experience of other Canadian provinces was also undertaken. We have focused on British Columbia and Alberta in our use of this jurisdictional review. British Columbia is of interest because of its experience with and reaction to the use of private sector, contracted assessment and service delivery. Alberta is of interest because it operates primarily a public sector assessment and service delivery with a range of community partnerships and because of its well developed management information system.

In addition to these research directions, the GGI evaluation team engaged both senior management and staff in logic model and methodology workshops and had a findings workshop with senior management.

The following report brings forward information from these lines of evidence under broad program themes, rather than reporting the results of each evaluation research separately. We will begin by moving from a document to an operational description of the ESS program. The focus of this analysis is the front-end agreement on the program directions as reflected in a logic model and the specification of evaluation issues and questions that are connected to this operational description of ESS. This will be followed by the evaluation research findings with respect to program implementation, delivery and results.

2.0   The ESS Program Profile

It is common in evaluation work to distinguish a document model from a manager's model from an operational model. That is, a program described in proposals, legislation and brochures may differ somewhat from the program as understood by senior and middle management which, in turn, may differ from how staff at the operational level experiences the program. Some consensus around program objectives, process and anticipated results is essential to design the evaluation research. The discussion in this section is still conceptual – that is, how people at several levels of the program describe it, but without documentation or analysis to confirm their views and experience. This section brings forward a program profile that was essential to define the evaluation directions. This profile also clarifies how ESS is intended to work.

This beginning step was aided by the internal review of evaluation questions and methodologies that shaped the Request for Proposals. The evaluation issues and questions drawn from our own logic model workshops and field interviews contain most of the questions anticipated in the RFP document. These evaluation issues and questions are found in Appendix A.

The ESS focus comes from provisions that allow the Minister (Department):

- to provide assistance for employment services; and
- to provide programs that will assist clients to become self-sufficient, assume greater responsibility for themselves and lessen clients' dependence on public financial assistance[5].

2.1   Program Logic Model

Participants in the two evaluation workshops[6] were asked to describe the ESS program in terms of its program activities, outputs and results. The logic model is a graphical image of a program that shows the cause and effect chain between the program activities, outputs and results. The

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[5] Self-sufficiency is defined as finding what is right for you at this time, with your background, your family and personal situation, and what jobs are available in your community.   Employability is defined as the factors that assist a person to be more self sufficient, including but not limited to skills, education, health, goals, volunteer activities, resources in the community, availability of transportation and child care, and personal supports (N*ova Scotia Support and Income Assistance Manual*, p. 3).

[6] The first was held with the ESS Evaluation Steering Committee and the second with ESS front-line staff and program

results are usually distinguished in terms of their immediate, intermediate or ultimate status. Ultimate results are more likely to take longer to occur and are most likely to have factors in addition to a specific program contributing to their condition.

In Table 2.1.1 below, the ultimate result that could be derived from participation in ESS programs – receiving supports and services directed towards employability and employment – would be the client's exit from ESIA support. Ideally, this exit would be a permanent result. Three results would be considered intermediate results. These three intermediate ESS results are:

• Increased client self-sufficiency;
• Improved client quality of life; and
• Change in employment status and increased earnings from employment as a share of income.

These results represent ESS program outcomes in the broadest sense. Which ESS clients reach these outcomes and under which circumstances are critical evaluation questions. The logic model identifies the causal link between program activities and the outputs that lead, in turn, to more immediate program outcomes. We will start at the top of this logic model and follow this sequence.

managers.

Table 2.1.1 Nova Scotia Employment Support Services Logic Model

Activities

| Intake and Case Management | Supports and Services | Collaboration and Knowledge Building |

Outputs

Assessments and Plans

- NSEA completed
- Needs, assets, barriers identified
- Client focused plans

Client-Focused Delivery

Services
- Career Counseling
- Referrals
- Training and job placements
- Formal education
- Volunteer actions

Supports
- Transportation
- Child care

Collaboration and Knowledge Building

- Management system
- Meetings with employers, associations, other departments and levels of governments

Results

Quality Client-Focused Service Delivery

- Clients in need identified
- Clients satisfied with service delivery
- Client needs met
- Client self-awareness
- Quality service delivered

Improved Employment and Life Skills

- Barriers removed and assets created
- Improved employability
  - education
  - skills
  - experience
- Improved life skills
- Increased social participation

Knowledge and Infrastructure

- Understanding client needs
- Strong link with employers, service delivery agents, government partners
- Appropriate resources identified and available
- Lessons learned

| Increased Self-Sufficiency | Improved Quality of Life | Change in Employment Status and Increased Earnings Share of Income |

Exit From Income Assistance

2.1.1   ESS Program Activities

The logic model identifies intake and case management, the provision of supports and services and collaboration, and knowledge building, as the three broadest ESS activities.

2.1.1.1   Intake and Case Management

At the initial intake and assessment for Income Assistance, the social and financial needs of applicants are determined. In addition to determining eligibility, the process helps to identify initial employment readiness based on a series of three questions which ask if there are any issues that would prevent the applicant from participating in work, training, upgrading, job search or employment counselling in terms of (1) health or physical issues, (2) emotional or mental health issues, or (3) other reasons. Those deemed to have the potential to participate in employability activity are referred to ESS for a more detailed assessment of employability. The client signs an Understanding of Participation in Employability Activity form if considered employable, setting out requirements they must meet regarding participation.

The Employment Support Services are provided based on the results of an employability assessment, using the Nova Scotia Employability Assessment (NSEA) tool and process to explore factors that may impact on employability. This process engages the client in developing an employment action plan. It is asset based and uses career development practices. The program is based on the "Blueprint for Life Career and Life Competencies Framework," which sets out 11 competencies for management of careers. Other assessment tools are used as needed to complement the NSEA.

The areas that are reviewed using the NSEA tool include but are not limited to: work experience and behaviour, academic/cognition; life situations and goals; confidence; motivation; job seeking skills; personal qualities awareness and physical and mental health. The NSEA is completed either by the client in a group setting or by an ESS counsellor in an individual interview with the client. The assessment process takes, on average, about one hour.[7]

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[7] Nova Scotia. *Nova Scotia Employability Assessment (NSEA) Manual*, 2001.

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2.1.1.2 ESS Supports and Services

ESS is described as being based on a program model which moves clients through the various assessment, intervention, follow up and re-assessment steps in the process as appropriate and needed. As part of the case management process, Employment Support Services staff, in collaboration with Income Assistance staff, ensures that clients receive the financial and other special supports required to carry out the employment action plan.

Employment Support Services caseworkers are to ensure that required services are delivered by the Department or community-based partners and private agencies in a timely manner, while being responsive to client need. Services include, but are not limited to:

- Career/life planning;
- Support for employability related special needs;
- Skills development;
- Job search services;
- Job development services;
- Direct job placement; and
- Entrepreneurship.

Job developers may play a key role in helping clients make links with employers. The use of the prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) portfolio is an option. Nova Scotia was the first social services ministry in Canada to adopt PLAR as part of career and life planning. The Nova Scotia process was developed through a partnership with a variety of agencies.

2.1.1.1 Collaboration and Knowledge Building

The following partnership programs are in place:

- Nova Scotia Co-operative Council Partnership: job placements in co-operative ventures;
- Regional Development Authorities: provision of labour market information and intelligence and networking opportunities;
- Work Activity Programs: job placements through this network;

- One Journey Work and Learn: job placements in sectors experiencing skill shortages[8];
- Educate to Work - referral to educations programs at Nova Scotia Community College; and
- Youth Development Initiatives - work experience for youth clients aged 16-20 years.

Internal linkages between IA and ES staff are important for supporting:

- Appropriate identification of clients to be referred or exempted from referral to ESS; and
- Case management - including provision of appropriate services, income support and other benefits.

In some offices, IA and ESS staff play dual roles and may be assigned to one component or the other depending on demands for services.

Collaboration with external community and employer groups can influence the array of services and opportunities provided. In the community there are organizations that are contracted to provide some of the services provided by ESS and other organizations that provide complementary services. Linkages with the business community are important for access to job opportunities and program placements. There is also potential for collaboration with other Provincial departments (Education, Economic Development) and Regional Development Authorities.

Key federal partners included Service Development Canada (now Human Resources and Social Development - HRSD) for referral and access to programming under the Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement. At the regional level, the labour market information portal of Skills Canada is an important tool for counsellors and clients. The Department of Community Services is also involved in a number of national initiatives led by HRSD related to career assessment and planning. The tools coming from these initiatives are used by delivery staff in the assessment and counselling process.

Knowledge building includes staff development as well as program development. The shift from an income assistance and compliance approach to social services to a career development, employability focus has required staff training. A training program is in place for ESS staff

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[8] *ESS Examples of Innovative Partnerships*, March 10, 2005.

which is designed to assist them in developing or updating core competencies as outlined in the National Guidelines and Standards for Career Practitioners.[9]   The areas of training include:

- Career theory;
- Career development certificate program;
- Nova Scotia Employability Assessment (NSEA);
- Blueprint for Life Work Design Orientation Programs; and
- PLAR Practitioner Training and Train the Trainer.

2.1.2   ESS Program Outputs

The ESS program outputs consist of client assessments and action plans, services and supports that are provided to clients and the products of collaboration and knowledge building activities.

2.1.2.1   Client Assessments and Plans

The intake and case management activities that establish initial eligibility for Income Assistance and identify the client as potentially employable create a record of referral to ESS. Upon referral to ESS, the NSEA process is meant to document client assets and barriers to employment and facilitate the development of an action plan.[10] This documentation is an essential source of information for establishing the ESS client profile. It is also the starting point or foundation from which appropriate services and supports are selected as components of a client's action plan. The logic model shows these assessment and plan outputs as primarily related to another <u>output</u> – the delivery of client services and supports. The quality of the assessment and plans also would contribute to client satisfaction and the quality of services delivered.

2.1.2.2   Client-Focused Delivery of Services and Supports

The action plan identifies the appropriate services and supports for each client. The services can include career counselling, training and job placements, the provision of formal education or educational upgrading, placements in volunteer work experiences and referrals to programs of

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[9] *DCS Staff Development Programs ESS*, undated.
[10] Internal ESS analysis suggests that the NSEA information may not be used for some clients. The evaluation research will provide an estimate of the extent to which the NSEA form is used and its intended information available.

other agency or community groups. Supports that will allow a client to take up these services can take the form of transportation assistance or assistance with child care. These resources in the form of services and supports are the most direct link in the logic model to the key immediate results representing changes in employment and life skills that, in turn, set the stage for changes in employment status and quality of life.

2.1.2.3   *Administrative Process Improvement*

The current situation involves a combination of a newly implemented case information system, the existing ESIA client data base, a financial information system and a paper-based record of the NSEA process. These clearly are "outputs" in a time of change. The management system, in addition to people, their place, and competencies, also includes management information systems. Accountability for the use of resources and program directions requires information and that information must be captured at a level sufficient to allow reporting required within the Department and from the Department to the government. Management information systems, then, are a critical output for program review, adjustment and reporting.

Capacity building includes staff development as well as program development. The move towards a career development and employability focus also has required staff training. A training program is in place for ESS staff that is designed to assist them in developing or updating core competencies as outlined in the National Guidelines and Standards for Career Practitioners.[11]   The areas of training include:

• Career theory;
• Career development certificate program;
• Nova Scotia Employability Assessment (NSEA);
• Blueprint for Life Work Design Orientation Programs; and
• PLAR Practitioner Training and Train the Trainer.

Program management will establish internal linkages between IA and ES staff. These relationships are important for supporting the appropriate identification of clients to be referred or exempted from referral to ESS and for case management - including provision of appropriate services, income support and other benefits. In some offices, departmental staff may play dual

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[11] *DCS Staff Development Programs ESS*, undated.

roles and may balance (or juggle) the dual requirements of Income Assistance and Employment Support Services.

2.1.2.4 Collaboration and Knowledge Building

The collaboration and knowledge building outputs represent contextual products that have an impact, either positively or negatively, on the delivery, take up and change produced by ESS services and supports. These include outreach to employers, employer acceptance of job placements and job subsidy strategies, and community-based outreach through Regional Development Authorities or other non-governmental organizations in Nova Scotia communities.

2.1.3   Immediate ESS Program Results

Then what? The first outcomes in the ESS results sequence are changes in the client perceptions of ESS service delivery and the client's self-awareness, levels of employability and life skills and changes in the staff/system's understanding of the client and the broader organizational and community context of service delivery.

2.1.3.1 Quality Client-Focused Service Delivery

The most immediate program results can be located with the clients. Are clients satisfied with their relationships with ESS staff and with the services and supports received? Do they have stronger sense of self-awareness? Do they believe their needs have been met? These attitudinal dimensions of client engagement are precursors to the successful uptake of services. They set the tone within which change, or the lack of it, will result from the services and supports received.

2.1.3.2 Improved Employment and Life Skills

Improved employment and life skills represent the critical first step towards increased involvement in the labour market. The career counselling, education up-grading and training, and job placements are intended to remove barriers to and create assets for employment – to strengthen the employability of the client. The specifics of these changes will be as diverse as the interests and resources of the clients and as open as the Nova Scotia economy. Information concerning these changes in employment and life skills is critical for a successful evaluation of ESS.

2.1.3.3   Increased Program Knowledge and Strengthened Infrastructure

The products of both administrative process improvement and community outreach will result in a better staff understanding of ESS client needs and stronger linkages to community organizations and the private sector employers in the regions of the province. Reporting from program information systems and a reflective professional practice can result in changes in staff competencies – in understanding client needs and in understanding the appropriate mix of client services for individual clients. A clearer analysis of ESS clients and service delivery will also assist in building stronger linkages with employers and other service delivery partners.

2.1.3.4   The Bottom Line . . .

Changes in employment status, related increases in self-sufficiency, and improved quality of life are ESS program results further "down stream" than the more immediate results produced by ESS services. The results sequence identified in the ESS logic model represent just that, a sequence of results that set the stage for entry into the labour market and successful exit from Income Assistance dependency.

2.2   Assessment of the ESS Program Logic Model

The initial assessment of the ESS logic model revolves around the model's usefulness as an empirical description of the program and as a guide to the identification of evaluation issues and questions. The use of the key informant interviews and workshop to push beyond a document based description of ESS still leaves us with an "operational" program model that remains to be challenged by the empirical evidence of the evaluation research. As the evaluation questions were clarified, research strategies to bring evidence to bear on the questions could be identified.

The strengths of the logic model are found in the three streams of program activity that are identified -- its client assessment and delivery of services, the need for collaboration with partners beyond the Department and the recognition that management and information systems are critical for reflective practice. The client-focused delivery begins with the staff and client identification of client assets for and barriers to employment through the NSEA process and the development of an action plan to convert barriers to assets. The model anticipates a progressive movement towards goals—the removal of barriers, gains in terms of job readiness and education

and skill levels, change in employment status and retention of employment status leading to increased self-sufficiency and quality of life. The model anticipates, in the end, an exit from the receipt of income assistance.

There is general agreement among staff with the content and sequence of the ESS program model, although some challenges were identified in the consultation process. The model may assume common agreement on program vision and objectives. Questions concerning the balance between the values of efficiency or effectiveness were raised by some workshop participants. Others thought that, yes, this is how it is supposed to work, but challenged whether or not we had reached the final "operational" model of ESS. That challenge was associated with questions concerning the clarity of policy and procedures, the absence of "Section 10" (ESS Program) in the ESIA policy manual, the traditional IA emphasis of the existing Manual in terms of assistance eligibility and compliance monitoring, and the inconsistencies in service delivery at the individual staff level and across the Departmental regions.

These challenges, however, only point to the limitations of workshop-based program analysis. In the end, the adequacy of the ESS program logic model and the accomplishments of the ESS program initiatives can only be assessed by the information gathered by the several evaluation research directions implemented for this evaluation. The primary purpose, then, of the program model is to aid in the elaboration of evaluation issues and questions. The ESS program model served that purpose.

2.3   Evaluation Issues and Questions

The evaluation issues and questions that flow from the ESS program model are found in Appendix A. These issues and questions will be brought into the report where they relate to the analysis of program implementation, delivery and results. The Evaluation Framework document, brought forward in the RFP for this evaluation, was prepared within the Department and identified a wide range of evaluation questions, but prior to the consensus reached around the ESS program model developed here. Most of the Evaluation Framework questions are reflected in the issues and questions derived from our key informant interviews, the staff workshops and the final development of the ESS logic model.

The issues and questions are organized in Appendix A around themes of:

- ESS rationale and relevance;
- ESS program implementation / activities;
- ESS program outputs;
- ESS program results (immediate and intermediate); and
- ESS program results (ultimate).

We will begin by addressing the questions of ESS rationale and relevance, although in a preliminary way. This discussion is an extension of the conceptual framework elaborated in this ESS profile section and is at the level of policy, not implementation. We will return to these initial comments in the concluding chapter after we have had the benefit of reviewing the evaluation findings.

2.3.1 Employability Programming and Best Practices

The policy underlying ESS is consistent with current thinking on employability programming. The Employment Support and Income Assistance Act of 2000 brought together the social benefits component with employment services and established the formal priority of employability and employment outcomes for recipients of income assistance. As part of this, ESS transformed the client intake process by focusing on people's capacity for work rather than just their entitlement to benefits. As well, benefits beyond basic needs include benefits that will support a client's movement towards employment.

The ESS program recognizes the need for collaboration with a variety of partners for the delivery of employment-related services and supports. This has led to collaboration with other provincial government agencies, the Canadian federal government, community-based organizations, the Nova Scotia Community College system and private career colleges and employers. Within this network of collaboration there is recognition of the relationship between program services and supports and the Nova Scotia labour market.

The client assessment process is intended to lead to the development of employment directed action plans that are organized around a range of service and support options to match the client employability needs. The movement from a social assistance benefits emphasis to employment

services has required considerable staff training in approaches to career development, employability assessment and prior learning assessment and recognition.

In all of these program elements, the form and direction of best practices are present. The implementation of form into practice remains a work in progress. Alberta and Nova Scotia are an interesting contrast in form and practice. Both have brought employment directed services together with benefits required to meet basic needs for living. Alberta, however, has made more successfully the shift in organizational culture to an emphasis on the employment side within which benefits are provided to clients considered "not able to work." There remains an unresolved tension within the organizational culture of Nova Scotia's Department between social assistance and employment assistance. Even though the legislation is ESIA, in practice it might be IA-ES. Our evaluation will suggest the need for a stronger integration of these two "silos" and a possible re-branding of ESIA to better capture the values around employment services.

2.3.2 Alternative Models

What defines "alternative" models? There are three basic components that can define alternative models:

- the services and supports provided beyond basic client needs;
- who provides those services; and
- the organization of the public sector department.

The definition of programming around services and supports has come to emphasize a mixed model with a menu of services and supports that can respond to the needs and interests of income assistance clients in relationship to a local labour market. The menu includes direct services and supports from the public sector, programs from the volunteer, not-for-profit sector, and services, often in the form of career training, from the private sector.

The definition of alternative models around the second question remains in play. Our review of other jurisdictions, however, suggests that recent experience points to mixed model partnerships, rather than competing models of service delivery. Table 2.3.1 is taken from the jurisdictional review in Appendix B and suggests a continuum of delivery models, rather than fixed points.

There are no examples within Canada and in other OECD countries where government programs are located at either extreme end of this continuum. British Columbia and, more recently, Ontario have been more experimental in developing performance based service delivery contracts with private sector companies. The jurisdictional review points to a mixed model of program delivery as the norm, with differences between jurisdictions defined by which program components are within the public, community-based not-for-profit, or private sector.

Table 2.3.1		
A Partnership Continuum in the Delivery of Employment Support Services		
Completely in-house public sector client intake, client assessment, case management and provision of services	In-house client intake, possibly shared client assessment, shared case management and shared provision of services with non-profit and for-profit partners	In-house determination of client eligibility for income assistance, but contracted out client assessment, acceptance for employment related services, case management and provision of services, including follow-up.
[. . . NS . . . . ALTA . . . . ONT/BC . . .]		

The final component that can define the program model is the organization of the public sector department. Provincial governments have experienced all alternatives as they try to balance the need for an integrated service delivery to a client population with the pressures to recognize areas of specialization. A narrow view of the "benefits" side of community services could hive off a "check writing" division, separate from the provision of a wider range of supports towards self-sufficiency. What may look like a move towards specialization and efficiency can have the disadvantage of creating two "silos" that clients need to negotiate. If the elements of ESIA are to be integrated, the question of dominant organizational themes or values needs to be addressed. Around what key goals would a newly "branded" division be organized? What values and objectives will foster integration?

2.3.3   Complement, Overlap or Duplicate?

Our assessment of program collaboration (Section 3.3 below) showed no evidence of problems with overlap or duplication. Instead, there is collaboration between the federal and provincial government, with other provincial departments and agencies and with community groups.

2.3.4   Achieving Desired Results

There is evidence that the ESS program is achieving desired results. ESS clients are gaining assets for employability and are entering the labour force on a part-time or full-time basis. These results are documented in the findings of the ESS client surveys and reported below in Section 5. These changes in employability and employment experience, however, were very difficult and expensive to document through the client survey process, compared to the option of capturing similar client program experience and change within the ESS information system. Although evaluations are conducted periodically to gather information not available from on-going program monitoring, ESS needs to improve its capacity to capture key client service and outcome information not readily available from the current information systems.

The jurisdictional review also suggests the possibility of strengthening the sustainability of employment outcomes by extending the period of client support into the post-IA, employment period. Currently, support in the employment period can continue for one year for assistance with pharmacy-related benefits, but a more focused employment-period relationship with an ESS caseworker could be considered. This direction is supported by findings in the literature review and in discussions with senior management representatives in Alberta Works. The Alberta Career Assessment Information System includes a "follow-up worksheet" that anticipates caseworker follow-up at 90 and 180 days. Caseworkers can provide counselling to "former" clients as they adjust to a new work environment.

3.0 Program Implementation

The following section brings forward evaluation findings with respect to client intake, referral and assessment, case management and program monitoring systems and themes of collaboration. A clear distinction is found between the description of the ESS program found in program documentation and elaborated in the development of the ESS logic model and the ESS program as implemented. Yes, the ESS framework and ESS as implemented are similar enough to be recognized as the same program, but there are important differences in how the intake and assessment processes are implemented and important limitations in the program's ability to document the services and supports it provides. Key findings included:

- The rationale underlying the ESS program of supports and services is consistent with current thinking on employability programming.
- Tension exists within ESIA between two complementary programs intended to be fully integrated – income assistance and employment assistance.
- Information necessary for on-going program monitoring and service delivery planning is incomplete.

3.1 Client Intake, Referral and Assessment

How are Nova Scotians in need of income assistance and capable of work determined to be eligible for assistance and employable? How are the services of the ESS program made available to appropriate IA clients? These questions were addressed at every stage of the evaluation process – client and staff focus groups, the staff on-line survey, interviews with key informants and the client survey.

3.1.1 The Starting Point – Client Intake and Referral

The initial point of contact for an ESIA client is the Income Assistance application process, including its three questions concerning possible client barriers to employment. The result of this intake process was the focus of questions in the client and staff focus groups and the on-line staff survey. Both staff and clients concluded that the process works under some circumstances but has limitations. In the staff survey, Income Assistance caseworkers were more likely to see

the three questions as an appropriate tool (47%) than ESS caseworkers (31%). That leaves one-half to two-thirds of staff finding the use of the three questions problematic in some way.

Table 3.1.1: Are the "three questions" concerning employability . . . an appropriate tool to determine client referral for an employability assessment?

IA caseworker

| 53% | 47% |

3 Questions work

Sometimes, but problematic

ESS caseworker

| 69% | 31% |
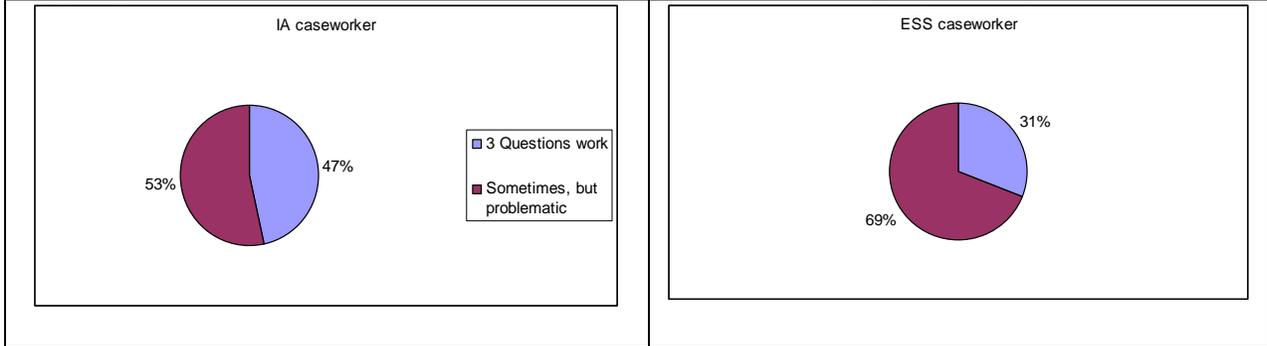
In focus groups and interviews with ESIA managers and staff, the IA intake process was recognized as the gateway to employability assessment. They identified that, for intake to work well, intake staff require a good understanding of the purpose of ESS and clear policies on which to make referrals. Most of those consulted had concerns that these conditions are not now met. As a result, inappropriate referrals to employability assessment make the ESS process inefficient from the start as clients are "shuffled back and forth unnecessarily."

The question concerning inappropriate referrals to ESS asked in the staff survey, resulted in 10 percent of staff describing this occurrence as frequent and 71 percent as occasional. IA staff were a little more likely to say this rarely occurs, but, over-all, there were not important staff or regional differences in this response.

Some staff suggested that a lack of clarity on policy can lead to inappropriate referrals of clients with employment barriers such as medical barriers or lack of access to transportation in rural areas. Offices are seen as having a lot of local discretion on how the existing policies will be applied, leading to some of the frustration of ESS staff in serving clients they deem inappropriate for ESS. In some offices, IA staff may err on the side of "letting ESS decide", leading to a we/they situation where the ESS caseworker takes on the role of referee in making the case to IA on why a client is not deemed appropriate for ESS. Local discretion in developing intake processes was not seen as necessarily inappropriate by staff.

The decision to make referrals at the time of intake to IA was also seen as an issue, since it was felt that clients are less apt to be open on their situation when they perceive it may impact on their eligibility for benefits. It was also noted that referral to ESS can happen at any point while a client is receiving IA, and the process would work best if it were used by IA staff in this way. However, limited IA resources were noted as a constraint to carrying out a more elaborate or tailored intake process.

Other concerns were expressed about some clients who were not referred and, as a result, may be inappropriately excluded from service. For example, if clients with disabilities are not referred, there are not necessarily efforts made later to see if their situation has changed. Clients are left to self-refer to ESS in such a situation.

Responses in the staff survey reinforced findings from the focus groups. Most thought that, for the most part, the process was working the way it should, but 22 percent over-all said "no, not really." Staff, regardless of this assessment, identified areas for improvement to the process and identified the following issues:
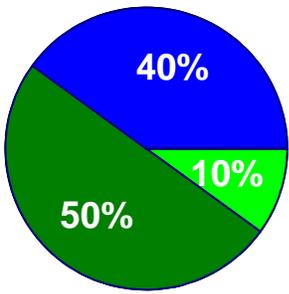
- The length of time from referral to assessment was said to be frequently too long – at the outer limits of the 6 week target or beyond.
- The questions can be seen as too direct for a first encounter with a client and may foster a response biased towards Income Assistance eligibility.
- The questions do not deal clearly enough with barriers to employment found in literacy, addictions or a criminal record.
- The client's capacity for a self-assessment that appropriately links their assets and barriers to employability.
- Client self-diagnosis of barriers as part of a departmental document, including physical and mental health barriers to employment.
- IA staff ambiguity around whether or not <u>all</u> clients should be referred for an employability assessment.

Senior staff have taken care to emphasize that the initial intake process and employability responses to the three employment questions triggers a referral to an ESS caseworker for an employability assessment and is not a referral of an IA eligible client to ESS as an ESS client. The next stage, then, is the staff/client engagement around the Nova Scotia Employability Assessment process.

3.1.2   The Assessment Process – NSEA and Action Plans

Both focus groups and the staff survey findings identified the NSEA process useful for some clients under some circumstances. The NSEA is both a tool and process. As such, it provides for development of a detailed client profile and leads staff and client to the development of a client action plan. Informants noted that it does cover in some detail the topics that are important to consider in developing employability action plans and it does promote the concept of a contract. Forty percent of staff saw the NSEA process as very useful for identifying client barriers and assets and 33 percent said it was very useful in developing appropriate action plans.

Table 3.1.2: Staff assessments of the usefulness of NSEA for identifying client assets and barriers and for developing client action plans		
	. . . for identifying employability assets and barriers	. . . for developing appropriate client action plans
Very useful	40%	33%
Somewhat useful	50%	56%
Not very useful	10%	11%
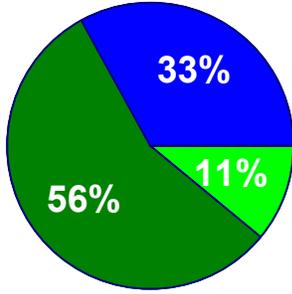
On both dimensions there were 50 and 56 percent, respectively, who found the NSEA process "somewhat useful." There is no important staff or regional variation in this assessment of the NSEA process. The drop in "very useful" responses between identifying assets and barriers and developing action plans suggests a gap in its successful application in some cases. The responses in the following table identify staff assessments of NSEA training as the strongest predictor of staff views on the usefulness of the NSEA process. IA and ESS staff with reservations about the helpfulness of NSEA training were more critical about the application of the NSEA process.

Figure 3.1.3: The usefulness of the NSEA process and staff views concerning the helpfulness of training received to administer the NSEA with clients					
NSEA useful	**. . . to identify assets and barriers to employability**			**. . .to prepare career development (action) plans**	
	Training very helpful	**Training somewhat or not very helpful**		**Training very helpful**	**Training somewhat or not very helpful**
Very useful	56%	22%		47%	18%
Somewhat useful	40%	61%		49%	63%
Not very useful	4%	18%		4%	20%
	100% (55)	100% (51)		100% (55)	100% (51)

Staff, supervisors and field managers who participated in focus groups or interviews expressed a number of concerns about the NSEA tool and process. Written comments in the staff survey noted similar themes. Its length and detail can interfere with, rather than support, staff/client consultation, and important issues can remain unidentified or become evident only much later.

Some offices and staff are using it appropriately to support an assessment process with clients, carried out over two or more sessions, during which trust is built with the client. But for the most part, staff described NSEA as an information gathering process. Staff identified two factors influencing this situation: the level of staff resources assigned, and the need for training related to interviewing and counselling more complex clients.

The NSEA process was considered overly detailed for clients who are more job ready and only require minimal supports from ESS in order to move on to work (e.g. funding for work related clothing or referral to academic upgrading).

Group NSEAs and self completion by clients are used in some offices and different views were expressed on the appropriateness of these approaches. Some offices felt that group NSEA sessions worked well. One office, however, stopped doing these when privacy issues were raised because of the group discussion. Some indicated that self-completion can be effective as a self-assessment process for clients who have good literacy skills, but may be inappropriate for others.

Reference was made to an earlier Employability Readiness Survey (ERS) in both focus groups and the staff survey. The ERS was used previously and some thought it was more useful for an initial assessment and more adaptable to individual clients. Others felt that simply knowing clients and their history was the best assessment tool.

Staff recognized that much work has been done developing and refining the NSEA tool – with input from the field - but expressed concerns that it appears that revisions are making it more complex and less appropriate, given the client profile and staff resources.

Most clients who participated in the focus groups expressed some dissatisfaction with the assessment process. Only a few clients recognized that they had gone through an assessment and planning process. Those who did felt it was helpful in identifying appropriate next steps towards their long term goals. Those who felt the experience was positive characterized their caseworker as supportive in identifying their needs, sharing information openly on benefits and programs available and following through with timely services and support.

Clients reporting negative experiences sometimes described ESS as a forced and unrealistic program – requiring mandatory participation that did not acknowledge their constraints (such as lack of transportation or lack of access to child care). Others noted that the process did not deal with their real barriers and focused too superficially on getting them into training programs or work. These were clients who quite openly shared information on their personal issues, medical or mental health problems.

A concern expressed by some clients in the focus group is that they were left to find their own way through the system in terms of finding out about the availability of program options and the level of benefits and supports. They had a sense of the caseworker as the gatekeeper to this information, creating a sense of frustration when they perceived that their caseworker did not have a supportive attitude or was too overworked to spend time sharing this information. Staff turnover also created issues for some clients. Older clients and those with disabilities often felt that negative assumptions were made about what they could do and this held them back from accessing work or training programs.

Representatives of the community organizations consulted expressed some concerns about the NSEA and action planning process similar to those of staff and clients. These included the need for employability assessments to be more holistic in dealing with the issues facing clients, the need for the process to recognize the gender-based issues faced by women, and the need for

flexible action plans. Others noted that some clients are not willing or ready when referred for specific community-based programs, but appear to have been long term recipients of IA who were directed to programming. A few of the employers interviewed felt that the clients referred to them were not yet ready for employment due to personal issues.

3.1.3   NSEA and Questions around Level of Assessments

Our attempt to understand the divergent responses to the NSEA process have led us to consider the assessment practices used in the Alberta Client Assessment Information System (CAIS). The Alberta assessment process works with three levels of assessment which distinguish levels of client need and case complexity.[12] These levels are:

- Level 1 – an assessment where the inquiry is self directed by the client. They may require information on skills and education needed for a specific profession. A level one assessment is basically a count of the number of requests for these minimal services.

- Level 2 – an employability assessment done electronically on the CAIS which is completed if a short employment assessment (15 to 20 minutes) is required to determine the services required to meet the client's needs (e.g., a resume writing or job search workshop). If the client requires financial assistance, but minimal other employment services, a Level 2 assessment is done and a Client Action Plan (HRE2104) is completed to identify the client and department expectations.

- Level 3 – a more in-depth employability assessment taking up to one hour is done electronically on the CAIS. A Level 3 assessment, including a signed HRE Client Investment Plan, may be required when:

  ► The client needs more long term employment or training services (e.g., addictions treatment, employment workshops, assessment for occupational or training courses).

  ► The client is currently receiving income support and is assessed as "Expected to Work," but has difficulty getting and keeping a job. This client may be re-assessed with the Level 3 assessment to determine if they are to be re-categorized as "not expected to work".

  ► Clients classified as "learner" in the Alberta system may have a Level 3 assessment completed by contracted training providers (e.g., colleges) to determine if the client meets the criteria to be classified and supported as a "Learner."

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[12] Details of the Alberta CAIS are available at www.gov.ab.ca/hre/caisindv.pdf. This discussion of levels of assessment was provided in correspondence by a staff person within the People & Skills Investments Division of Alberta Works, AHRE.

The NSEA process does not appear to differentiate between clients this way, although caseworkers could adapt the process on an informal basis and, in fact, do so. There is not a clear application of these levels of assessment to the current ESS caseload, but estimates of client barriers to employment from the NSEA forms provide some insights into what percentage of clients may fall into three different levels similar to the Alberta classification approach. Table 3.1.4 suggest this possibility of client differentiation.

Table 3.1.4 Levels of Assessment and Barriers to Employment		
Percent of Clients with Barriers – from internal analysis of completed NSEA	**Level of Assessment**	**Percent of Clients with Areas Having at Least One Barrier – sampled NSEA forms for the evaluation (Table 4.3.2)**
10% -- 0 to 2 barriers	**Level 1**	21% -- 0 to 1 areas w barrier
34% -- 3 to 5 barriers	**Level 2**	38% -- 2 to 3 areas w barrier
56% -- 6 or more barriers	**Level 3**	42% -- 4 or more areas w barrier

3.1.4   Staff Training for Assessment and Employment Counselling

A number of staff training programs and events have been developed and delivered to ESIA staff specifically to support the implementation of ESS. These include training on:

- NSEA training (for all ESS and some IA staff);
- Career Theory;
- Career Development Certificate Program;
- Awareness sessions on national standards for career practitioners ;
- Blueprint for Life Work Design;
- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Practitioner and Train the Trainer;
- CEED (Entrepreneurship training); and
- Essential Skills Orientation.

Staff also develops individual learning plans, for which financial support is provided by DCS. Other learning events include attendance by selected staff at career counselling conferences at the national and provincial levels. Each quarter, ESS regional forums (information sharing and learning events) are held in each region, with staff setting the agenda. The staff development program continues to evolve.

Virtually all ESS staff received training in the use of the NSEA and over one-half of the IA staff in the staff survey also reported receiving NSEA training. There were small regional differences in NSEA experience reported in the staff survey. The assessment of NSEA training was divided between those who found it very helpful (53%) and those who had reservations about their training experience – 43 percent said somewhat helpful and six percent said not very helpful. ESS staff were a little more likely to say very helpful (57%) than IA staff who participated in the NSEA training (45%). Written comments in the staff survey reflect the differences of opinion concerning NSEA as an assessment and planning tool.

| Table 3.1.5: Staff experience using NSEA and training to administer NSEA ||
Staff reporting use of NSEA*	Staff reporting training in NSEA
80% Central region	83% Western region
80% Western region	82% Central region
67% Northern region	75% Northern region
59& Eastern region	56% Eastern region
95% ESS staff	95% ESS staff
78% ESS/IA staff	78% ESS/IA staff
57% IA staff	57% IA staff

Staff written comments:

I think that for a lot of the clients the process takes a while to get into. They are not used to self evaluation. Once they "get" the process and begin to see true value in themselves and their accomplishments, then they begin to meet the process head on, feel valued and see value in their work.

The NSEA is useful as a starting point for working with clients. Not sure how useful the clients find it other than it begins the dialogue and thinking/planning process.

The clients typically see the NESA as a useless tool, one that the caseworker must complete for the paper file. They often do not provide the proper information, and feel the personal approach has been lost. The sections that are completed are often a very small part of developing a career plan.

The NSEA is a tool and much depends upon the client/worker relationship and the ability to draw out information and formulate an appropriate action plan with time lines and then notify the IA worker. The last part is often not done and often feels disconnected.

The NSEA doesn't capture everything that an experienced and highly skilled counsellor captures. Clients cannot be put into "boxes". I don't find it is effective or very helpful. I do like the "action plan" page. Overall, I think that it is insufficient. It has become a rather big "monster" in our department.

At the time of application most clients are too willing to answer the NSEA questions in any way that they feel will lead them to continued ESIA eligibility.

Too invasive. It doesn't do any thing...the last page ..the contract....where the client and the worker signs is useful.

***The "use" of NSEA reported here from the staff survey does not reflect the extent of use. Some staff may be reporting that they have used NSEA on some occasion, but the analysis of completed NSEA information shows that large numbers of client files do not have a completed NSEA form.

Staff, supervisors and managers recognized the investment made in training, particularly for ESS staff. A recurring concern, however, among staff and supervisors who participated in focus groups was the lack of counselling training to enable caseworkers to appropriately serve the more complex clients they now deal with in ESS. This was considered a major gap in the training provided to date. More specifically, they noted the need for training in intensive interviewing skills for dealing with clients with multiple and complex barriers, skills in assessing/identifying more complex needs, motivational interviewing, career coaching and life skills coaching. In most focus groups, it was suggested that the federal counsellor training program would be appropriate for their needs.

Staff in most regions has limited access to professionals to whom they can refer clients for assessments (for example in mental health). They feel they at least need some basic skills in identifying mental health issues and providing appropriate interventions within the limits of their role in order to fill this gap. This staff/client context may reflect a lack of clarity regarding the purpose of ESS or, possibly, the overlap between ESS and services provided under the Nova Scotia LMAPD agreement.

In reference to the training now provided, frequent comments were that the career theory course was not practical in relation to caseworker needs, and that the NSEA training was inadequate. Staff also noted that casual caseworkers are not provided with orientation on NSEA but required to get this from other staff, which influences the quality of their orientation. Some staff recommended that the level of expertise required of IA and ESS workers needs to be better defined in recruitment policy and training programs delivered to meet this level.

3.2 ESS Case Management and Information Systems for Monitoring

Case management and budgetary information systems are important for two critical management functions. First, the ESS program needs information internally that can document and track over time the services and supports its staff provide. Second, the ESS program needs information to report externally from the Department to the Nova Scotia government and citizens. The gradual strengthening of the business planning process has included the addition of a formal "Annual Accountability Report" that identifies a limited number of key performance measures that are used to set targets and track change over time. We will consider both information functions.

Table 3.2.1 brings forward a program model graphic that was used in the client and staff focus groups to orient the groups towards a group interview reflective of the whole program domain. The graphic is useful here to highlight in a preliminary way the range of program benchmarks that would be useful for program management, reporting and response to a changing program environment. The following discussion will show that only a few of these possible benchmarks are currently available in an electronic database form, some additional items exist in a decentralized paper-based format and a significant number of these benchmarks are simply not retained in the course of program implementation.

Table 3.2.1 A Case Management and Information Systems Framework to Guide the Development of Key Program Benchmarks

IA Intake Process with 3 questions regarding employability	Leads to referral to ESS staff work and the use and results of the NS Evaluation Assessment process (NSEA)	ESS CLIENT SERVICES and SUPPORTS – Client directions from the NSEA ACTION PLAN	Front-end or immediate changes in client employability	Changes in client employment status: Exits IA FT-PT Sustainable
Active client count versus average monthly caseload	Record that a client employability assessment was done	Services and supports provided clients	Client gains in employability	Status of post-IA employment Services provided during initial employment period to facilitate sustainability Or, alternatively, client re-entry into IA
Basic client profile demographics	Key client assets and barriers to employment	Client satisfaction with employability services and supports process	Client changes in quality of life	
Preliminary employability decision	Record of engagement with client around employability action plan	Record of client compliance, engagement in action plan initiatives	Client employment experience	
	Key directions of action plan			

3.2.1 Case Management Information

The case management information systems in place during the period of evaluation were a mixture of electronic and paper-based systems, centralized and de-centralized. The evaluation also took place during a period of significant changes as the Department continued to introduce a new information technology. These changes are a "work-in-process."

Because the information technology is still under development, our evaluation work relied on the legacy systems used to record the basic client profile information. The information was used to draw the sample for the ESS client and non-client surveys and the sample of cases that were drawn from the field to provide the evaluation with information from the paper-based NSEA process. The "HOST" system was used for some analysis of ESS expenditure areas. The legacy ESIA data base and the HOST system are centralized; the paper-based NSEA information is held with the district offices.
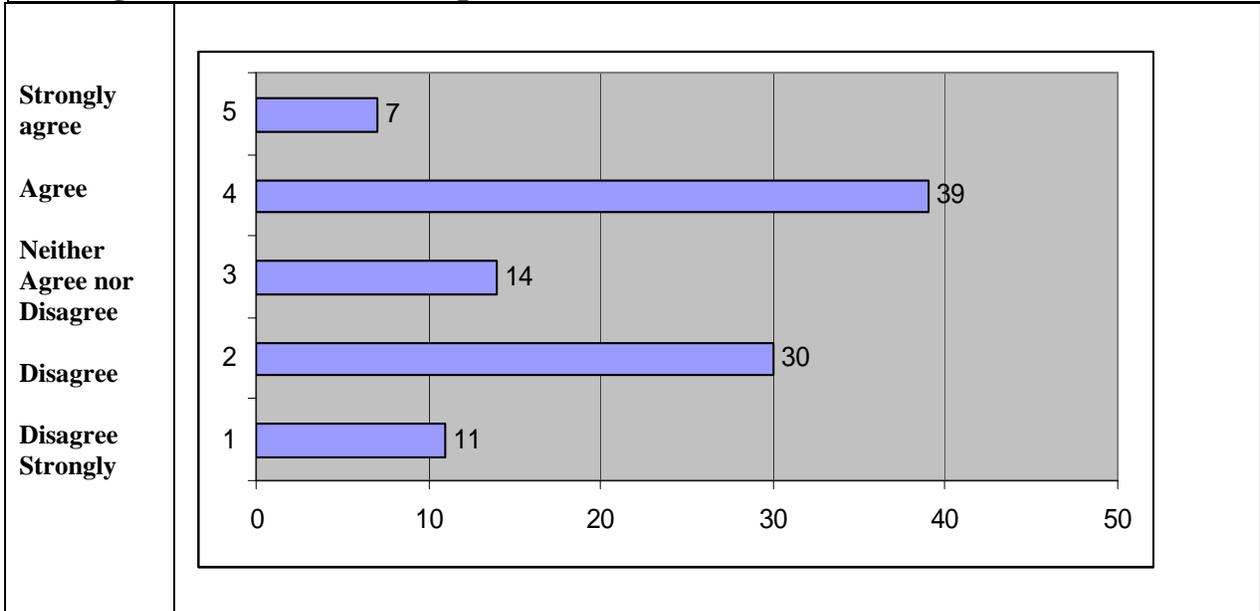
Overall, 44 percent of staff agreed and 35 percent disagreed with the suggestion that ESS staff have appropriate tools and resources for client case management. There were no strong staff or region differences in this response, although ESS staff was somewhat more likely to disagree and less likely to be uncertain about it. Table 3.2.1, below, shows the response only from ESS staff. This ambiguity reflects the current status of information systems within ESS. The ESIA data base, the HOST system and the paper-based NSEA process each contain important but unlinked information. It is not that they could not be linked through the common client case number identifier. The point is that they are not.

The greatest amount of data management effort in our evaluation research was taken up sampling client files and then bringing the NSEA recorded assets, barriers and action plan information from those cases into machine readable form. From the original 2,496 cases sampled for a NSEA record, we were able to enter information from only 910 files. The remaining cases did not have NSEA related information in the file or the information was not complete. An earlier internal review of the NSEA process provided us with a warning in this regard. The internal review sampled cases to document the assets and barriers reported for clients. In that work, only 43 percent of the cases included a NSEA document. Some of these files without a NSEA (20%) included an earlier Employment Readiness Survey, but almost one-half of the files were identified as ESS clients (i.e., coded EP2) without any record of a NSEA having been completed with the client. At that time (2002) the Central Region had the lowest number of cases with NSEA reports, only 16%, and the Western Region had the highest (63%).[13]

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[13] Internal, unpublished memorandum, "NSEA Review 2002, Facts Sheet."

Table 3.2.1	ESS staff have appropriate tools and resources for client case management: ESS staff responses (%)

Strongly agree	5 — 7
Agree	4 — 39
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3 — 14
Disagree	2 — 30
Disagree Strongly	1 — 11

Critical comments from the staff survey:

There is no accountability. It is hard to see what clients are involved in ESS services unless you go back and read all the notes. There should be an easy way to track what a client is doing. There is no follow-up in the present system.

A main problem – the procedures for follow-up and monitoring clients after they are referred to the NSEA process. Too often a client will be referred and you will see nothing indicating involvement. There's no specific case list of clients with ESS . . . as a caseworker you loose touch. There should be a better system . . . to prevent a client from falling through the cracks. A full year should not go by without some regular update in case notes.

Our efforts to establish a NSEA data base suggest that a problem of non-compliance remains. Our review of the intake, referral and assessment processes in the previous section noted considerable resistance to the new information technology and resistance to being "data entry personnel." At the same time staff recognize that good information on client assets and barriers, the services required and services delivered is critical for, not only sound professional practice, but for accountability. This lack of compliance is not based on a failure to communicate policy or service standards. Rather, the decentralized organization of the Department, the remaining corporate memory of past practices, and reactions to both the training provided for engaging the

NSEA process and the process itself come together to produce this problem in bringing necessary program information into useful information systems.

3.2.2   Program Monitoring Information

Given the limitations of the legacy information systems, the external report to government and the public in the annual accountability report is a credit to the Department. The most recent report shows an eleven percent drop in ESIA caseload from 2000-01 to 2004-05 and brings forward the following performance measures for that period under the Core Business Area of Employment Support and Income Assistance. Four of the five performance measures relate directly to the employment objectives of ESS. The four performance measures are:

- Percentage of income assistance recipients who, upon employability assessment, are supported to attend an educational program;
- Percentage of income assistance recipients involved in ESS who have secured full or part-time employment;
- Income assistance as a percentage of total monthly income; and
- Percentage of total monthly income cases with wage income.

The clearest gain is reported for ESS clients attending an educational program. Targets have not been met in the other areas. The report comments on the increased number of barriers to employment in the current ESS caseload and the upward pressure for client support in the areas of special needs.

One conclusion is that the ESS program and the Department, generally, can bring forward performance measures at a fairly high level, but without the more detailed documentation of services and supports that might account for change in these performance measures, other than a broad generalization about changes in client characteristics. In other words, the Accountability Report can offer some general reasons for the lack of change, but does not link more directly ESS services and supports to change, for example, in secured full or part-time employment. We tried with limited success to identify ESS services and supports through expenditure data that is summarized in Appendix D. In the end, our strongest measure of services provided is found in the ESS client and non-ESS client survey data.

The developments in performance measurement and program monitoring in Alberta[14] represent progress at both levels – program management and accountability. The Alberta Career Assistance Information System is a user (staff) friendly system for client intake, assessment, client action plans and capturing services and supports provided. The various case management, client application, client assessment and client investment plan worksheets that support this capacity for management and accountability can be viewed on the Alberta Human Resource and Employment website.[15]

3.3   Collaboration in Three Directions

The successful management and delivery of ESS services requires collaboration and partnerships between the ESS program and others within government and externally. Within government, the Departments of Education, Health, Justice and Economic Development each have resources that can be important to ESS clients. Externally, ESS relies on a range of community partnerships for program delivery. Contacts with employers in the private and not-for-profit sectors of Nova Scotia's economy are a critical resource for successful work experience and job placements for ESS clients.

Questions concerning cooperation and collaboration were asked in both focus groups and the on-line staff survey. Managers, staff and community organizations consulted were asked for their views on what was being done regarding collaboration with other government departments, community groups and employers.   Staff was asked in the on-line survey to comment on working relationships with other departments, community non-profit groups and employers.

3.3.1   Collaboration with Other Government Departments

The need for inter-department cooperation is widely recognized and various inter-departmental committees exist to facilitate the planning and delivery of services to clients who need services from multiple agencies. Successful collaboration requires more than co-location or coordinating committees populated by senior staff. The staff was asked in the staff survey whether "inter-departmental cooperation around services to clients was generally good." Very few (7%) strongly agreed with this suggestion and 58 percent agreed or strongly agreed. That leaves 42 percent who were not confident of the level of cooperation within government around the multi-

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[14] Alberta. *Measuring Performance: A Reference Guide*. Edmonton: Alberta Treasury, 1996.
[15] The AHRE website is: www.gov.ab.ca/hre/cais/caisindv.pdf

sector needs of ESS clients. There were no important regional differences in these responses, but there were differences between IA and ESS staff. ESS staff was more likely to agree with this suggestion (65%) and more likely than IA staff to disagree (29%). The IA staff was more likely to be ambivalent, opting for the "neither agree or disagree" response (33%).

This broad assessment of inter-department cooperation implies both strengths and weaknesses at this point and is given more detail in the key informant interviews and the focus group results. Managers, staff and the other departments consulted had similar views on how collaboration supports complementary client services.

DCS managers and staff felt that the linkages with the Department of Education are becoming stronger, particularly regarding literacy initiatives, and the work on the *One Journey: Work and Learn* initiative. Department of Education representatives also felt that the *One Journey: Work and Learn* model is a good one. They noted that the linkages are largely based on relationships and could benefit from more formalized policies on the roles of respective departments. The delegation of authority to DCS regions to make funding decisions causes some difficulties in implementing province-wide initiatives. The Education representatives also felt that investments in community-based initiatives by DCS that might implicate other departments should be based on more collaboration. They also noted that government generally is trying to figure out structures to support horizontal initiatives. This issue is not limited to Education and DCS.

Linkages with Economic Development are largely carried out through Regional Development Authorities and are seen as working well. Staff in focus groups frequently commented that they would like to be more involved in the regional committees. At present, managers are the more active participants.

DCS managers and staff generally felt that linkages with government departments and agencies that have mandates related to clients with multiple barriers (e.g. health, mental health, justice) are weak and this is a concern. It was noted that the issue cannot be solved easily as resource constraints in these other entities influence this.

The linkages with Service Canada are made at both the service delivery and policy development levels. Under the Canada - Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework, one priority is employability which relates well to the ESS mandate. ESIA staff noted that their relationships with Service Canada are generally strong but have been affected by changing Service Canada policies (and organizational change). The relationship needs ongoing attention at provincial and

regional levels. Service Canada representatives noted that the regional relationships are rooted in the history of local offices which pre-date the Nova Scotia Service Exchange process and the ESIA Act. As a result, there are some inconsistencies in the level of involvement of DCS and Service Canada managers in such initiatives as action teams under the Skills and Learning Framework. They felt this could be improved by more senior level direction to regions.

Overall, the key conclusion on linkages with other departments is that there is a need to develop a clearer province-wide DCS approach to guide the actions of regional managers and staff on these collaborations.

3.3.2   Collaboration with Community Groups/Organizations

Collaboration is ongoing with a broad range of community groups and organizations and is seen as being effective in supporting client service. A relatively high level of collaboration and involvement of community organizations in the delivery of programs and services – 27% strongly agreed with this and 46% agreed – was reported in the staff survey. This response was consistent across the four regions, but varied by staff. Combined, ESS-IA staff were most likely to strongly agree on the importance of non-profit community groups for program delivery (67%), followed by ESS staff (37%) and IA staff (12%). This contrast between ESS and IA staff could reflect just the difference of program delivery priorities between staff – assistance versus employment-related services.

ESS managers and staff in focus groups and interviews spoke positively and without hesitation about the extent to which they work with community-based organizations. This collaboration takes the form of making referrals for employment and other related services or in contracting with organizations to deliver specific interventions on behalf of DCS. Relationships with the Nova Scotia Community College were cited in all groups as being particularly useful in providing education programs for clients. Some staff also noted they participate on community-based committees (either as DCS representatives or as volunteers) related to career planning, literacy development or broader social needs. Some regions encourage this involvement in community development. Collaboration with community groups, in whatever form, is seen as important to client service. In several focus groups, staff felt that the lack of tools such as display units hampers their capacity to fully participate in community outreach and market the services available.

There were some concerns expressed on contracting for services with community-based organizations. Specifically, in some regions there is a reliance on community-based organizations that are not well resourced and often staffed by underpaid workers or volunteers to deliver services on behalf of ESS. Concerns were also expressed that the 'core' services of ESS should not be contracted out. ESIA informants cited the need to be able to expect consistent services and results and to develop standards for collaboration in service delivery.

A focus group was held with eight community organizations from the Yarmouth area. These represented a range of educational institutions, and career/employment services for specific client groups such as youth at risk, persons with disabilities and Black Nova Scotians. Collaboration in this region was described as excellent and a number of specific initiatives and services have been developed with these groups. ESS was seen as being flexible in its programming (whereas IA criteria were seen as being not flexible enough to assist clients). The groups see themselves as helping facilitate clients' understanding of ESS and their access to services. In most cases, ESS staff had approached the groups to initiate the collaboration or to contract for specific services, based on a service gap or need identified by ESS.

As a general concern, collaboration at the policy making level was seen as less effective by some community groups. Representatives of women's organizations, for example, noted that they have been working with DCS to get back to the drawing board on collaboration focused on policy development. However they felt that "DCS is always receptive to reports but are slow to react." They were concerned about the DCS policy focus on saving money rather than helping the most vulnerable citizens. These groups consider this to hamper collaboration aimed at client service.

3.3. Collaboration with Employers

The focus on collaboration with employers varies by region, and overall appears to be given less emphasis in service delivery compared to other external collaborations. Only 10 percent in the staff survey strongly agreed with the suggestion that "collaboration with potential employers is good" – 58 percent agreed or strongly agreed, leaving 42 percent not agreeing with this suggestion. The favourable assessment was slightly higher for ESS staff and was lower in the Central Region and higher in the Northern Region.

Some regional variation on collaboration with employers also was noted in the focus groups and interviews with DCS managers and staff. In some cases this is considered a responsibility of all

caseworkers. For others, this is the responsibility of job developers. Informants noted that regional managers have discretion on the allocation of resources to job developers, and this varies, depending in part on managers' perceptions of what the role will contribute to ESS. In one region there was considerable concern about the reduced funding for travel for job developers, which hampered their work.

Staff in focus groups noted that the job developer role is changing in that they have higher client caseloads assigned and are not able to do as much brokering of work placements for each client. The skill sets of job developers were also identified as a key factor in their success. Staff also considered that limited marketing tools provided to job developers is a constraint to their effectiveness.

Several reasons were given for the varied emphasis on collaboration with employers. When the economy is strong, there is a perception of less need for this role, as the emphasis is on preparing clients to conduct their own job search. It was frequently noted that there is less employer contact now since there are fewer clients who are job ready. Some staff gave examples of having done marketing with employers only to find they could not identify clients to refer.

Five employers in the Halifax area were interviewed. These had participated in paid or unpaid work placements for clients that were arranged by ESS. Most had positive comments about this process: it was efficient with limited red tape and the caseworker kept in contact during the placement to offer advice as needed. Most would participate in such placements in future, seeing the social value of this kind of program. In some cases the workers hired filled a skill gap for the employer. In others, the clients placed had significant barriers to work and required additional supervision. The employers were generally willing to do this but highlighted the need for good briefing on the situation in advance.

The *One Journey: Work and Learn* initiative was cited by ESS staff and community organizations as an effective approach to collaboration leading to positive results in linking unemployed workers with industries facing skill shortages. This joint initiative of DCS and the Department of Education began in 1999. An evaluation conducted in 2005 noted a number of strengths and areas for fine-tuning and recommended expanding it across the province and to more industries. Other than this program, it appears that other placements (paid or unpaid) are developed by individual regions and that there is no defined departmental wage subsidy/placement program with criteria and defined subsidy levels.

Overall, few issues regarding collaboration with employers were raised by those consulted, and there was a sense that a lot of staff and community groups were not well aware if there was a employer strategy and what was actually being done by the department.

3.4 Program Implementation: Analysis Highlights

The evaluation issues and questions related to program implementation deal with the three broad areas: client intake, referral and assessment; administrative information systems and program monitoring; and program collaboration. The key evaluation research findings for these areas are highlighted here to anticipate the direction of our conclusions.

3.4.1 Client Intake, Referral and Assessment

About one-third of ESS staff said the three questions concerning barriers to employment were always being used appropriately. The remaining staff found some reason to question their usefulness in referring IA clients to ESS. The presence of these questions at the front-end of the ESIA eligibility process was questioned for their impact on the client's ability or willingness to answer correctly. There are also inconsistencies with respect to who should be referred. The language of the ESIA "Everyone Needs Help Sometimes" brochure, for example, says IA clients must be willing to complete a NSEA as a condition of income assistance. Our evaluation findings, then, show that:

- Staff report inappropriate referrals as a common experience; and
- There is considerable local discretion in developing the intake process and policies around this process.

The NSEA process was considered very useful in identifying client barriers to employment by 40 percent of staff. The general views, positive or negative, concerning the NSEA process are tempered by the wide spread lack of its use in practice. We can note that:

- Our analysis of NSEA application information showed just over 60% of the case files sampled did not have a completed NSEA form;
- The Central Region had the highest level of non-compliance;
- The information on those NSEA form completed often did not approach the standards sought in training for its use as an employability assessment tool;

- Many clients in both the focus groups and client survey did not recognize it as a process in which they had engaged;
- Delays between referral to ESS and the assessment beyond the norm of six weeks were noted;
- Most generally, the NSEA form and process can be considered over designed for clients that are job ready;
- The "action plan" section of NSEA was found useful, even by critics of the over-all process; and
- Action plans in client files with NSEA reports varied in level of detail and the extent to which they were updated to acknowledge client progress.

The Alberta CAIS process might be considered in this regard where Alberta Works distinguishes between three levels of assessment. The Alberta client assessment process only gets more detailed or complicated as the client characteristics warrant. We realize that Nova Scotia began with several levels of assessment before adopting the NSEA process for all ESS clients.

There has been a very mixed reaction to the training provided for the NSEA process. The negative reactions seem a combination of reaction to more the form and process of the NSEA interview guide, than the content, and to the approach or style of the training sessions.

3.4.2   Case Management and Program Monitoring Systems

The current sources of information on ESS clients, services and supports and program outcomes are a mixture of electronic databases and paper records. Some components are centralized. Others are decentralized. The EISA database provides adequate information for a profile of clients' basic demographic information. The main gaps in the system relate to the information on client needs, the services received and the outcomes for the clients. The NSEA forms, if consistently completed and recorded, could provide a profile of needs and potential resource requirements regionally or by client type. The NSEA forms, however, are not always completed and, even if completed, they exist only in paper form.

Most of the case management and program monitoring information that would be useful for program review and planning is not readily available. While we recognize the distinction

between information for on-going program monitoring and the more periodic information and analysis of program evaluation, we note that:

- The ESS program cannot easily document the services and supports it provides with the existing sources of program information;
- ESS has not been able to sustain its priorities for information in the current Departmental context of information system review and innovation; and
- The multitude of codes used to summarize financial data and the limitations of linking expenditures to program supports and services limits the utility of this information for program management and monitoring.

The building blocks for a comprehensive program monitoring system exist within the over-all intake and employability assessment framework, but not the process as implemented. Ideally, the implementation of this system would include:

- Completion and recording of an employability assessment form for all participants and entry of the information into a database;
- Maintaining the original information to allow tracking of changes to the participants' needs (removal of barriers) and requiring a systematic updating of the information;
- Adding information on programs and services received and financial information that is clearly linked to a limited number of types of programs and services;
- For evaluation purposes, entering start and end dates for major programs and services would be very useful;
- Ensuring the information on the EISA database is updated systematically to capture changes in clients' status; and
- Linking all of this information together to create a comprehensive database for program management and monitoring.

This integrated database would permit management to monitor the profile of the clients served, their needs, and the programs and services received by region, office and client type. Outcomes could be measured in terms of barriers removed and changes in IA status. However, before a performance monitoring system is implemented, program management should develop a specific performance monitoring plan including agreement on the key indicators, the data sources for these indicators and the level of analysis or detailed desired from the system.

Generally, staff understands the objectives and rationale for ESS but were often not clear on the specifics of the program policies and service standards. Overall, staff did not feel there was a definitive statement of the objective, rationale and policies for ESS. The policies and standards are documented in the ESIA policy manual, but found in various places throughout the manual. Staff indicated a need for training, primarily training on providing counselling services. All ESS staff had participated in NSEA training, but some cited a need for training similar to the training provided to their federal counterparts who deliver employment programs and services under the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA). More emphasis on employment counselling may assist in developing employment services counselling to assist the clients and the staff to develop action plans and identify the programs and services most suited to meet client needs.

3.4.3   Collaboration and Knowledge Building

There was a mixed staff assessment of collaboration with other departments. Just over 42 percent expressed some reservations about these links to departments with shared interests. The findings show:

- A need for a clearer, province-wide approach to collaboration at the regional level;
- A recognition of the strengths of collaboration with the Department of Education, especially in areas of literacy and the *One Journey: Work and Learn* initiative; and
- Links to the Nova Scotia Community College system are important to ESS clients, while the limited number of Education to Work seats was identified as a concern.

An internal DCS review identifies the direction of collaboration with community groups and employers but not the frequency or results of this collaboration. The collaboration that exists has developed over time and is not organized within a broader policy framework of collaboration. Staff noted that community groups can vary in their capacity to provide consistent services because of their limited financial and human resources.

In the one employer focus group, the participants were willing to cooperate, but noted some experience with placements that were not job ready. The triangle between employers, clients and ESS staff is influenced by the conditions of regional economies, the resources of ESS staff, and the level of barriers found in the client population.
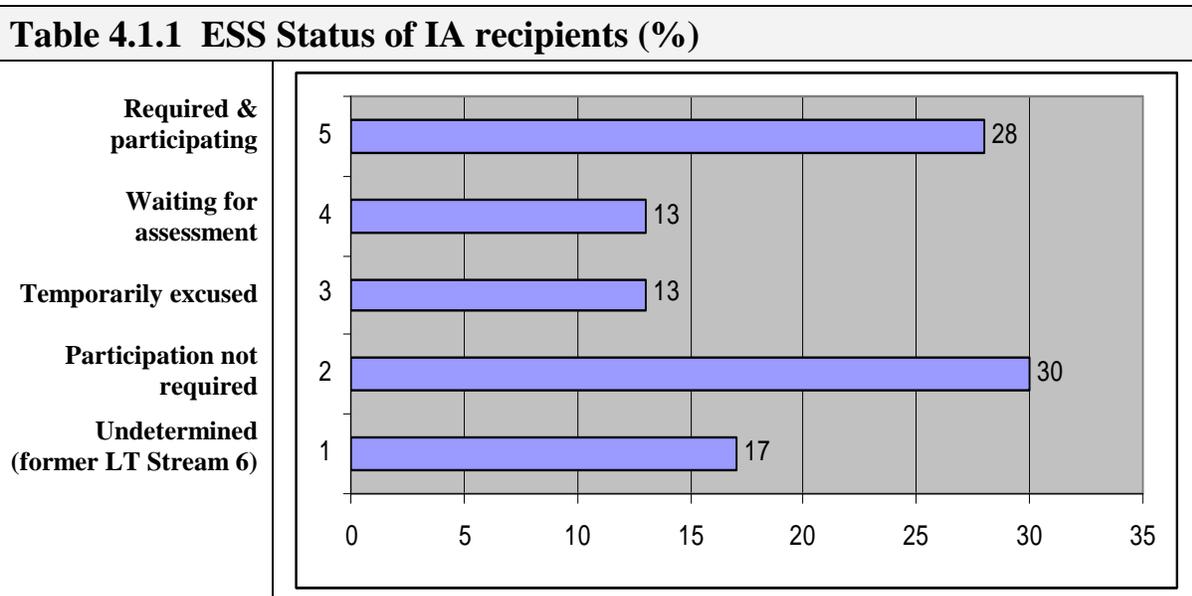
4.0   Program Delivery

Who are ESS clients and what services and supports do they receive? In the absence of clear answers to these questions from the program information systems, the evaluation has used a combination of the ESIA database and information from the client survey to clarify the ESS client profile and to develop a profile of services and supports delivered to clients. The key findings from this analysis includes:

- The survey of participants found 72 percent were satisfied with the quality of service they received – 42 percent were very satisfied and only 11 percent dissatisfied; and
- The size and complexity of the ESS clientele require multiple and long-term interventions. As a result, in the short-term, employability-related outcomes are more frequently obtained than sustained employment.

4.1   Participation Rates

Table 4.1.1 provides the distribution of the IA recipients' ESS status. The information comes from the ESIA database drawn from active clients in the June-November 2004 period which includes 37,177 clients. Of these clients, 28 percent met the criteria to participate in ESS and were participating. The status of the remaining IA recipients is shown in Table 4.1.1.

Table 4.1.1 ESS Status of IA recipients (%)

Status	Value
5 Required & participating	28
4 Waiting for assessment	13
3 Temporarily excused	13
2 Participation not required	30
1 Undetermined (former LT Stream 6)	17

The Eastern Region had the highest incidence of ESS participants, 36 percent. The Western Region and Central Regions had participation rates close to 25 percent, while

There were significant Regional variations in ESS participation.

the Northern region had slightly lower levels of participation, 20 percent. There were also regional differences in the incidence of the other ESS status codes. The largest regional differences were for the undetermined codes and participation not required. The Northern and Western regions had the highest percentage of clients (39%, 38%) for whom "participation was not required." Less than one percent was coded as "participation required but not participating." The Regions with the largest percentage of undetermined codes had the lowest percentage of "participation not required" codes and vice-versa. This may simply reflect differences in converting the older undetermined codes (former LT stream 6 cases) into participation not required codes.

Generally, the ESS participant codes in the ESIA database appear to match the findings of the client survey. One of the challenges in developing the survey was properly identifying ESS participants. There were concerns that some cases might not be coded correctly or codes might be out of date, particularly for the non-participants who may have become employed between the time period from which the sample was selected (last 6 months of 2004) and the time the survey was conducted. To address this, the survey questionnaire asked a series of questions regarding participation in assessment or counselling sessions with their case worker in the past two years. If the participant did not recall any such counselling sessions they were deemed non-participants for the purpose of the survey questionnaire. Individuals who were identified as non-participants using this approach were also asked questions about their ability to participate in employment or employment services, similar to the questions asked IA applicants at the in-take stage of their application. Anyone who did not report any barriers to participation in employment or employment services were identified as non-participants who were potentially eligible to participate in ESS.

The results of the survey response were compared to the administrative data that identified participants and non-participants. The results for ESS participants were as follows:

- 72% reported employment services in past 2 years;
- 18% did not report any assessment or counselling services but reported they were able to seek employment; and
- 10% did not receive services and may not have been eligible due to self-reported employment barriers.

This analysis suggests the large majority of the ESS participants (72%) are coded correctly as ESS clients. Based on the respondents' self-reported ability to work or participate in employment services, very few (10%) appear to be misclassified and should have been non-participants (not ep-2). Another 18% would appear to have been coded correctly as ESS eligible but they did not recall any ESS related services in the past two years. These may have been individuals who were served in the past but had not received any follow-up activity or were relatively job ready and did not need much assistance. Based on the low number of these individuals who did not seek services and their relatively good employment outcomes, they appear to be less in need of service.

The same analysis was conducted for the survey respondents who were coded as non-participants on the administrative data. The results were as follows:

- 52% reported employment services in past 2 years[16];
- 22% did not report any assessment or counselling services but reported they were able to seek employment; and
- 26% did not receive services and may not have been eligible due to self-reported employment barriers.

> **There is a large demand for ESS services that is not reflected in the administrative data. A large percentage of the individuals coded as non-participants either reported participating in employment related services or did not report any barriers to participating in these services.**

Based on this survey respondents' self-reported engagement in employment related services or their ability to work or participate in employment services, only 26% appear to be non-participants and not able to participate in ESS types of programs and services. Even assuming that some of these individuals may have confused the IA intake process for employment counselling or over-estimated their employability, the findings suggest a large demand for ESS programs and services among the IA clients coded as non-participants.

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[16] These may not have been ESS employment programs and services. Some may have been LMDA or LMAPD employment programs and services.

4.2   Profile of Participants and Non-Participants

The above discussion of employment services received by both ESS and non-ESS clients raises questions about the differences between these two groups and their relative distribution across the Department's four regions. Although some Regions may have a higher ESS participation rate, the total number of ESS participants will depend on both the number of IA clients and the participation rate in each Region. The largest number of ESS participants are in the Eastern (36%) and Central Regions (32%), followed by the Western Region (20%). The Northern region has the smallest number of ESS participants (12%). The distribution of ESS clients (ep2) has to be compared with other indicators to assess the importance of these regional differences. Table 4.2.1 shows the provincial distribution of low income population in the four regions, the distribution of ESIA staff (both ESS and IA) and the distribution of clients.

Table 4.2.1 The Distribution of Low Income Individuals, ESIA Staff and ESS and non-ESS Clients by Region					
	Low Income Population*	ESIA staff (ESS and IA combined)	ESIA Clients – both ESS and non-ESS	ESS Clients (ep2)	Non-ESS Clients (not ep2)
Central	37%	34%	36%	32%	37%
Northern	17%	25%	16%	12%	17%
Eastern	21%	18%	27%	36%	24%
Western	25%	23%	21%	20%	22%
*The distribution of regional low income population was accumulated by Nova Scotia County from the Community Counts income data and reflects the Statistics Canada definition of "low income."					

For the most part, there is a reasonable match between the distribution of a potential client base, the distribution of staff and the distribution of clients. The Northern Region has somewhat fewer ESS clients than its share of low income population. The Eastern Region has more ESS clients than its share of low income population. The comparison of the distribution of low income population with the distribution of ESIA staff suggests that the Central and Western Regions are more or less in line with their potential client population. The Northern Region might be somewhat over-staffed; the Eastern Region somewhat under-staffed. The differences between the ESS and non-ESS client distributions could reflect different client characteristics in the demographics of the regions or different caseworker decision-making patterns in intake and referral to ESS.

Table 4.2.2 provides a profile of ESS clients and non-ESS client for selected variables from the administrative data and Table 4.2.3 provides additional profile information from the survey. Note that the number of cases for the survey is much smaller than the administrative data, where information on the entire population is available. While the overall findings for the survey data are still relatively reliable (approximately +/- 2.5%), the smaller number of cases for each region results in a higher sampling error and greater caution must be used when citing differences between regions[17].

ESS participants have lower levels of educational attainment, 46 percent did not complete high school. This lower level of education presents challenges for finding longer-term stable employment for these ESS participants. The ESS participants also had a relatively high incidence of persons with disabilities (29%) who may have unique needs in terms of employment services and supports.

> **The clients served under ESS need support and services to respond to low levels of education, status as single parents and a relatively high incidence of persons with disabilities. The non-ESS client caseload has lower levels of education and higher levels of disability barriers.**

Two key characteristics of the ESS participants are the large proportion of the ESS participants that are women (65%) and those who are single parents (45%). The high incidence of single parents among the ESS participants indicates a high need for supports among the ESS participants. This clientele may face more labour market challenges due to their family situation in terms of mobility to accept jobs in other areas, hours of work, child care or transportation. Not only is there a higher incidence of single parents and females, but essentially all the single parents are female (95%). There were no important regional differences in this profile of ESS client characteristics.

Both groups face significant barriers to labour market participation. The following two tables show that the most important differences between ESS and non-ESS clients are the following:

- There is a higher percentage of women as ESS clients;
- Fewer ESS clients are 45 years old or older;
- More ESS clients have dependents;
- Fewer ESS clients are single with no children;

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[17] When the total of respondents in a region is 300 to 400, the sampling error is approximately +/- 6% to +/- 5%, while for sample sizes of 100 to 150 respondents the sampling error is approximately +/- 10% to +/- 8%.

- Both groups have low levels of education, but ESS clients are somewhat more likely to have Grade 12; and
- The non-ESS client group has a higher percentage reporting a disability.

Table 4.2.2 ESIA Client Profile from Analysis of Departmental Administrative Data – ESS Clients and non-ESS Clients[*]		
	ESS Clients	**Non-ESS Clients**
Gender		
Male	35%	46%
Female	65%	54%
Age		
Under 21	5%	4%
21 to 24	13%	8%
25 to 34	33%	19%
35 to 44	27%	23%
45 to 54	16%	25%
55 and above	7%	22%
Marital Status		
Married/Common Law	12%	13%
Single	63%	56%
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	25%	37%
Number of dependents		
0	47%	74%
1	28%	15%
2 – 3	23%	10%
3 or more	2%	1%
Family Composition**		
Single no children	43%	66%
Single parent	45%	21%
Married no children	5%	8%
Married with children	8%	5%
Total	100% (10,269)	100% (26,908)

*The analysis of ESIA client characteristics is based on a unique database that was developed to include all active clients during the period from June 2004 through November 2004. This produces a client total that differs from the commonly used "monthly average caseload" because of client turnover and represents more accurately the total number of clients served during a period of time.

** The family composition variable was derived from marital status and number of dependents.

Table 4.2.3 Comparing ESS (ep2) and Non-ESS (not ep-2) Clients as Represented in the Client Survey Data (%)
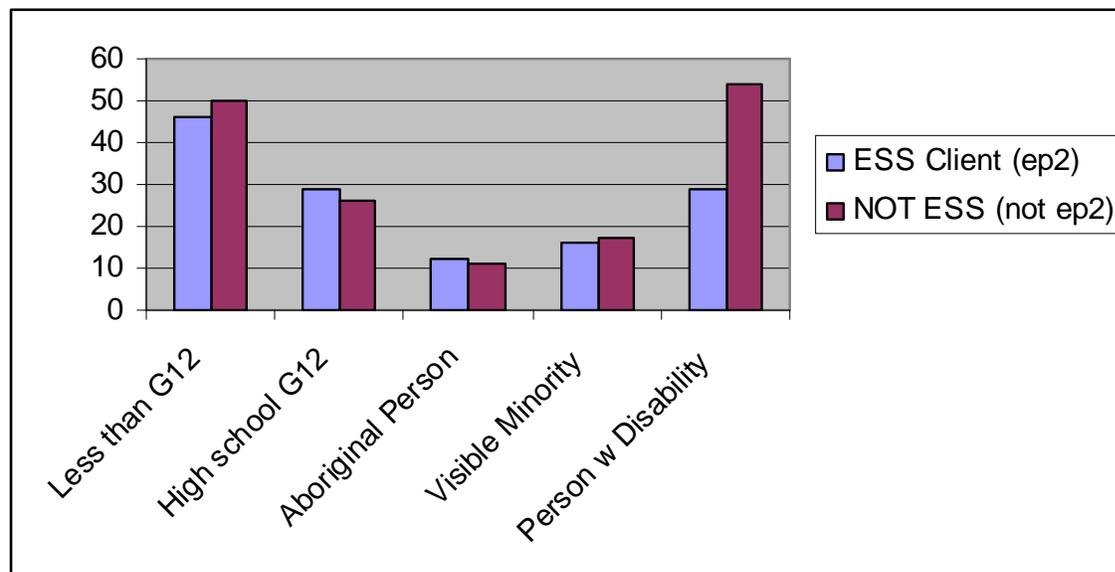
4.3   Meeting Client Needs

Our main source of information concerning client needs is found in our analysis of the NSEA forms in the files of clients sampled for the NSEA review. Although we have earlier noted the limitations of this database, it can be used along with the client survey to develop a profile of client needs, client program participation and experience, the capacity to meet client needs and client satisfaction. The on-line staff survey also provides some information on these concerns.

4.3.1   Profile of Client Needs

From a sample of client files selected randomly, 910 had relatively complete NSEA forms that were entered into a database to quantify the employment service and program needs of the ESS participants. Table 4.3.1 presents the results of this analysis, the

> **The highest areas of need for ESS clients are job seeking skills, academic or specific marketable skills and supports for their life situation.**

percent of participants with at least one barrier for each of the seven main assessment areas on the NSEA form. Also, the percentage of clients with barriers in multiple assessment areas is shown. Using the incidence of barriers as a measure of need, ESS participants have the highest

needs for employment programs and services related to academic improvement or specific marketable skills (78%), job seeking skills (63%) and supports for their life situation such as child care, affordable housing and transportation (50%). While there is some regional variation, generally these areas of high need are high in all of the Regions.

Table 4.3.1 Percent of ESS Participants with Barriers: NSEA Forms					
Barrier Areas	**Central**	**Northern**	**Eastern**	**Western**	**Total**
Academic or Marketable Skills / Cognitive Barriers	72%	77%	83%	77%	78%
Job Seeking Skills Barriers	64%	63%	62%	63%	63%
Life Situation Barriers	49%	60%	44%	54%	50%
Goal or Confidence Barriers	35%	38%	34%	37%	36%
Work Experience or Job Behaviour Barriers	22%	37%	33%	32%	31%
Physical or Mental Health Barriers	24%	24%	26%	29%	26%
Skills or Personal Qualities Barriers	19%	29%	27%	28%	26%
Number of Areas with at least one Barrier					
No Areas	7%	5%	4%	7%	6%
1 Area	16%	12%	16%	13%	15%
2 –3 Areas	39%	37%	40%	36%	38%
4 or more Areas	38%	45%	40%	44%	42%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Cases	216	123	314	257	910

While a sizeable proportion of the clients had needs in the other assessment areas, the incidence of barriers was lower, including for goals or confidence (36%), work experience or job behaviour (31%), physical or mental health barriers (26%) and improving general skills or personal qualities (26%).

Very few clients (6%) had no barriers noted on the NSEA forms and only 15 percent had only one area with barriers. The vast majority had barriers in multiple assessment areas (79%) and nearly 42 percent had barriers in 4 or more areas. It is unlikely

A high incidence of multiple barriers suggests that ESS clients will likely have poor labour market outcomes unless a longer-term or multiple interventions strategy is used to address their labour market barriers.

that ESS participants with such a high number of multiple barriers will achieve success in the

labour market unless significant levels of assistance are provided for employment related programs and services. This type of client is also less likely to be accepted into a "performance based," contracted employment support agency.

There are actually two dimensions to the barriers to employment question – barriers located within ESS policy and programs and those found in client characteristics. These two dimensions as suggested in the staff survey are shown in Table 4.3.2

Table 4.3.2 Staff views on barriers to client progress towards employment	
Barriers found within ESS policy and programs	**Barriers found in client characteristics**
Policies: • Inconsistent application of policies • Recognizing needs of rural clients • Transportation costs for rural clients • Change current student loan/IA policy to allow continued IA • Forcing clients to participate • Staff data entry takes away from client focus • Process ladened, need decision-making closer to front line staff **Program:** • High caseload • Multiple caseloads (ESS, daycare, LMAPD) • IA and ESS staff relationships • Appointments taking too long to schedule, waiting times for assessment • Lack of time for clients **Resources:** • Limited funds, lack of funds • Lack of staff • Too few seats at NSCC in Educate to Work • Childcare support levels too low • Insufficient training for ESS staff	• Lack of education or training • Level of literacy • Barriers of mental health, addictions, behaviour problems, social skills • Disabilities • Unidentified learning disabilities • Criminal record • Limited basic work skills • Limited work ethic • Lack of marketable skills or training • The labour market and "marginal" clients • Child care • Child care for parent of more than one child • Housing issues • Transportation, especially in rural areas • Rural living as a barrier to employment • No support network • Lack of self-confidence, motivation • Low self esteem • Afraid to leave assistance, dependency on IA • Lack of knowledge of available programs • Lack of adequate funds to meet basic needs

The staff references to client-based barriers parallel the client barriers recorded in the sample of NSEA forms that were available for assessment as summarized above in Table 4.3.1. The staff views on barriers to client progress that are on the program side are brought forward under the areas of policies, programs and resources. These findings represent the staff views on how the program limits on their ability to respond to client needs. At this point, it is not a matter of saying these suggested program limitations are correct or not. They do, however, represent views from front line staff of program issues that may be considered.

4.3.2   Program Participation and Client Experience

Table 4.3.3 provides the information obtained from the ESS participant survey respondents on the types of programs and services they received. A large majority received some form of counselling services (72%), including the needs assessment and developing an action plan. The next most frequent program or service received was employment supports such as assistance for child care, transportation, purchase of clothes and work boots, etc. (43%), job search, resume writing assistance (38%), and education and training (36%). Work placement (14%) and self-employment assistance (3%) were the least reported programs and services.

While the most frequently used programs and services correspond to the three highest need areas - academic improvement or specific marketable skills (78%), job seeking skills (63%) and supports such as child care, housing, transportation etc. (50%), there is a

> **A comparison of the ESS participants' needs and the programs and services received suggests further investments in these clients will be required to improve their employability and achieve ESS' employment and IA exit goals.**

significant gap between the level of need and the reported services provided. For example, 78 percent of the clients in the NSEA analysis had barriers related to academics or specific marketable skills while 36 percent of the survey respondents reported participating in an education or training program. Even for lower needs areas such as work experience or job behaviour, the percentage of individuals reporting participating in a job placement or wage subsidy program (14%) was substantially lower than the needs analysis indicated (31%).

The gaps between the levels of needs found through the NSEA forms and the types of programs and services reported by the survey respondents do not necessarily reflect inadequate action plans or program resources. The gap simply may reflect the fact that ESS participants are in the process of completing a return to work plan that will require several different types of employment services over a longer time period. Individuals who have multiple needs may only

be at the beginning of an action plan that addresses a limited number of barriers. This would create an apparent gap in the services relative to need since the action plans are in progress. The reader is reminded, however, that these findings and conclusions are based on comparing data from two different sources. The clients who were sampled for the selection of the NSEA forms were not the same clients who were sampled for the survey. Although both groups were randomly sampled from a population of ESS clients, the results may not be comparable because the client files included in the NSEA analysis are the minority (one-third) of clients whose file actually had a completed NSEA process documented. With this caveat in mind, the findings strongly suggest further investments in these clients will be required to improve their employability and achieve ESS' employment and IA exit goals.

Table 4.3.3 ESS Participant Service and Programs					
Programs and Services	**Central**	**Northern**	**Eastern**	**Western**	**Total**
Met to discuss employment needs, assets, and barriers	69%	68%	69%	79%	69%
Met to discuss the type of work they could do and how to get ready to do that work	61%	61%	59%	72%	60%
Prepared action plan to prepare for work and find a job	62%	59%	56%	65%	61%
Any one of above counselling services	73%	71%	71%	84%	72%
Other supports – purchase work clothes/boots, transportation, child care	51%	40%	40%	47%	43%
Job search, resume writing assistance	41%	34%	34%	47%	38%
Education or training course	36%	44%	29%	46%	36%
Work placement/wage subsidy	16%	14%	12%	18%	14%
Self-employment assistance	4%	4%	2%	4%	3%
Number of cases	363	166	405	318	1,533*

* A regional code was not available for all the survey respondents; therefore the total of cases in each region is smaller than for the total sample.

Regional differences in the participation in programs and services included:

- Central Region had the highest number of participants reporting supports such as child care, transportation (51%);
- The Eastern (29%) and Central Regions (36%) had the lowest percentage of participants reporting an education or training program; and
- Participants from the Northern (34%) and Eastern (34%) Regions were less likely to state they had participated in job search related services.

The current capture of program information does not allow us to conclude whether or not these regional differences are appropriate responses to client needs or variations in capacity of regions to respond to needs. Some specific details of the programs and services are provided below.

- Over half of the work placement participants reported volunteer work (no wages);
- 30 percent of the work term participants worked for the employer after the work term and 17 percent were currently working for the employer;
- 56 percent of the training and education participants took a formal education course, 44 percent participated in training programs;
- 72 percent of the training and education participants received a certificate or diploma; and
- The majority of all program participants remain in the program until its scheduled completion date. The exception to this were clients involved in self-employment programming where only 23 percent had started their business and a high percentage of these business were no longer in operation.

A summary of a payments data set was provided by Departmental IT staff that allows some descriptive analysis of three payment areas directly related to work incentives. The file was extracted for the fiscal year 2004-05 and provided a provincial summary of all ESIA payments issued by the Department of Community Services for all payment types, summed by payment amount for each active case (no duplicates). The data shows payment totals for each case number across 102 payment codes. Codes relevant for ESIA clients include (and are listed in the data as):

- Work Incentives Employability Part EP - Transportation (86);
- Work Incentives Employability Part EP - Child Care (87); and
- Work Incentives Employability Part EP - Other (88).

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There were 10,539 ESIA participants that received payments under these employability codes. The use of the "other" coding category creates limitations in understanding the nature of support provided. Payments made under these codes are summarized below.

Table 4.3.4 Summary of Work Incentives Employability Participation Payments for the Fiscal Year 2004 – 05				
	EP - Transportation (86)	EP – Child Care (87)	EP – Other 88)	Total: Work Incentives Employability Part
Number of Cases*	8,951	2,842	3,881	10,539
Percent of Clients Receiving This Payment	14%	4%	6%	
Total Payments	$3,388,849.85	$3,434,546.75	$1,058,283.99	$7,881,766.70
Average payment made to clients receiving the work incentive support	$378.60	$1,208.50	$272.68	$747.87
Maximum payment made to any one client	$7,191	$5,500	$5,250	
*The total consists of all clients who received at least one Work Incentive Employability Payment some of whom received more than one type of incentive (e.g., child care and transportation)				

In total, ESIA participants collected $7.9 million in employment related payments. Relative to total payments received by these cases during the fiscal year, EP payments represented approximately 11 percent of payments received ($63.7 million was paid to this same group through other payment codes).

4.3.3   Capacity to Meet Client Needs and Client Satisfaction

The capacity to meet ESS client needs will depend on a number of factors. Do ESS staff have appropriate supports and services to develop successful action plans? Do IA and ESS staff work well together? Does staff have up-to-date information concerning the Nova Scotia labour market? These were questions in the on-line staff survey.

The conclusion from the staff survey data is that, for the most part, IA and ESS staff work well together to meet client needs. Few were uncertain or disagreed with that suggestion, while 29 percent strongly agreed and 56 percent agreed with this theme of cooperation in response to client needs. There were some regional differences in this assessment of staff cooperation that

can be seen in the "strongly agree" responses. The cooperation theme was above average in the Western Region, average in the Eastern Region and below average in the Central and the Northern Regions. Within ESS staff, dissatisfaction with the IA to ESS referral process was related to reservations about the two groups working together.

The majority of staff agreed that they had access to services and supports that would respond to clients' unmet needs or barriers as identified in the assessment process. Very few, only six percent, strongly agreed and, in contrast, 43 percent had reservations about the adequacy of services and supports. These supports and services are directed towards entry into the Nova Scotia labour market. Labour market information is more directly related to the ESS staff function and they were somewhat more likely to agree that they had access to this information than IA staff. There were also regional differences. Both are shown in the following table.

Table 4.3.4 Staff and Regional Differences in Assessment of Up-to-Date and Useful Labour Market Information (% Strongly Agree and Agree)	
78% ESS/IA staff	77% Western Region
67% ESS staff	54% Eastern Region
52% IA staff	47% Central Region
	44% Northern Region*
*The Northern Region had the highest proportion of IA staff as respondents.	

Table 4.3.5 presents the client satisfaction ratings obtained from the survey of ESS participants. Table 4.3.6 provides related satisfaction measures. Overall 72 percent were satisfied with the quality of service they received related to employment programs and services – 42 percent were very satisfied, only 11 percent dissatisfied. Satisfaction with aspects of service directly related to the staff received the highest ratings, including courteousness of staff (81%), treated fairly (78%) and helpfulness of the case worker (76%).

Overall, clients responding in the client survey were satisfied with the programs and services received, although improvements could be made to the timeliness and access to programs and services.

The lowest satisfaction ratings were for access issues including the amount of time clients had to wait for employment related services (64%) and ease of access to programs and services (65%). Nearly one quarter of the survey respondents (24%) stated the programs and services fell short of their expectations and 18 percent stated they had problems getting the programs and services they needed. There are some regional variations in the satisfaction ratings, although the regional differences on these items only range between five to 13 percent. The Northern Region tended,

over-all, to have lower satisfaction ratings. The greatest regional differences contrast the Western and Northern regions on the question of the availability of a case worker to discuss employment needs.

Table 4.3.5 ESS Participant Client Satisfaction : Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied with Services					
	Central	**Northern**	**Eastern**	**Western**	**Total**
Aspect of Service					
Overall satisfaction with the quality of service received	72%	67%	68%	77%	72%
The courteousness of the staff	79%	74%	85%	78%	81%
Services were provided in a fair manner	76%	72%	81%	82%	78%
The ability of the caseworker to be helpful	77%	67%	75%	76%	76%
Availability of the case worker to discuss employment needs.	65%	63%	68%	76%	69%
Given good information about the kinds of employment programs and services available	66%	66%	69%	72%	67%
Given good information about how to get programs and services	69%	61%	65%	71%	67%
Ease of access to programs and services (i.e. being able to get to them)	67%	61%	68%	63%	65%
The amount of time you had to wait for employment related services	67%	62%	62%	67%	64%
Number of cases	259	117	272	262	1,079

The differences in apparent client satisfaction and dissatisfaction with services and supports between responses in the client survey and the critical responses received in client focus groups can be attributed to a number of factors, including:

- The client stage of engagement with the program – some survey clients were no longer receiving income assistance (39%) and were employed (35%);
- The format of a focus group can encourage problem identification and encourages more in-depth qualitative responses;
- The motivation to respond to a focus group invitation may be related to an interest in expressing negative views concerning a program; and
- It is common for social program clients to be satisfied with program process and personnel features without being entirely satisfied with program outcomes.

The client survey provides the most systematic reading of the level of client satisfaction within which the qualitative comments from focus groups can be placed. The focus group responses suggest content to the critical responses found in the survey findings. In the following table, one of the findings of most concern is the last which shows that just under one-half of clients reported no follow-up to their employment plans.

Table 4.3.6 ESS Participant Client Satisfaction – Other Client Satisfaction Measures					
	Central	**Northern**	**Eastern**	**Western**	**Total**
Quality of the Services Received					
Exceeded expectations	21%	15%	18%	17%	18%
Met expectations	52%	51%	60%	63%	58%
Fell short of expectations	27%	33%	22%	20%	24%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Got Information Needed					
Yes	75%	66%	80%	79%	77%
No	17%	20%	13%	10%	14%
Received part of what was needed	8%	15%	8%	11%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Problems Accessing Programs and Services					
Yes	24%	24%	14%	15%	18%
No	76%	77%	86%	85%	82%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Anyone follow-up on employment plans					
Yes	58%	57%	51%	61%	57%
No	42%	43%	49%	39%	43%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of cases	259	117	272	262	1,079

4.4 Program Delivery: Analysis Highlights

The evaluation issues and questions related to program delivery focused on:

- contrasts in ESS and non-ESS client profiles and program participation;
- the service and support needs of both client groups; and
- the quality of service and client satisfaction.

The key evaluation research findings for these areas are highlighted here to anticipate the directions of our conclusions.

4.4.1 Client Profile

ESS faces a fairly large demand for programs and services. In a six month period from June to November 2004 there were 37,175 IA clients of which 10,269 (29%) were classified as ESS participants. Based on the survey results, there is a large demand for ESS services that is not reflected in the administrative data. A large percentage of the individuals coded as non-participants reported participating in employment related services (52%). Based on a total of approximately 26,900 non-participants during this time frame, this would be equivalent to nearly 13,990 additional clients. These individuals may have received services from ESS or other sources. In either case, the finding suggests the potential client base is substantially larger than recorded by the administrative data.

The profile of ESS clients compared to non-ESS clients highlighted several features of the ESS client group that warrant consideration from a program development and service delivery perspective. These include the multiple barriers to employment with special note of these client characteristics:

- Low levels of education – 46 percent did not complete high school;
- Two-thirds of ESS clients are women;
- A high percentage of single parents – 45 percent, virtually all of whom were female; and
- A high percentage of individuals with a disability – 29 percent.

These client groups typically have greater difficulty finding employment and have unique needs in terms of employment services and supports to address low skill levels or the requirement for specific supports to meet their needs.

The NSEA data provided a "needs" profile of the ESS participants, based on the barriers and assets reported on the forms. ESS participants have the highest needs for employment programs and services related to academic improvement or specific marketable skills (78%), job seeking skills (63%) and supports for their life situation such as child care, housing, transportation etc. (50%). While there is some regional variation, generally these areas of high need are high in all of the Regions. The vast majority had barriers in multiple assessment areas (79%) and nearly 42 percent had barriers in 4 or more areas. It is unlikely that ESS participants with such a high number of multiple barriers will achieve success in the labour market unless significant levels of assistance are provided for employment related programs and services.

There was no historical data to compare the profile of current and past ESS participants to measure the change in the clientele over time. According to the staff surveyed, current clients have more barriers than previous clients. About two-thirds of the ESS staff surveyed agreed that clients today tend to have more barriers to employment than clients 3 or 4 years ago.

4.4.2   Program Profile

Due to the difficulties matching financial codes to specific categories of programs and services (e.g. training, wage subsidies, etc.) a direct measure of the availability of the take-up of programs and services could not be measured using the administrative data. The survey of participants provides information on the take-up of programs and services and provides some additional support for the views of the staff on regional differences in the delivery of ESS.

The most commonly reported services were counselling services (72%), followed by employment supports such as assistance for child care, transportation, purchase of clothes and work boots (43%), job search, resume writing assistance (38%), and education and training (36%). Work placement (14%) and self-employment assistance (3%) were the least reported programs and services. Regional differences in the participation of programs and services included:

- Central Region had the highest number of participants reporting supports such as child care, transportation, etc. (51%);

- The Eastern (29%) and Central Regions had the lowest percentage reporting a education or training program (36%); and

- Participants from the Northern (34%) and Eastern (34%) Regions were less likely to state they had participated in job search related services.

The regional differences could be due to differences in the needs of clients in the various regions. The analysis of the NSEA data, however, did not indicate strong regional differences in the need of clients for the various programs and services offered under ESS. Based on staff perceptions, the differences may be due to access to resources. According the survey of staff, there were regional differences in the program resources available – 76 percent agreed that differences in supports and services across regions influenced the ability to implement successful action plans. Some participants also cited problems accessing programs and services. Nearly one quarter of the survey respondents stated the programs and services fell short of their expectations and 18 percent stated they had problems getting the programs and services they needed.

4.4.3   Quality of Service and Client Satisfaction

The client survey findings showed clients were satisfied with the programs and services received, although improvements could be made to the timeliness and access to programs and services. Overall, 72 percent were satisfied with the quality of services they received related to employment programs and services – 42 percent were very satisfied, only 11 percent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction with aspects of service directly related to the staff received the highest ratings, including levels of courteousness of staff (81%), being treated fairly (78%) and helpfulness of the case worker (76%). The lowest satisfaction ratings were for access issues including the amount of time clients had to wait for employment related services (64%) and ease of access to programs and services (65%).

Some clients felt the services fell short of expectations (24%) and 18 percent stated they had problems getting the programs and services they needed. A comparison of the NSEA data and the survey data on participation in programs and services indicated gaps or a continued need for employment programs and services. While the most frequently used programs and services correspond to the three highest need areas - academic improvement or specific marketable skills, job seeking skills, and supports such as child care, housing, and transportation, there was a significant gap between the level of need and the reported services provided. For example, 78 percent of the clients in the NSEA analysis had barriers related to academics of specific

marketable skills while 36 percent of the survey respondents reported participating in an education or training program.

5.0 Program Results

The movement of ESS clients towards employment can be seen as a composite of strengths and weaknesses in services and client characteristics. We consider here the challenges to achieving program results and the program impacts on client education and skills, employability and employment and quality of life. There have been successes in improving the employability of individual clients, in spite of the complexities of the ESS clientele and the challenges of program delivery. The key findings reported in this section include:

- Participation in the employment programs and services was identified by a majority of ESS clients as being responsible for improvements in job finding skills and on-the-job abilities.
- In addition, clients reported a substantial gain in educational attainment.
- Following their participation in ESS, a majority of clients gained employment experience and generated wage income, while continuing to receive income assistance.   A smaller percentage found and maintained employment that allowed them to be independent from income assistance.

5.1   Challenges to Achieving Program Results

Although ESS programs and services may be relatively successful in terms of removing barriers to employment, the ESS and IA clients remaining in the system have more barriers than ever before. The population of non-ESS clients represent even more complex cases and include a portion of the client base that needs basic support for living without the possibility of participating in the labour market. They represent a client population with a higher incidence of persons with disabilities, and older age profile and lower levels of education attainment.

Responses from the staff survey matched this assessment. The following table shows staff conclusions about the barriers to employment among current clients compared to those of only three or four years earlier. Overall, 63 percent of staff believed today's ESS clients have more barriers to employment than previous clients and 71 percent believe ESS services have been successful in removing client barriers to employment. Tables 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 show a difference in this assessment between IA and ESS staff. Fewer, but still over 50 percent, IA staff acknowledge this change or the ability of ESS services to have the desired impact. Each of the

three staff groups were very reluctant to "strongly agree" with the suggestion that ESS has been successful in removing client barriers to employment.

Table 5.1.1 ESS Clients Today Tend To Have More Barriers To Employment – Staff Survey (% strongly agree and agree)
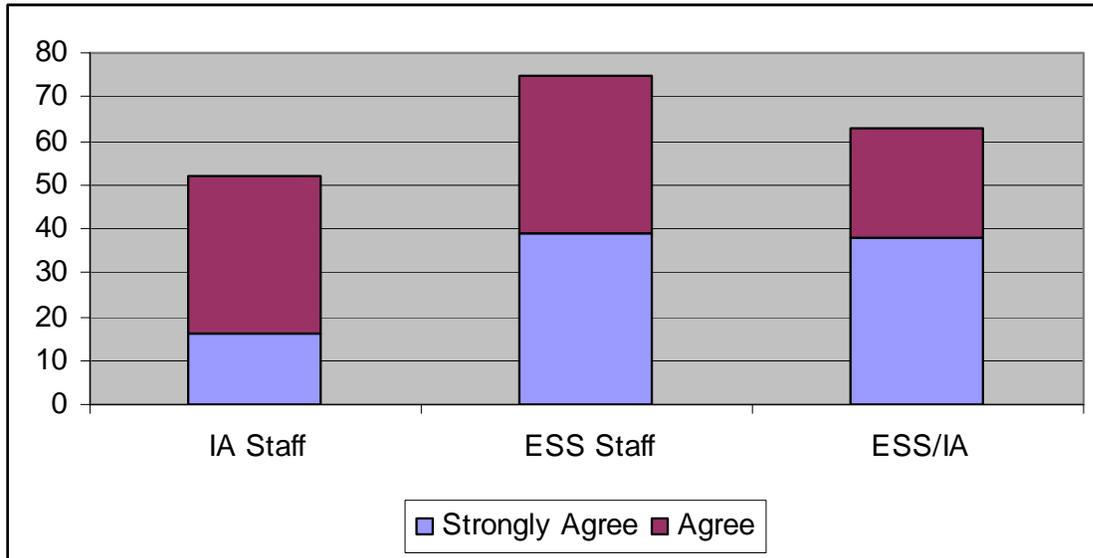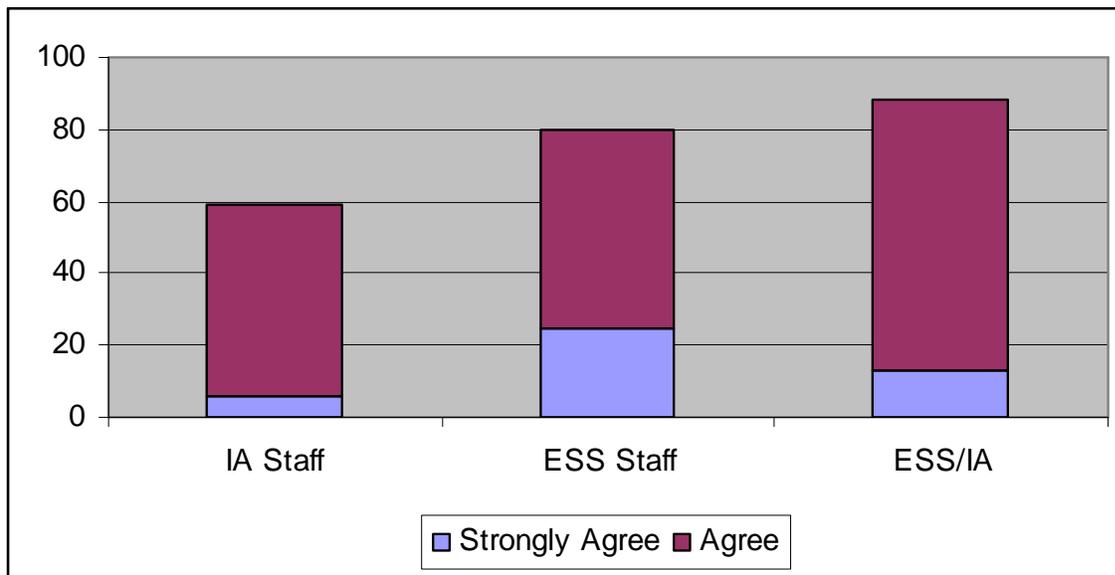

Table 5.1.2 ESS Services Have Been Successful in Removing Client Barriers to Employment -- Staff Survey (% strongly agree and agree)

A common observation across all groups consulted through focus groups and interviews was that there have been successes in improving the employability of individual clients and in helping clients achieve self-sufficiency. ESS staff and community organizations based this on their experiences with clients; other stakeholders based this on their contact with client groups that use ESS services. Many informants, however, also felt that ESS as implemented was limited in achieving the desired results. This opinion was based on a number of key factors:

Policy: The perceived conflict of ESS and IA policy objectives – longer term support for moving clients towards self-sufficiency versus quick exit off income support. The degree of inconsistency in implementation of policy and the degree of change in policies are seen as constraints to achieving objectives.

Client profile: The more challenging client profile will lead to fewer employment outcomes. Some noted the need to better define reasonable results for ESS, given this client profile. Others noted the challenges to measuring results for clients who make progress and then regress due to their complex needs – progress is not a straight line.

Lack of longer term interventions: While ESS can stay with clients in the longer term, the policy that prevents participation in longer term education programs is seen as a major gap in the supports for achieving client self-sufficiency.

System: NSEA and current technological supports were seen as barriers to effective program implementation.

Resources: Lack of staff training on standards and skills for dealing with current clients.

5.2   Impacts on Education and Skills

Table 5.2.1 shows the ESS participants' perceptions of the impacts of their program participation on various aspects of their skills development. ESS participants indicated their program participation was useful or very useful in increasing their understanding of what they need to do to find employment (65%), increasing their

> **ESS participants reported substantial gains in education levels and indicated the program was useful in improving their skills.**

ability to find work in the future (65%) and gaining job skills (55%). In addition, the clients'

educational attainment prior to their program participation was compared to their current level of educational attainment. There was a significant improvement in the educational attainment of program participants. Prior to the program, only 23 percent of the ESS participants had at least some post-secondary education or higher. At the time of the interview, however, 41 percent reported some post-secondary education or higher.

Table 5.2.1 ESS Participants Perceived Usefulness of the Program and Services: Staff Survey, Percent Rating Useful or Very Useful

Legend:
- Understanding what's needed to find employment
- Increasing ability to find work in the future
- Gaining specific job-related skills
- Gaining work experience on-the-job
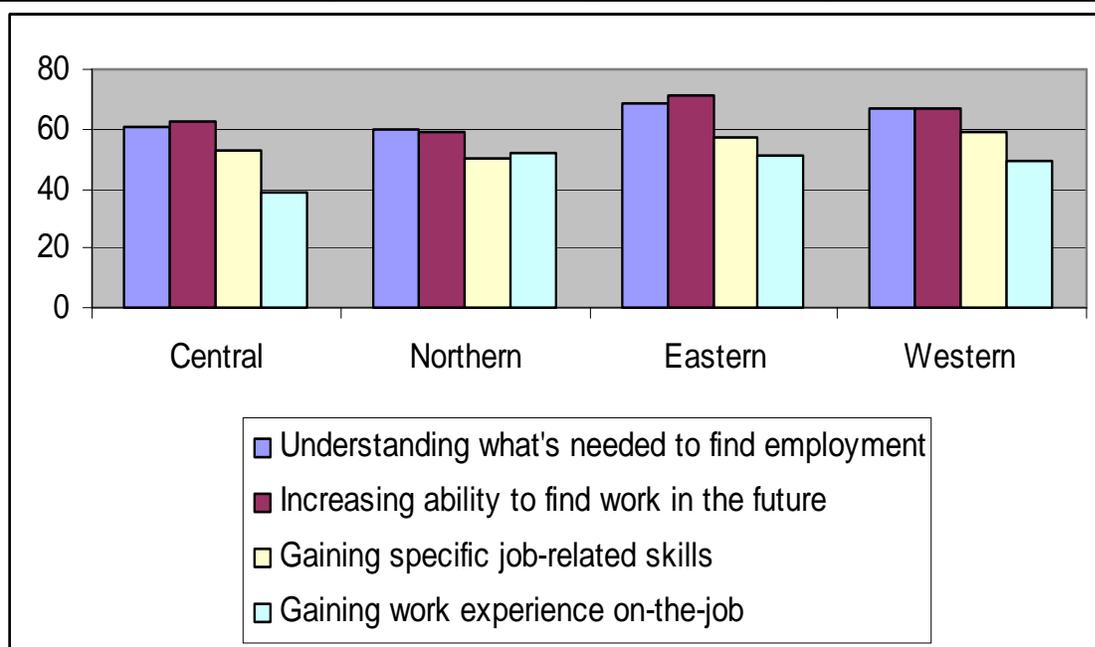
5.3   Impacts on Employability and Employment

The British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance provided the graph of the "employment continuum" shown below in its RFQ for Service Provider Pre-Qualification.[18] The point of the graph is to emphasize that movement towards employment is a process. The process is reflected in the ESS logic model presented above in Table 2.1.1 and is recognized in the program descriptions and organizational culture of the ministries of British Columbia and Alberta. Clients do not just "leave the caseload" for employment. They, with their service

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[18] British Columbia. *RFQ SATP-156, BCEP Service Provider Pre-Qualification*, 2005, p. 13.

provider(s), commit themselves to a developmental process that can remove barriers to employment and add assets for employment.

Table 5.3.1 The "Employment" Continuum
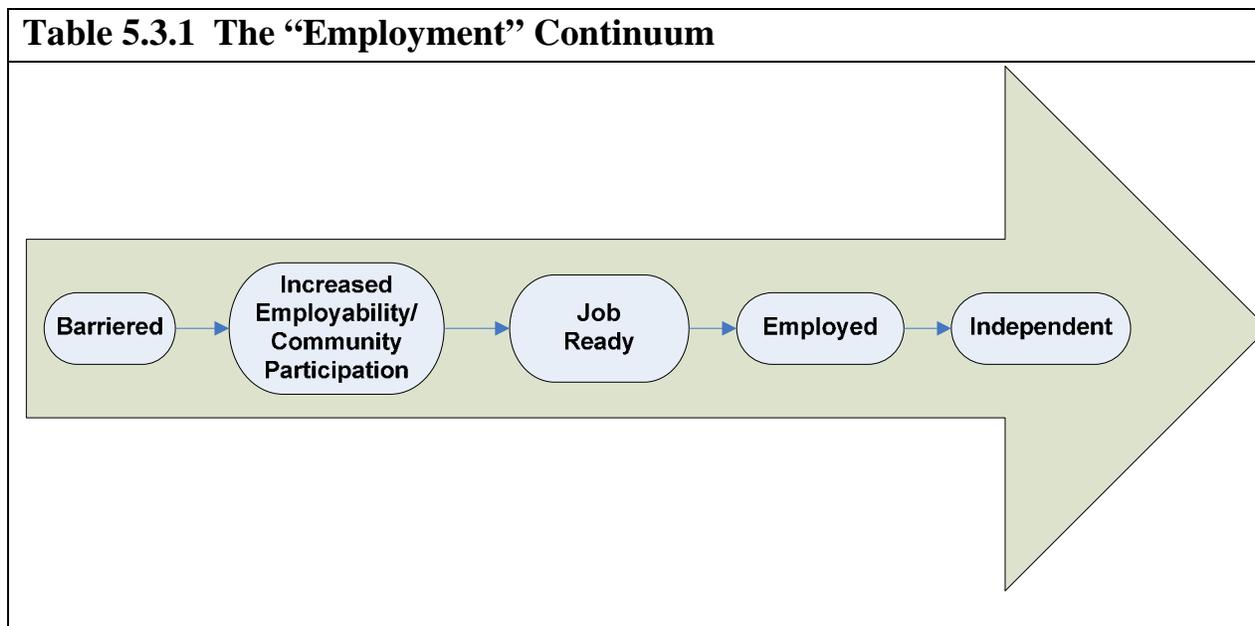
The evaluation research has had to turn to the client survey for the most direct measures of progress along this continuum and to the staff survey for an assessment based on casework experience. The ESIA and ESS information systems do not provide direct measures of these benchmarks, certainly not in readily available formats.

5.3.1   ESS Impacts on Employability

Two questions in the staff survey measured essentially the same theme, especially for the sub-set of ESS staff.

- Q21d: Client changes in employment status have tended to be temporary in nature – not sustained
- Q21f: Among current ESS clients, changes in "employability" are more likely than movement towards sustained employment

The first question (21d) has a more critical edge to it in terms of [not] achieving ESS objectives. The responses were almost equally divided in thirds – those who agreed with this suggestion, those who disagreed and those who were undecided. For the second question (Q21f), two-thirds

considered the interim outcome, changes in employability, more likely than movement to sustainable employment. The following table does not describe the ESS caseload, but it does highlight the different perspective found amongst IA and ESS staff concerning ESS outcomes.

Table 5.3.2 Client Changes in Employment Status Have Tended to be Temporary in Nature – Not Sustained Employment
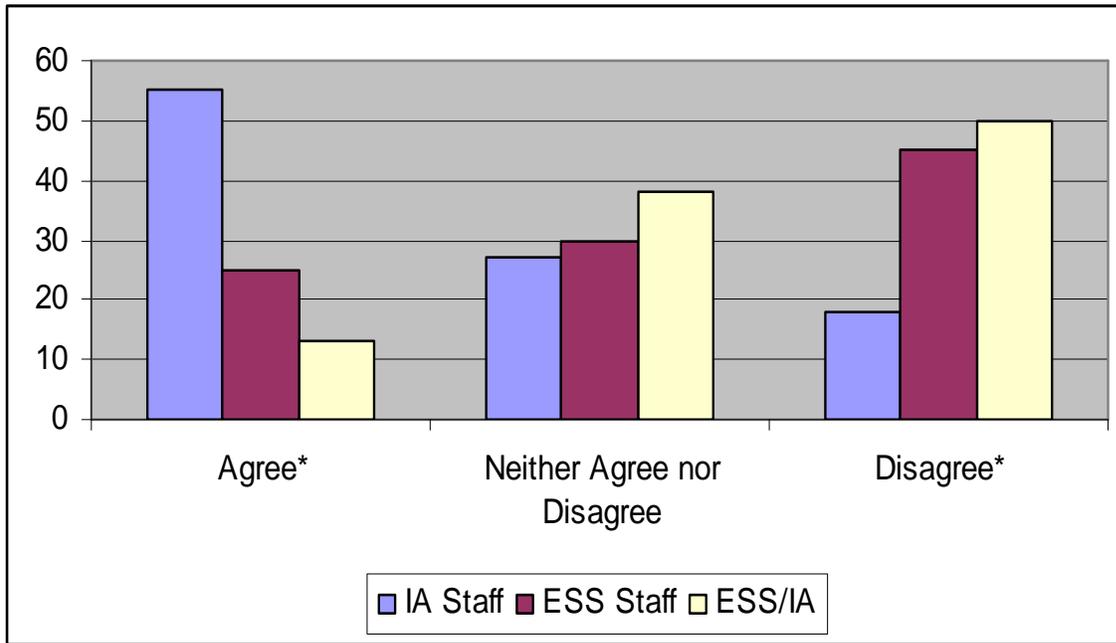
*Agree responses combine Strongly Agree and Agree; Disagree responses combine Strongly Disagree and Disagree responses

In the staff survey, IA staff was more likely to see the ESS client's move towards employment to be temporary, not sustainable. ESS staff was more confident of a sustainable employment outcome (50%), but are still divided in their assessment.

Table 5.3.3 shows results from the client survey and the perceived changes on several employability related measures. A majority of ESS participants indicated that their job finding or job abilities had improved. For example, 60 percent agreed their ability to get a job had improved and 64 percent agreed their ability to keep a job had improved. Half of the ESS participants rated their

> **Most clients believe their ability to find and keep work improved. There still appears, however, to be a high demand for skills development through training or education programs.**

programs or services as helpful or very helpful in removing barriers or reducing problems for

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finding or keeping employment. It is interesting to note, however, that 81 percent continued to express interest in improving their skills through training opportunities. This finding implies that, despite the improvements in skills reported earlier and their perceptions their job readiness has improved, there is still a very large potential demand for additional training and education programs among the ESS participants.

Table 5.3.3 ESS Participants Perceived Changes in Employability Related Measures: Percent Agree or Strongly Agree					
	Central	**Northern**	**Eastern**	**Western**	**Total**
I am more interested in improving my skills through training opportunities	79%	76%	81%	83%	81%
The skills I can bring to a job have increased/improved	57%	60%	63%	65%	62%
My ability to get a job has improved	58%	53%	68%	61%	61%
My ability to keep a job has improved.	62%	58%	73%	66%	64%
Helpful in removing or reducing problems or barriers to finding and keeping employment	51%	47%	49%	56%	50%
Number of cases	239	109	256	243	1,006

5.3.2　Employment Outcomes

Table 5.3.4 presents the employment outcomes: worked at any job in 2005, current employment status, and the IA status at the time of the survey interview for the ESS participants. The results show 56% had found employment in 2005, a result that was relatively consistent across the Regions. At the time the survey was conducted, 35 percent were still employed (or had found new employment), 22 percent employed full-time or self-employed. Compared to just over a 12 months to 18 months prior to the survey the ESS participants were on IA, at the time of the survey 39 percent were not receiving IA.

Examining the outcome measures by the type of employment programs and services received, work placement participants and individuals receiving other supports such as child care and transportation assistance tended to have better employment outcomes, but these results are based on a relatively

> **While the majority of ESS participants have found employment since being on IA in 2004, a smaller percentage have been able to retain employment and leave IA.**

small number of participants. These findings could also be because they were in a placement in 2004 that carried over to 2005 or, in the case of the employment supports, in many cases the employment may have been the cause for the need for assistance rather than the assistance directly resulting in the employment of the individual.

Table 5.3.4 ESS Participants Perceived Impacts of the Programs and Services: Percent Agree or Strongly Agree					
	Central	**Northern**	**Eastern**	**Western**	**Total**
Worked at Any Job in 2005					
Yes	55%	58%	57%	58%	56%
No	45%	42%	43%	42%	44%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Current Employment Status					
Employed FT/Self-Employed	27%	26%	22%	20%	22%
Employed PT	14%	14%	11%	16%	13%
Total Employed	41%	40%	33%	36%	35%
In School	12%	8%	10%	11%	10%
Maternity/sick leave	3%	1%	2%	3%	2%
Full-time homemaker	3%	5%	5%	6%	5%
Unemployed/looking for work	18%	22%	25%	23%	23%
Unemployed/not looking for work	19%	17%	18%	14%	18%
Other	4%	8%	7%	7%	6%
Don't know	<1%	0%	0%	<1%	<1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
IA Status at Time of Interview					
Still receiving IA	65%	56%	56%	59%	61%
Not receiving IA	35%	44%	44%	41%	39%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Cases	363	166	405	318	1,533

In addition to the client survey, we reviewed the reported earnings of ESIA clients for the fiscal year 2004-05. The dataset contained all unique cases for that period that reported at least one of the following four income codes:

- Wages
- Business income
- Income from self-employment
- Youth wage

The financial summary or earnings is provided in the following table.

Table 5.3.5 Summary of Earnings Data					
	Wages	Business Income (Exemption)	Income from Self-employment	Youth Wages	Total All Sources
Number of Case	7,435	8	26	32	7,482
Average for those reporting positive earnings	$3,156	$5,147	$2,054	$1,590	
Sum of Earnings	$23,464,249	$41,174	$53,394	$50,879	$23,609,697
Maximum Earnings Reported	$37,648.48	$21,374.00	$10,845.00	$5,111.00	$37,648.48

There are 7,482 cases that had earnings while on ESIA during the fiscal period 2004/05. Collectively, these individuals reported earnings of $23,609,697. This provides an average earning of $3,155.53 per case (median: $1,757.34). This is comprised of:

- **Earned Wages**: Total IA participant earned wages amounted to just over $23 million, with an average earned wage of $3,136 (median = $1,726.37) among 7,435 cases.

- **Business Income**: Participant's total business income totalled just over $41,000. The average business income was $5,147 for those that reported positive business income earnings.

- **Self Employment Earnings**: Total self employment income amounted to just over $53,000 with 26 cases reporting self employment earnings. The average earned was $2,054 for those reporting some self employment income.

- **Youth Wages**: Total youth wages was $50,879. This was reported by 32 cases with an average of $1,590 for those cases reporting.

5.4   Impacts on Quality of Life

Both staff and ESS clients reported positive results from program participation on non-employment outcomes -- quality of life, self-esteem, physical health. The following table shows that ESS staff was more confident of this impact on quality of life than IA staff.

Table 5.4.1 As a result of receiving ESS services and supports, our clients show a clear improvement in their quality of life
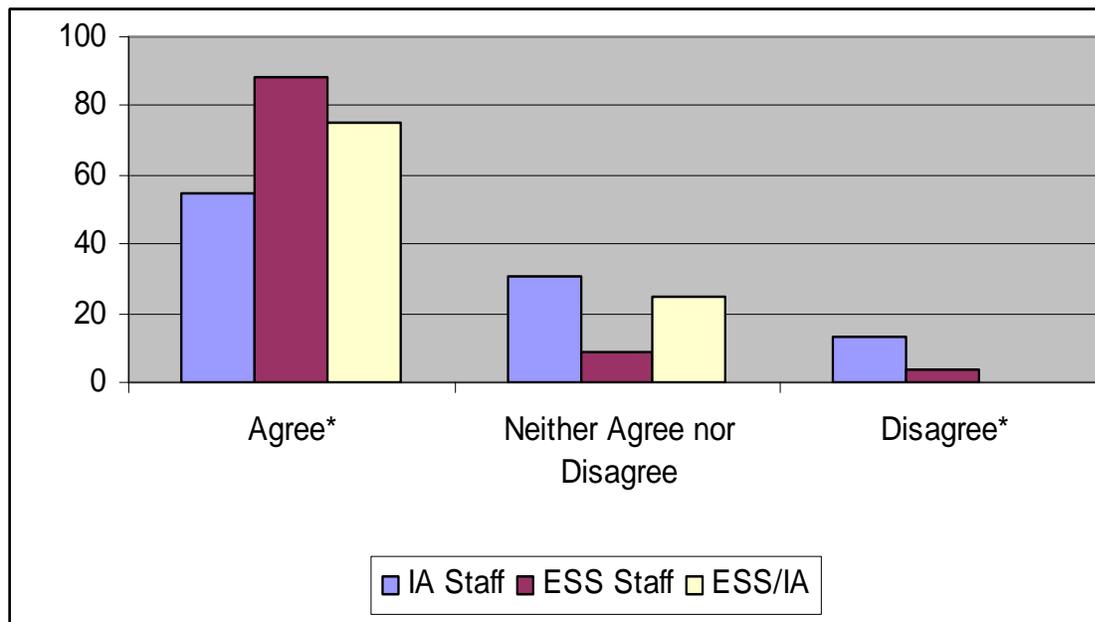

*Agree responses combine Strongly Agree and Agree; Disagree responses combine Strongly Disagree and Disagree responses

Table 5.4.2 provides the ESS participants' rated usefulness (percent useful or extremely useful) of the programs and services on various aspects of their life. According to these rating the largest benefits were increasing their self-esteem (63%),

> **ESS participants agreed that the services and supports received through the ESS program contributed to their quality of life beyond improving their employability.**

increasing their satisfaction with their work life (59%) and improving the quality of their life overall (58%). Many participants also indicated the programs were useful for improving their health (44%) and friendships (48%).

Table 5.4.2 ESS Participants Perceived Usefulness of the Programs and Services: Percent Rating Useful and Very Useful
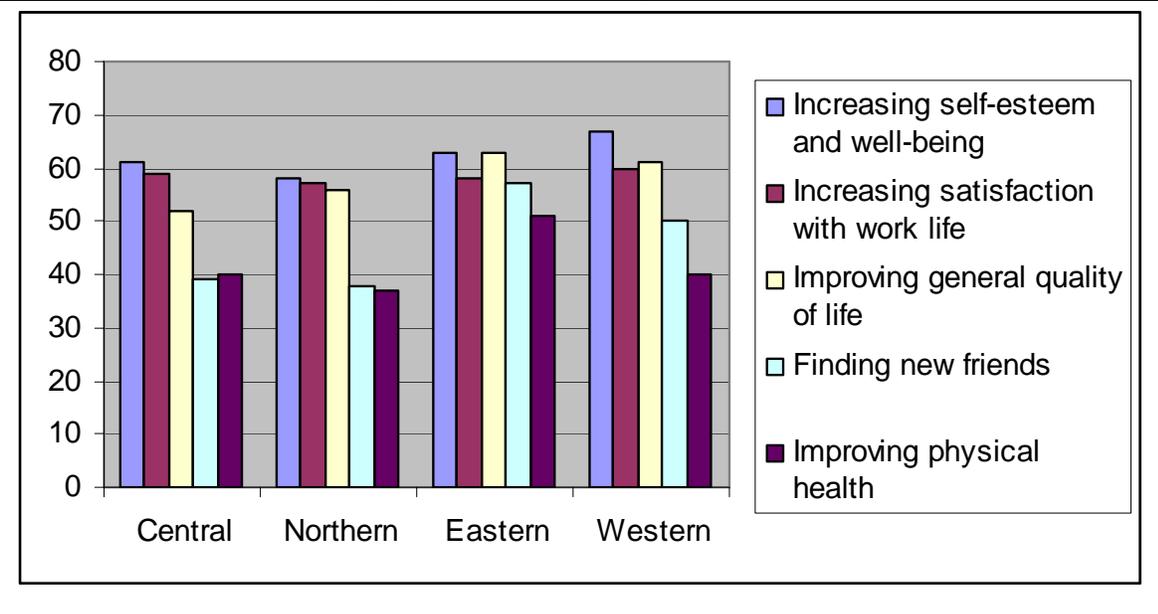
5.5   Program Results: Analysis Highlights

The evaluation research responding to the questions related to program results demonstrated the challenges to achieving results. The findings show ESS program contributions to:

- Improvement in education and skill levels;
- Improved employability and gaining employment; and
- The client's quality of life.

The key evaluation research findings for these areas are highlighted here to anticipate the directions of our conclusions.

5.5.1 Improved Employability and Skills

A common observation across all groups consulted through focus groups and interviews was that there have been successes in improving the employability of individual clients and in helping clients achieve self-sufficiency. ESS staff and community organizations based this on their experiences with clients; other stakeholders based this on their contact with client groups that use ESS services. The survey of client's confirmed the qualitative information. A majority of ESS participants indicated that their job finding or job abilities had improved. For example, 60 percent agreed their ability to get a job had improved and 64 percent agreed their ability to keep a job had improved.

Generally, ESS participants attributed their participation in the employment programs and services as being responsible for these gains. The participant survey respondents indicated their program participation was useful or very useful:

- in increasing their understanding what they need to do to find employment (65%);
- increasing their ability to find work in the future (65%); and
- gaining job skills (55%).

A more direct measure of the impact, besides the perceptions of staff and participants, was the substantial gain in educational attainment reported by respondents to the participant survey. Prior to the program, only 23 percent of the ESS participants had at least some post-secondary education or higher. At the time of the interview, however, 41 percent reported some post-secondary education or higher. Despite these reported gains in employability, there still appears to be a high demand for skills development through training or education programs – 81 percent agreed they were more interested in improving their skills through training opportunities. This finding implies that, despite the improvements in skills reported earlier and their perceptions their job readiness has improved, there is still a very large potential demand for additional training and education programs among the ESS participants.

5.5.2 Employment and IA Outcomes

The majority of ESS participants in the client survey had found employment since being on IA in 2004. A smaller percentage, however, were able to retain employment and leave IA. Based on the survey of participants, 56 percent had found employment in 2005. At the time the survey was conducted, 35 percent were still employed (or had found new employment), 22 percent employed full-time or self-employed. Also, at the time of the survey, 39 percent were not receiving IA. The participant survey results are consistent with the staff expectations for the program. The staff survey showed approximately two-thirds agreed that changes in employability were more likely to occur than a movement to sustained employability. Attribution of the results to specific programs or services was not clearly demonstrated based on the survey results. Examining the outcome measures by the type of employment programs and services received, work placement participants and individuals receiving other supports such as child care and transportation assistance tended to have better employment outcomes, but these results are based on a relatively small number of participants. However, since no comparison group was feasible for this analysis, the findings could represent selection bias or other pre-existing characteristics of the participants that resulted in slightly better employment outcomes.

5.5.3 Quality of Life

Based on the views of the ESS participants, they experienced impacts on their quality of life beyond improving their employability. The ESS participants rated the programs and services as useful in terms of increasing their self-esteem (63%), increasing their satisfaction with their work life (59%) and improving the quality of their life overall (58%). Participants even indicated the programs were useful for improving their health (44%) and friendships (48%).

6.0   Summary of Findings

This concluding section brings forward the major findings from sections 3, 4 and 5 of the report under three headings: Client Profile, Successes and Areas for Improvement.

While the findings point to opportunities to enhance the design, delivery and implementation of ESS, overall, the evaluation found that the policy underlying the ESS program of supports and services is consistent with current thinking on employability programming. Clients are achieving positive outcomes both in terms of employment opportunities, but also improvements in their employability and quality of life. In addition, clients are generally satisfied with the programs and services provided.

6.1   Client Profile

➢ One of the major undertakings of this evaluation was to develop a profile of ESS clients. Existing administrative data was used to provide key demographic characteristics. In addition, data from a sample of paper-copy employability assessments (NSEA) provided a closer look at the barriers and assets of ESS clients.[19] For reference, during fiscal year 2005/06, just under than 10,000 clients were served through the ESS program.

ESS Client Profile	
Characteristic	*Percentage*
Gender: Male	35%
Female	65%
Age: Under 21	5%
21 to 24	13%
25 to 34	33%
35 to 44	27%
45 to 54	16%
55 and above	7%

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[19]   In the interests of using the same client base to complete the telephone survey, analyze administrative data and capture detail from the paper-copy employability assessment form (NSEA), the client profile was developed to include all active clients during the period from June to November, 2004. Research shows that data from the most recent fiscal year (2005-06) is consistent with the profile presented here.

Family composition:	
Single, no children	43%
Single, with children	45%
Couple, no children	5%
Couple, with children	8%
Number of dependents:	
0	47%
1	28%
2-3	23%
3 or more	2%

➢ Currently, the NSEA form is available in hard-copy only. In order to provide the following detailed profile of client assets and barriers, approximately 900 NSEA forms were entered into a database. This analysis allows for a description of the barriers challenging participants in each of the seven main assessment areas on the NSEA form:

ESS Participants – Barrier Profile	
Barrier area	*Percent*
Academic or Marketable Skills/Cognitive Barriers	78%
Job Seeking Skills Barrier	63%
Life Situation Barriers	50%
Goal or Confidence Barriers	36%
Work Experience or Job Behaviour Patterns	31%
Physical or Mental Health Barriers	26%
Skills or Personal Qualities Barriers	26%

Number of areas with at least one barrier	
No areas	6%
1 area	15%
2-3 areas	38%
4 or more areas	42%

➢ Using the incidence of barriers from this table as a measure of need, ESS participants have the greatest need for ESS services related to *academic or marketable skills* (78%), *job-seeking skills* (63%) and supports for their *life situation* such as child care and transportation (50%).

➢ Very few ESS clients had no barriers (6%), and only 15% had only one area with barriers. The vast majority had barriers in two or more assessment areas (79%), and over 40% had barriers in 4 or more areas. A high incidence of multiple barriers within the ESS caseload suggests that, in the short-term, employability-related outcomes are more frequently obtained than sustained employment.

➢ The size and complexity of the ESS clientele require multiple and long-term interventions; clients served under ESS need support and services to respond to low levels of education, status as single parents and a relatively high incidence of persons with disabilities.

➢ The evaluation also provided a demographic profile of the ESIA client who is not required to participate in ESS. While some of the demographic detail is similar between the two groups, there are some notable differences:

- A greater proportion of ESS clients are women (65% versus 54%)
- Fewer ESS clients are 45 years old or older
- A greater proportion of ESS clients are single parents (45% versus 21%)
- A greater proportion of non-ESS clients are single without children (66% versus 43%)
- ESS clients have attained higher levels of education
- The non-ESS client group has a higher percentage reporting a disability

➢ The current ESS client profile, showing more complex cases with multiple barriers, requires a sustained level of services to produce gains in employability and sustainable employment.

6.2   Successes

Program Design
➢ The policy underlying the ESS program of supports and services is consistent with current thinking on employability programming. The range of programs and services is consistent with those offered in the other reviewed jurisdictions. The findings suggest that a performance-based, contracting out system cannot replace the current direct delivery approach.

Program Implementation

➢ Overall, clients indicated they were generally satisfied with the programs and services they received.

Outcomes

➢ The ESS program is responding to government's priority with respect to independence and self-sufficiency for clients:

- There has been success in improving the employability of individual clients and in helping clients achieve self-sufficiency. Participation in the employment programs and services was identified by a majority of ESS clients as being responsible for improvements in job finding skills and on-the-job abilities.
- ESS participants reported substantial gains in education levels and indicated the program was useful in improving their skills.
- Following their participation in ESS, a majority of clients gained employment experience and generated wage income, while continuing to receive income assistance.
- ESS participants agree that the services and supports received through the ESS program contributed to their quality of life beyond improving their employability.

6.3   Areas for Improvement

Program Design

➢ Tension exists within ESIA between two complementary programs intended to be fully integrated – income assistance and employment assistance. Absence of clarity on the specifics of the ESS program policies and service standards are a likely contributing factor. While staff stated they intuitively understood the philosophy underpinning ESS, they reported a need for clear elaboration of the rationale, objectives, and policies for ESS.

➢ In the absence of a completed employability assessment, defining who is or is not an ESS client is challenging. As a result, not all clients who could benefit from employability-related programming are being served, and some clients not streamed into ESS are nonetheless receiving services.

Program Implementation

➢ Based on results from the telephone survey, there is a large demand for ESS services that is not reflected in the administrative data. A large percentage of the individuals coded as non-participants either reported participating in employment related services or did not report any barriers to participating in these services.

➢ Clients indicated there are some gaps in employment programs and services. While 78 percent of clients identified barriers related to academics or specific marketable skills, only 36 percent reported participating in an education or training program.

➢ In addition, the timeliness of accessing ESS services and accompanying programs was reported by clients as an area for improvement.

➢ The evaluation identified challenges with the employability assessment process:
  • Concerns were identified with the length of time between a referral for an employability assessment and the time it takes to complete the assessment.
  • There is considerable difference between the standard to which staff are trained to use the NSEA tool and the standard to which it is implemented.
  • The inconsistent use of the NSEA tool by staff, and the fact that it is completed on hard-copy, contributes to the lack of information available and accessible to report program and client outcomes.
  • Findings suggest that the development of alternative levels of assessment be explored that better reflect client needs for services and job readiness. Comprehensive jurisdictional and literature reviews identified employability assessment tools that could serve as a model for Nova Scotia and may alleviate concerns expressed by staff who questioned the need to complete the NSEA process for all clients.

➢ With regard to partnerships and collaboration, the evaluation notes the importance of the partnerships currently in place and suggests a need for improved collaboration with other provincial and federal departments.

➢ It was noted that there is not a strong level of awareness around strategies for engaging employers.

Outcomes

➢ Following their participation in ESS, a majority of clients gained employment experience and generated wage income, while continuing to receive income assistance. A smaller percentage found and maintained employment that allowed them to be independent from income assistance.

Information Systems and Monitoring

➢ A key finding from this evaluation outlines the challenges associated with defining, capturing and accessing information that is necessary for on-going program monitoring, program reporting, and service delivery planning. While some data is currently being captured to enable performance measurement, the information is often incomplete, not available electronically or presented in a format that does not readily facilitate analysis.

➢ The case management and information systems that support the program and the development of partnerships with other government departments, community agencies and employers are recommended as areas for review.

➢ In order for the program to fully benefit from the development and implementation of new information technologies, ESS will need to articulate its information needs, and have these needs met, in reference to policy objectives and service delivery standards.

Appendix A: Evaluation Issues and Questions Derived from ESS Logic Model

Table A1   ESS Rationale and Relevance
1. Is the policy underlying ESS consistent with current thinking on employability programming and intended results – ESS relationship to "best practices"?   2. Are there alternative models that should be considered?   3. Does ESS complement, overlap or duplicate other federal and provincial employment programs?   4. Is it reasonable to expect the ESS program as implemented will achieve the desired results?

Table A2   ESS Program Implementation / Activities
A1. NSEA Assessment, Intake and Case Management   5. Are the "three questions" regarding employability being used appropriately to refer IA clients to ESS?   6. What is the ESS client population over time – number of clients, client profile?   7. What are client and staff views concerning the NSEA process?   8. Does the NSEA process lead to appropriate client action plans?   9. Does staff have in place appropriate resources/tools for case management?   **A2. Providing Supports and Services to ESS clients**   10. What supports and services are available to ESS clients?   11. Does the "basket" of supports and services available to clients vary by region?   **A3. Program Management and Capacity Building**   12. What is the current status of program information systems – client, financial, human resources?   13. What capacity building initiatives have been undertaken to facilitate staff development in employability and career counselling?   **A4. Collaboration and Knowledge Building**   14.   What initiatives are being taken to foster collaboration with employers?   15. What initiatives are being taken to foster collaboration with community groups?   16. What on-going research and analysis concerning the Nova Scotia labour market has been available to ESS program managers and staff?

Table A3   ESS Program Outputs

O1. Assessments and Plans:

17. What percentage of clients referred to ESS by IA caseworkers have a completed NSEA report?

18. What is the distribution of needs, assets and barriers identified in the NSEA process – i.e., client needs assessment profile?

19. Are there client-focused actions plans prepared for each ESS client? Are they current? Do they change as the ESS client changes – gains employability assets?

20. What is ESS staff views concerning the usefulness of the NSEA forms and process?

21. What are ESS client views concerning the usefulness of the NSEA forms and process?

O2:   Client-Focused Delivery of Services and Supports:

22. What is the profile of services and supports provided to ESS clients?
    a. Has this changed over time?
    b. Does the profile of services and supports vary by region?

O3:   Administrative Process Improvement

23. Are program policies and service standards in place?

24. Is IA and ESS staff aware of program policies and service standards?

25. How does the ESS management staff communicate policies and standards? Monitor their implementation or use by staff?

26. Are the relevant management information systems in place and useful?

27. What are ESS staff and management views concerning the "user friendly" status of these information systems?
    a. The utility of the information systems?
    b. The administrative impact of the information systems?

28. Has staff training taken place around employability and career counselling?

29. What is the staff assessment of this training in terms of professional development and usefulness?

30. What are the formal and informal linkages between ESS programming and other government departments and agencies?

O4:   Community Outreach

31. Have initiatives to foster employer awareness been undertaken?

32. How many job placements have been implemented? How many job subsidies have been implemented?

33. What labour market demand information – regionally and provincially – is available, current and used by ESS management and staff?

34. Are there examples of community action initiatives? How many? What directions have they taken?

Table A4 ESS Program Results (Immediate and Intermediate

R1: Quality Client-Focused Service Delivery

35. Are ESS clients satisfied with the employment services and supports provided to them?

36. Do the services and supports provided to them respond to the needs identified (assets and barriers) in the NSEA process?

37. Has client self-awareness around assets, barriers and employability changed? Improved?

R2: Improved Employment and Life Skills

38. As a result of ESS services and supports provided, have client barriers to employment decreased? Have assets been developed in clients?

39. Is there evidence of improved employability in ESS clients in terms of education, skills and work experience resources?

40. Is there evidence of improved life skills in ESS clients?

41. Is there evidence of increased social participation on the part of ESS clients?

R3/4: Increased Program Knowledge and Strengthened Infrastructure

42. Is there improved two-way collaboration between ESS and potential employers of ESS clients?

43. Is there improved two-way collaboration/stronger links between ESS and external service delivery agents?

44. Has inter-departmental cooperation and program planning improved?

45. How effective or important of these linkages – as perceived by ESS management and staff and by the other departments?

46. Has the Department/ESS improved/increased its understanding of ESS program delivery – client profile and service delivery profile?

47. Has ESS improved its capacity for accountability – i.e., its ability to report on program outputs and results?

Table A5 ESS Program Results (Further down the results sequence)

Ultimate R1

A: Change in Employment Status and Increased Earnings Share of Income

48. What changes in employment status have occurred in ESS clients within the timeframe under study?

49. What combination of client characteristics and services combine to increase employability, to facilitate movement towards employment?

50. Are the changes in employment status permanent or temporary?

51. Have ESS clients experienced an increase in the earnings share of their income . . . as a result of receiving ESS services and supports?

B: Increased self-sufficiency / Improved quality of life

52. Have ESS clients shown an increased self-sufficiency as a result of ESS services and supports?

53. Has the receiving of ESS services and supports improved the quality of life for ESS clients?

Ultimate R2: Exit from Income Assistance to Work in the Labour Market

54. How ESS clients exit from Income Assistance for work in the labour market? Annually?

55. What are the key factors in a model that would predict this exit result?

56. Is there a significant "return rate" – i.e., is the exit sustainable?

Appendix B: Comparisons with Other Jurisdictions

The GGI team has prepared a review of the professional research in the areas of welfare reform, active employment measures, skills development and training, and hard-to-employ social assistance recipients. The literature covers primarily the client groups that are traditionally marginalized from the labour market.[20] There are some limitations to this literature review. Much of the research relates to programs in the United States. The US sources are extensive and present the results of pilot and demonstration projects in individual states, as well as large-scale evaluations of programs implemented in many states.[21] Studies in Canadian jurisdictions are relatively new and the long-term impact of employment initiatives and intervention models are not yet measured.

Recent legislative reforms in Canada and internationally emphasize that social assistance is a temporary support of last resort for employable people who are unable to support themselves.[22] The rules governing employability determination vary between OECD countries and between jurisdictions within Canada. Generally, the changes have two primary purposes. First, to ensure greater opportunities for social assistance recipients to develop the skills to achieve self-sufficiency, and second, to ensure that financial assistance is provided to those "truly in need".[23] A strong focus is placed on individual responsibility and the mandatory requirements for recipients to engage in work-related activities that support entry or re-entry into the labour force and decrease or eliminate reliance on income assistance benefits. These activities generally involve job readiness training, job search activities, training or educational upgrading or work experience.

We have information from several Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick) and programs in these provinces are discussed in our draft literature document. British Columbia and Ontario, most recently, have used private sector resources in their programming. Ontario has recently piloted a project in several municipalities

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[20] Goss Gilroy Inc. *Evaluation of Employment Support Services: Literature Review Draft Report*, n.d.
[21] MDRC. *Beyond Welfare and Work First: Building Services and Systems to Support California's Working Poor and Hard-to-Place* (conference highlights), 2001.
[22] Human Resources Development Canada. *Lessons Learned: Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market*, 1999, p, 27. Also see United Kingdom. *A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work*. London: Departmentof Work and Pensions, 2006.
[23] Human Resources Development-NB. *From Options to Action: A New Social Assistance Policy Blueprint*, 1994, p, 1.

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using the private sector company, WCG International, and under the banner of JobsNow. British Columbia has similar experience and the advantage of an evaluation of the performance of their contracted delivery agencies. We will focus on British Columbia and Alberta and do so to highlight several themes. These themes are:

- Partnerships for program delivery;
- Recognizing the employability continuum;
- The client profile and targeting program delivery;
- "Branding" and organizational culture;
- Client contact before and after; and
- Capturing program information.

Partnerships for Program Delivery

The question is not whether or not to partner with others, but with whom are you going to partner for effective delivery of employment services. There are three directions of partnership – the public sector, the volunteer or non-profit sector and the private sector. The current Nova Scotia Employment Support Services program has partnerships in each sector, but the link to the private sector is primarily in the purchase of training programs, not for broader case planning and management. We could think of a continuum of partnering suggested in the following figure with Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia located on it (as a first draft impression):

Table B1		
A Partnership Continuum in the Delivery of Employment Support Services		
Completely in-house public sector client intake, client assessment, case management and provision of services	In-house client intake, possibly shared client assessment, shared case management and shared provision of services with non-profit and for-profit partners	In-house determination of client eligibility for income assistance, but contracted out client assessment, acceptance for employment related services, case management and provision of services, including follow-up.
NS . . . . ALTA . . . . .BC		

Although the WCG International group (JobWaveBC and Triumph Vocational) is working in British Columbia and, as of April 2005, in Ontario, it is important to recognize the range of

partners the British Columbia ministry uses to provide services. The list in Table 3.2 includes for-profit companies, community, sector-specific and voluntary associations.

The presence of Alberta in our considerations is useful too because of the explicit way in which Alberta Ministries are challenged to link with "cross-ministry initiatives" and brings the reminder of the importance of within government partnerships. Alberta's Department of Human Resources and Employment Business Plan cites links to:

- Leading in Learning and Skilled Workforce Initiative (Co-champion);
- Economic Development and Innovation Initiative;
- Health Innovation and Wellness Initiative;
- Aboriginal Policy Initiative; and
- Alberta Children and Youth Initiative.

Table B2
British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance Partnership Agencies

MEIA PARTNERSHIP AGENCIES	Planning and Employment Services
Job Placement Program (JPP)	
ASPECT	Assistive Technology - BC
www.aspect.bc.ca A	www.at-bc.ca/
Destinations	BC Centre for Ability Association
www.Destinations.ca	www.centreforability.bc.ca
JobWaveBC	British Columbia Paraplegic Association
www.Jobwavebc.com	www.canparaplegic.org/bc
KOPAR Administration Ltd.	BC Society of Training for Health and Employment
www.koparadmin.com/	Opportunities (THEO)
	www.theobc.org/
Pre-Employment Services (PES)	Canadian National Institute for the Blind
ConnecTra	www.cnib.ca/divisions/bc_yukon
www.connectra.org/	Employment Action
Dawson Creek Catholic Social Services	www.employment-action.bc.ca
www.jobsearchonline.bc.ca/	Gastown Vocational Services
Kootenay Employment Services	www.vch.ca/community/mental_health_rehab.htm
www.kes.bc.ca/	The Neil Squire Foundation
Orion Health Services	www.neilsquire.ca
www.orionhealth.ca/	WCG International Consultants Ltd.
Sustainable Employment Network Inc. (SENI)	www.triumphvocational.com
www.senibc.com/	Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Steele O'Neil and Associates, Inc.	www.widhh.com
www.steeleoneil.com	
THEO BC - BC Society of Training for Health and	
Employment Opportunities	
www.theobc.org/	
Vancouver Island Vocational Rehabilitation Services	
www.vivrs.ca/	

WCG International Consultants Ltd. www.triumphvocational.com	
NOTE: The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance is not responsible for contents found outside this site. Inclusion is not an endorsement of any agency or individual.	

The Employability to Employment Continuum

Each province makes some distinction in the client caseload with respect to a client's "employability." The Nova Scotia Income Assistance application process screens applicants with the three questions concerning possible barriers to employment. Clients are required to participate in an employability assessment (NSEA)[24] and, if deemed employable by that screening process, are required to develop and follow an action plan leading to employment. For lack of a better classification category, they are designated "ep2" – required to work.

Alberta WORKS provide potential clients with the following definitions of their two broad categories – Expected to Work, Not Expected to Work and Learners. Learners are clients needing academic upgrading or training so they can get a job. Table 3.3 distinguishes the first two categories and carries with it an implied employability continuum. The final client group under the Expected to Work definition has barriers to employment that are considered temporary.

Table B3
Alberta distinctions around expectations to work for Income Support clients

Expected to Work	Not Expected to Work
You are working part-time or your income is less than the financial benefits provided under Income Support. You are expected to keep working. If you work part-time, you are expected to find full-time work. You are able to work but do not have a job. You must show that you are making an effort to find work. You are temporarily not available for work for a short-time, perhaps because you are ill, you have a child under six months of age, you recently left an abusive relationship, or another reason approved by your worker. You are expected to plan for your future and begin looking for work when your situation changes or your health improves.	You are an adult with a permanent disability that severely impairs your ability to earn a livelihood, as defined by the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program and you require benefits that are not provided under the AISH program. You will receive a "handicap benefit." Your worker has determined that you have multiple barriers or suffer from a chronic medical condition that inhibits your ability to seek and accept employment, but these disabilities are not a permanent disability as defined by the AISH program [Not expected to work clients may receive a personal needs supplement and slightly higher Income Support core benefits.]

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[24] ESIA-134 / July 2005 (Understanding of Participation in Employability Activity)

The British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance offers the graph of the "employment continuum" shown below in its RFQ for Service Provider Pre-Qualification.[25] The point of this theme is to emphasize that movement towards employment is a process. The process is reflected in the ESS logic model presented above in Table 2.2 and is recognized in the program descriptions and organizational culture of the ministries of British Columbia and Alberta. Clients do not just "leave the caseload" for employment. They, with their service provider(s), commit themselves to a developmental process that can remove barriers to employment and add assets for employment.

Table B4
The "Employment" Continuum
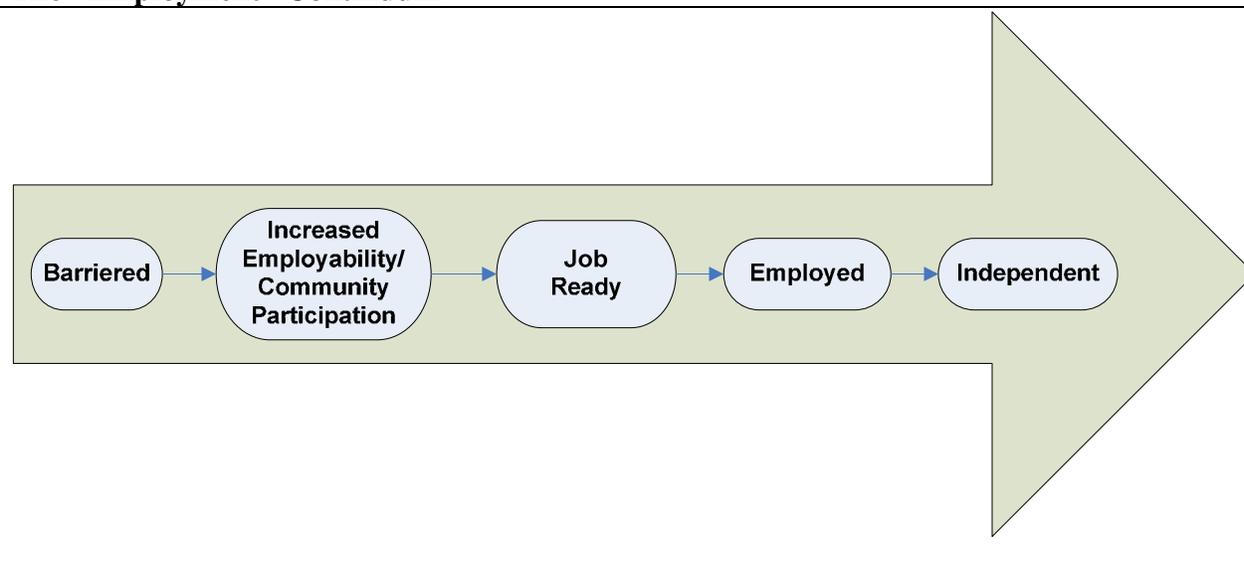
The Client Profile and Targeting Program Delivery

About two-thirds of all ESS clients are women. Somewhat over one-half of the women are single parent mothers. How does the ESS program – its design, available service and delivery – reflect this significant client demographic? The recent policy paper published by U.K. Department for Work and Pensions gives special focus to helping ill or disabled people, lone parents and older workers and at its "New Deal" website added unemployed and young "musicians" as a category of possible clients needing assistance. Who are the largest clients groups? How can program delivery and services be tailored to respond to their needs and best link them to the labour market? The target groups for Nova Scotia's ESS can be informed by

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[25] British Columbia. *RFQ SATP-156, BCEP Service Provider Pre-Qualification*, 2005, p. 13.

our subsequent analysis of the administrative data base. To start the discussion, we would suggest: women, single mothers, youth, the disabled and older workers.

It is also important to know the demographic and employability profile of clients to effectively engage in partnering relationships for the delivery of services. The Job Placement Program introduced in British Columbia in 2000 used "performance-based" contractors to deliver employment support services to clients. It was intended in its first year to target clients who were new to or had very little attachment to previous services.

It's a question of the glass being half full or half empty. The Ministry correctly estimated that contractors would accept one-third of the people referred to them. In the first year 14,526 clients were referred to contractors; 33 percent were accepted, 25 percent were considered acceptably trained and 20% were placed in employment that satisfied the contract. On the one hand, two-thirds of the referred clients were not accepted. On the other hand, 75 percent of the accepted clients were successfully trained.[26] The issue here is one common to performance-based contractual relationships in this social program area – creaming. The BC Ministry acknowledged this issue in its recent Request for Qualifications call where it noted in a list of "opportunities for improvement" that it is:

- Unclear if all Clients benefit – program design/payment structure encourages service providers to focus on Clients least in need of assistance (others may receive no, or limited help), [and it]
- Appears that referrals are driven by contractual targets, not Client need. As a result, Clients may undergo duplicate assessments with multiple service providers before being able to access suitable services.[27]

Corporate Branding and Organizational Culture

Is corporate branding just the latest way for public relations firms to strengthen their cash flow? When looking at other jurisdictions, it is clear that considerable importance is attached to a name. How many different ways can you say "job" or "work" to get your point across? Whether it's JobWave, JobsNow, the UK Jobcentre Plus or Alberta Works, leaders in both the

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[26] Adams, Peter and Cathy Tait. *Evaluation of the Job Placement Program and the Training for Jobs Program*. Victoria: Victoria Consulting Network, 2004.
[27] British Columbia. *RFQ SATP-156, Appendix H: Employment Programming Improvement Opportunities*, 2005.

private and public sectors are trying to make a statement regarding their corporate direction and the values they are promoting.

Alberta Works is in the public sector. It is the public umbrella under which the Alberta Department of Human Resources and Employment delivers employment and training services, income support, child support services and health benefits for "expected to work" and "not expected to work" clients. Behind the appealing brochure and website is a "CAIS USER Manual" that captures client progress from entry to exit with categories, distinctions and requirements that would be familiar to the Nova Scotia ESS caseworker.[28] While the requirements for accountability and compliance remain, the corporate face of Alberta Works represents a cultural shift for Alberta

> **About** Alberta Works
>
> Alberta Works **focuses on training people for employment. The goal of** Alberta Works **is to help unemployed people find and keep jobs, help low-income** ...
>
> **www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/albertaworks/**

Human Resources and Employment. Organizational values do not change over night, but a senior manager on Alberta Works claimed that, with the change in name, came a change in principles – "we believe clients are honest." And, their clients living in the Alberta economy and labour market will be those most challenged to find employment.

There are mixed themes in the organizational culture of the NS Department. Some staff prefer the values implied by programs delivered as "social assistance" and think the move to "Employment Support and Income Assistance" represents a change in values. What's in a name?

Client Contact Before and After

We have noted in our analysis of the ESS client information base and client focus groups the variability with which ESS clients maintain contact with a caseworker around the development, maintenance or implementation of a NSEA-derived action plan or whether or not they remember developing an action plan. An American review of 13 job retention and advancement programs found the greatest impact in programs that offered earnings supplements and a mix of job search and education supports. Tied to these findings, however, was an emphasis on "solid follow-up and post-employment services and case management."[29]

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[28] www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/cais/caisindv.pdf
[29] Michalopoulos, Charles. *Synthesis of Research: Promising Retention and Advancement Strategies*. MDRC: Beyond Welfare and Work First conference, 2001.

Alberta Works case management requirements require a client to meet every six months with his or her career employment counsellor. They also use a Client Reporting Card (CRC) that needs to be filled out, signed and returned every month. The CRC provides the financial benefits worker with the information necessary to process Income Support benefits for the following month. If the card is not returned, the client will not receive Income Support benefits. The British Columbia Employment Program recognizes the need for extended services and will contract for pre-employment, placement, post-placement and work experience services. The post-placement services can include:

- coaching and support;
- mediating in work conflicts between program clients and their employers;
- contacting and monitoring the client on a regular basis to assist the client in resolving any issues that may impact on his or her ability to maintain employment;
- providing post-placement coaching and other supports; and
- assisting clients who become unemployed to find another job.

Each of these services implies an on-going relationship between the service provider and the client. They bring attention to the question of "exit." When and under what circumstances does an ESS client exit? Which circumstances best support a sustainable exit?

Capturing Program Information

The current ESS (and ESIA) information systems are challenged to provide a detailed client profile in terms of services provided or even services purchased. Nova Scotia is not alone with this problem. The extent of information regarding the characteristics of the Alberta client caseload, services provided and client satisfaction suggests Alberta as a model. The performance reporting has its roots in a "performance measurement" initiative started by Alberta Treasury in 1996 and sustained as a focus of accountability since.[30] Nova Scotia Counts started in the same vein, but has not been sustained at the government-wide level. The current migration towards a new integrated case management system within the Department is coping with all the dynamics of organizational change. The bottom line, however, is that you need information to be a reflective practitioner and for accountability.

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[30] Alberta. *Measuring Performance: A Reference Guide*. Edmonton: Alberta Treasury, 1996.

It is interesting to note the impact that partnerships can have on capturing client information as well. The responsibility and, possibly capability of capturing, retaining and forwarding client information can change as that partner moves to receive services from a community, non-profit agency or a private service provider. The challenge of capturing program and client information from partners was noted in BC's recent RFQ document:

. . . the Ministry does not receive data from service providers required to:

- Assist individual Clients who are not successful in the program;
- Improve the design of referral processes and employment programs; and
- Assess the cost-effectiveness of program areas.[31]

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[31] British Columbia. *RFQ SATP-156, Appendix H: Employment Programming Improvement Opportunities*, 2005.

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Appendix D: Financial Data Fields

Table D1 Financial Data Payment Fields Organized by Percent of Clients with This Payment (64,380 clients)

Payment Field	Number of Payments	% of Clients with this payment	Total Payments	% of total payment
Basic: Basic Requirements (1)	45,038.00	69.96%	$191,168,849.62	54.12%
Special Needs.Transportation. Medical Transportation (46)	10,265.00	15.94%	$ 3,213,634.35	0.91%
Special Needs.Transportation.Travel & Transportation (2)	9,420.00	14.63%	$ 3,784,707.59	1.07%
Work Incentives. Employability Part.Ep - Transportation (86)	8,952.00	13.90%	$ 3,388,849.85	0.96%
Special Needs.School Supplies.School Supply Supplement (82)	7,015.00	10.90%	$ 749,145.72	0.21%
Special Needs.Medical.Optical (8)	5,487.00	8.52%	$ 692,465.40	0.20%
Special Needs.Medical.Special Diet (51)	5,421.00	8.42%	$ 2,928,003.41	0.83%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Telephone (59)	4,679.00	7.27%	$ 1,262,973.28	0.36%
Special Needs.Medical.Drugs (4)	3,946.00	6.13%	$ 676,140.34	0.19%
Work Incentives.Employability Part.Ep - Other (88)	3,886.00	6.04%	$ 1,058,283.99	0.30%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Furnishings (15)	3,698.00	5.74%	$ 1,124,562.99	0.32%
Special Needs.Other.Items Not Specified (25)	3,130.00	4.86%	$ 2,432,630.03	0.69%
Special Needs.Other.Special Clothing (40)	2,961.00	4.60%	$ 622,330.31	0.18%
Work Incentives.Employability Part.Ep - Child Care (87)	2,843.00	4.42%	$ 3,434,546.75	0.97%
Special Needs.Other.Comforts Allowance (7)	2,676.00	4.16%	$ 2,697,715.32	0.76%
Special Needs.Medical.Drugs (Non-Prescription) (60)	2,566.00	3.99%	$ 699,034.59	0.20%
Special Needs.Medical.Medical Care (3)	2,547.00	3.96%	$ 1,124,167.75	0.32%
Basic.Basic.Child Benefit Adjustment (85)	2,420.00	3.76%	$ 851,126.32	0.24%
Special Needs.Medical.Eye Examination (58)	2,318.00	3.60%	$ 105,161.02	0.03%
Special Needs.Medical.Maternal Allowance (61)	1,892.00	2.94%	$ 315,978.08	0.09%
Special Needs.Medical.Dental (5)	1,862.00	2.89%	$ 615,757.97	0.17%
Employment/Education.Other.Education Costs (12)	1,833.00	2.85%	$ 427,045.83	0.12%

Special Needs.Support Services.Child Care (39)	1,777.00	2.76%	$ 1,640,406.71	0.46%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Utility Arrears (53)	1,456.00	2.26%	$ 763,462.18	0.22%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Security Deposit (42)	1,452.00	2.26%	$ 367,288.65	0.10%
Special Needs.Transportation.Moving Expenses (45)	1,265.00	1.96%	$ 232,791.92	0.07%
Employment/Education.Other.Workshop (Sheltered) (54)	1,196.00	1.86%	$ 3,472,396.57	0.98%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Emergency Nov 2004 (22)	952.00	1.48%	$ 50,894.58	0.01%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Emergency Fuel (43)	940.00	1.46%	$ 292,189.40	0.08%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Maintenance Arrears (71)	838.00	1.30%	$ 442,193.44	0.13%
Basic.Basic.Aom Refund (17)	811.00	1.26%	$ 1,367,101.63	0.39%
Homes.Homes.Community Based Options (26)	806.00	1.25%	$ 5,391,577.58	1.53%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Property Insurance (44)	709.00	1.10%	$ 241,238.72	0.07%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Homeless Shelter (55)	655.00	1.02%	$ 1,699,326.58	0.48%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Housing Repairs < $500 (13)	573.00	0.89%	$ 222,938.59	0.06%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Rental Arrears (49)	571.00	0.89%	$ 417,916.84	0.12%
Special Needs.Other.Funerals (9)	498.00	0.77%	$ 1,405,196.30	0.40%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Housing Repairs $500 + (14)	484.00	0.75%	$ 250,698.87	0.07%
Special Needs.Medical.Medical Board & Lodging (47)	451.00	0.70%	$ 112,738.33	0.03%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Underpayment (79)	369.00	0.57%	$ 69,029.79	0.02%
Special Needs.Support Services.Von (11)	263.00	0.41%	$ 91,928.54	0.03%
Employment/Education.Employment.Employment (29)	255.00	0.40%	$ 36,692.45	0.01%
Employment/Education.Return To Work.Rtw - Transitional (31)	251.00	0.39%	$ 609,734.69	0.17%
Homes.Homes.In Home Support (19)	216.00	0.34%	$ 1,353,065.39	0.38%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Portperty Tax Arrears (52)	190.00	0.30%	$ 123,621.04	0.03%
Special Needs.Transportation.Relocation / Repatriation (48)	183.00	0.28%	$ 92,031.46	0.03%
Special Needs.Support Services.Attendant Care (41)	166.00	0.26%	$ 482,259.49	0.14%
Homes.Homes.Group Home / Dev Residence (36)	142.00	0.22%	$ 97,028.94	0.03%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Postitive Adjustment (80)	131.00	0.20%	$ 22,316.12	0.01%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Tran. Shelter Benefit (50)	129.00	0.20%	$ 424,397.37	0.12%
Special Needs.Other.Medical Equipment (18)	108.00	0.17%	$ 76,905.32	0.02%
Homes.Homes.Residential Care Facitlities (35)	106.00	0.16%	$ (33,756.19)	-0.01%
Employment/Education.Return To Work.Summer Youth Initiative (66)	105.00	0.16%	$ 170,310.70	0.05%

Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Transition House (56)	94.00	0.15%	$ 302,952.43	0.09%
Special Needs.Support Services.Homemakers (10)	77.00	0.12%	$ 132,698.76	0.04%
Homes.Homes.Community Residence Board (6)	75.00	0.12%	$ 464,397.07	0.13%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Excess Shelter (62)	72.00	0.11%	$ 50,762.14	0.01%
Special Needs.Medical.Allergy Supplies (38)	65.00	0.10%	$ 25,654.76	0.01%
Homes.Homes.Adult Residential Centre (37)	53.00	0.08%	$ 19,664.84	0.01%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Residential Recovery Prog (57)	49.00	0.08%	$ 108,910.98	0.03%
Employment/Education.Return To Work.Rtw - Opportunities (33)	36.00	0.06%	$ 7,692.66	0.00%
Special Needs.Other.Items Over $5000 (16)	33.00	0.05%	$ 59,243.73	0.02%
Employment/Education.Return To Work.Rtw - Work Experience (32)	26.00	0.04%	$ 14,998.13	0.00%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Extermination Services (65)	18.00	0.03%	$ 9,002.23	0.00%
Employment/Education.Employment.Work Exp. (Not Rtw) (34)	18.00	0.03%	$ 2,532.48	0.00%
Homes.Homes.Administration Fee (Cbo) (63)	16.00	0.02%	$ 16,584.95	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Retro-Active Monthly Entitlement (73)	13.00	0.02%	$ (957.93)	0.00%
Homes.Homes.Homes (Nursing) (27)	11.00	0.02%	$ 5,340.65	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Mortgage Arrears (68)	8.00	0.01%	$ 8,587.45	0.00%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Juan - Emergency Food (20)	8.00	0.01%	$ 1,882.98	0.00%
Homes.Homes.Homes (Aged) (28)	8.00	0.01%	$ 497.00	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Negative Adjustment (81)	7.00	0.01%	$ 400.78	0.00%
Basic.Basic.Increase In Fb Rates (30)	5.00	0.01%	$ 905.93	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Shelter Arrears (74)	2.00	0.00%	$ 68.17	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Monthly Entitlement (72)	2.00	0.00%	$ (1,514.89)	0.00%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Youth Facility (64)	1.00	0.00%	$ 1,617.06	0.00%
Basic.Basic.Grand Parenting Adj (Gpa) (67)	1.00	0.00%	$ 528.00	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Home Improvement Loan Arrears (77)	1.00	0.00%	$ 38.56	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Vta Allowance Arrears (75)	1.00	0.00%	$ 25.00	0.00%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Juan - Emergency Repairs (21)	1.00	0.00%	$ 19.30	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Appeal Decision (69)	-	0.00%	$ -	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.# In Budget (78)	-	0.00%	$ -	0.00%

Table D2: Financial Data Payment Fields Organized by Size of Total Payment (64,380 clients)

Payment Field	Number of Payments	% of Clients with this payment	Total Payments	% of total payment
Basic. Basic Requirements (1)	45,038.00	69.96%	$191,168,849.62	54.12%
Homes.Homes.Community Based Options (26)	806.00	1.25%	$ 5,391,577.58	1.53%
Special Needs.Transportation.Travel & Transportation (2)	9,420.00	14.63%	$ 3,784,707.59	1.07%
Employment/Education.Other.Workshop (Sheltered) (54)	1,196.00	1.86%	$ 3,472,396.57	0.98%
Work Incentives.Employability Part.Ep - Child Care (87)	2,843.00	4.42%	$ 3,434,546.75	0.97%
Work Incentives.Employability Part.Ep - Transportation (86)	8,952.00	13.90%	$ 3,388,849.85	0.96%
Special Needs.Transportation.Medical Transportation (46)	10,265.00	15.94%	$ 3,213,634.35	0.91%
Special Needs.Medical.Special Diet (51)	5,421.00	8.42%	$ 2,928,003.41	0.83%
Special Needs.Other.Comforts Allowance (7)	2,676.00	4.16%	$ 2,697,715.32	0.76%
Special Needs.Other.Items Not Specified (25)	3,130.00	4.86%	$ 2,432,630.03	0.69%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Homeless Shelter (55)	655.00	1.02%	$ 1,699,326.58	0.48%
Special Needs.Support Services.Child Care (39)	1,777.00	2.76%	$ 1,640,406.71	0.46%
Special Needs.Other.Funerals (9)	498.00	0.77%	$ 1,405,196.30	0.40%
Basic.Basic.Aom Refund (17)	811.00	1.26%	$ 1,367,101.63	0.39%
Homes.Homes.In Home Support (19)	216.00	0.34%	$ 1,353,065.39	0.38%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Telephone (59)	4,679.00	7.27%	$ 1,262,973.28	0.36%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Furnishings (15)	3,698.00	5.74%	$ 1,124,562.99	0.32%
Special Needs.Medical.Medical Care (3)	2,547.00	3.96%	$ 1,124,167.75	0.32%
Work Incentives.Employability Part.Ep - Other (88)	3,886.00	6.04%	$ 1,058,283.99	0.30%
Basic.Basic.Child Benefit Adjustment (85)	2,420.00	3.76%	$ 851,126.32	0.24%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Utility Arrears (53)	1,456.00	2.26%	$ 763,462.18	0.22%
Special Needs.School Supplies.School Supply Supplement (82)	7,015.00	10.90%	$ 749,145.72	0.21%
Special Needs.Medical.Drugs (Non-Prescription) (60)	2,566.00	3.99%	$ 699,034.59	0.20%
Special Needs.Medical.Optical (8)	5,487.00	8.52%	$ 692,465.40	0.20%

Special Needs.Medical.Drugs (4)	3,946.00	6.13%	$ 676,140.34	0.19%
Special Needs.Other.Special Clothing (40)	2,961.00	4.60%	$ 622,330.31	0.18%
Special Needs.Medical.Dental (5)	1,862.00	2.89%	$ 615,757.97	0.17%
Employment/Education.Return To Work.Rtw - Transitional (31)	251.00	0.39%	$ 609,734.69	0.17%
Special Needs.Support Services.Attendant Care (41)	166.00	0.26%	$ 482,259.49	0.14%
Homes.Homes.Community Residence Board (6)	75.00	0.12%	$ 464,397.07	0.13%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Maintenance Arrears (71)	838.00	1.30%	$ 442,193.44	0.13%
Employment/Education.Other.Education Costs (12)	1,833.00	2.85%	$ 427,045.83	0.12%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Tran. Shelter Benefit (50)	129.00	0.20%	$ 424,397.37	0.12%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Rental Arrears (49)	571.00	0.89%	$ 417,916.84	0.12%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Security Deposit (42)	1,452.00	2.26%	$ 367,288.65	0.10%
Special Needs.Medical.Maternal Allowance (61)	1,892.00	2.94%	$ 315,978.08	0.09%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Transition House (56)	94.00	0.15%	$ 302,952.43	0.09%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Emergency Fuel (43)	940.00	1.46%	$ 292,189.40	0.08%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Housing Repairs $500 + (14)	484.00	0.75%	$ 250,698.87	0.07%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Property Insurance (44)	709.00	1.10%	$ 241,238.72	0.07%
Special Needs.Transportation.Moving Expenses (45)	1,265.00	1.96%	$ 232,791.92	0.07%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Housing Repairs < $500 (13)	573.00	0.89%	$ 222,938.59	0.06%
Employment/Education.Return To Work.Summer Youth Initiative (66)	105.00	0.16%	$ 170,310.70	0.05%
Special Needs.Support Services.Homemakers (10)	77.00	0.12%	$ 132,698.76	0.04%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Portperty Tax Arrears (52)	190.00	0.30%	$ 123,621.04	0.03%
Special Needs.Medical.Medical Board & Lodging (47)	451.00	0.70%	$ 112,738.33	0.03%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Residential Recovery Prog (57)	49.00	0.08%	$ 108,910.98	0.03%
Special Needs.Medical.Eye Examination (58)	2,318.00	3.60%	$ 105,161.02	0.03%
Homes.Homes.Group Home / Dev Residence (36)	142.00	0.22%	$ 97,028.94	0.03%
Special Needs.Transportation.Relocation / Repatriation (48)	183.00	0.28%	$ 92,031.46	0.03%
Special Needs.Support Services.Von (11)	263.00	0.41%	$ 91,928.54	0.03%
Special Needs.Other.Medical Equipment (18)	108.00	0.17%	$ 76,905.32	0.02%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Underpayment (79)	369.00	0.57%	$ 69,029.79	0.02%
Special Needs.Other.Items Over $5000 (16)	33.00	0.05%	$ 59,243.73	0.02%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Emergency Nov 2004 (22)	952.00	1.48%	$ 50,894.58	0.01%

Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Excess Shelter (62)	72.00	0.11%	$ 50,762.14	0.01%
Employment/Education.Employment.Employment (29)	255.00	0.40%	$ 36,692.45	0.01%
Special Needs.Medical.Allergy Supplies (38)	65.00	0.10%	$ 25,654.76	0.01%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Postitive Adjustment (80)	131.00	0.20%	$ 22,316.12	0.01%
Homes.Homes.Adult Residential Centre (37)	53.00	0.08%	$ 19,664.84	0.01%
Homes.Homes.Administration Fee (Cbo) (63)	16.00	0.02%	$ 16,584.95	0.00%
Employment/Education.Return To Work.Rtw - Work Experience (32)	26.00	0.04%	$ 14,998.13	0.00%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Extermination Services (65)	18.00	0.03%	$ 9,002.23	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Mortgage Arrears (68)	8.00	0.01%	$ 8,587.45	0.00%
Employment/Education.Return To Work.Rtw - Opportunities (33)	36.00	0.06%	$ 7,692.66	0.00%
Homes.Homes.Homes (Nursing) (27)	11.00	0.02%	$ 5,340.65	0.00%
Employment/Education.Employment.Work Exp. (Not Rtw) (34)	18.00	0.03%	$ 2,532.48	0.00%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Juan - Emergency Food (20)	8.00	0.01%	$ 1,882.98	0.00%
Special Needs.Alternative Shelter.Youth Facility (64)	1.00	0.00%	$ 1,617.06	0.00%
Basic.Basic.Increase In Fb Rates (30)	5.00	0.01%	$ 905.93	0.00%
Basic.Basic.Grand Parenting Adj (Gpa) (67)	1.00	0.00%	$ 528.00	0.00%
Homes.Homes.Homes (Aged) (28)	8.00	0.01%	$ 497.00	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Negative Adjustment (81)	7.00	0.01%	$ 400.78	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Shelter Arrears (74)	2.00	0.00%	$ 68.17	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Home Improvement Loan Arrears (77)	1.00	0.00%	$ 38.56	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Vta Allowance Arrears (75)	1.00	0.00%	$ 25.00	0.00%
Special Needs.Shelter/Utility.Juan - Emergency Repairs (21)	1.00	0.00%	$ 19.30	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Appeal Decision (69)	-	0.00%	$ -	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.# In Budget (78)	-	0.00%	$ -	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Retro-Active Monthly Entitlement (73)	13.00	0.02%	$ (957.93)	0.00%
Basic.Adj/Arrears.Monthly Entitlement (72)	2.00	0.00%	$ (1,514.89)	0.00%
Homes.Homes.Residential Care Facitlities (35)	106.00	0.16%	$ (33,756.19)	-0.01%