PRE-EMPLOYMENT:

A REVIEW OF MODELS & DIRECTIONS

Report prepared for:

Department of Human Resources & Employment
Government of Newfoundland & Labrador
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A social development, policy, research, planning, and service organization, dedicated to citizen engagement and the promotion of volunteerism.

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Pre-employment: A Review of Models and Directions

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Community Services Council (CSC) was contracted in late 1999 to examine options for pre-employment models on behalf of the provincial Department of Human Resources and Employment (HRE). The options and models were to reflect the needs of income assistance clients and to consider regional variation. The CSC review was to be based on input from field staff and community groups and incorporate new and emerging practices and program developments.

Our review of North American and European literature shows that pre-employment programs are becoming increasingly flexible and accommodating with respect to service access and delivery. There are three reasons for this: (1) to increase the capacity to serve a greater variety of clients in different regions (2) to ensure that clients get personalized pre-employment experiences that are meaningful and effective, and (3) to minimize the numbers of clients receiving financial assistance by maximizing the number of employable, economically independent citizens (Herr & Wagner, 1998); (Centre for Best Practices, 1998). These objectives are shared in Newfoundland & Labrador.

1.1 Background to this Research

HRE is responsible for providing social assistance income support and employment support services in the province. The department is in the process of major restructuring following the move of social services programs into a newly developed and regionalized system of community-based health services in the province. HRE, as it redesigns itself is also researching disability needs, information management needs, financial administration procedures and the needs of its consumers, as directly articulated by clients. While reviewing contracted community partnerships in 1999, HRE acknowledged the need to further examine rural opportunities for program development in pre-employment. This current review of pre-employment issues is therefore intended to inform an on-going process of change.

HRE has developed a series of new training and program options for meeting employment needs. These have included improved screening and assessment techniques, a move toward case management, and redirection of staff functions from basic eligibility assessment toward employment and career development, among others. HRE has remained committed to labour market development partnerships and the supply of labour market information. All of these moves are in keeping with trends in other jurisdictions.

1.2 Community Services Council

The Community Services Council (CSC) is a social development planning, research policy and service organization with experience in defining community need, building community capacity and providing direct client services to persons in need. Established in 1976, CSC has pioneered research on social programs, early childhood investment strategies, coordination models for service delivery and the development of human and social capacity in Newfoundland and Labrador. The CSC has delivered pre-employment services to women, persons with learning disabilities, youth, students, social assistance recipients and other specialized populations for more than twenty years.

1.3 Human Resources and Employment Mandate

> *"It is the vision of the Department of Human Resources & Employment that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador be healthy, educated and self-reliant, living in supportive communities within sustainable regions having access to social programs which encourage them to achieve their potential."*
>
> Vision Statement
> Human Resources & Employment,
> Government of Newfoundland & Labrador

The Department of Human Resources & Employment (HRE) has indicated its objective to replace the current emphasis on financial assistance with emphasis on employment support and economic independence. At the field level, this objective will be accomplished in part by changes and improvements in the pre-employment programs and practices that increase employability and economic independence.

Our review of the literature confirms that these values and objectives are consistent with objectives for income-support reform in Europe and North America. This report identifies general strategies for implementing pre-employment initiatives in Newfoundland that are consistent with HRE's objectives and will, hopefully, assist in its overall redesigning process.

1.4 Accountability

The research was conducted at the direction of a multi-disciplinary Steering Committee which met periodically between December 1999 and April 2000. It comprised researchers from the CSC and representatives of the Career Support Division of HRE in addition to representatives from the provincial Departments of Education, and Health and Community Services. The federal Department of Human Resources and Development (HRDC) was represented, as was Memorial University of Newfoundland. The names of committee members are listed in this report.

In addition, the four Regional Managers (Eastern, Central, Western and Labrador) of the provincial Department (HRE) formed an ad hoc ‘Reference Group.’ This unique arrangement allowed the research team to consult on broad issues during regular meetings over the research period and on specific regional issues from time to time as the research progressed. This was particularly helpful in that regional managers encouraged participation by their district staff in both the survey and focus groups. They also identified key resource persons in regions where research activity was being planned and identified community partners to be included.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The Community Services Council used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to complete the 2000 review of pre-employment issues and models for the Department of Human Resources and Employment, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador.

2.1 Survey of Front Line Staff and Community Partners

Information was gathered from HRE personnel actively engaged in front-line delivery of client services. These personnel included financial assistance workers, career development workers and field staff whose job descriptions are changing to make their functions align more closely with the emerging mandate of the department. Data was gathered from every district office of each region of the province.

For comparative purposes, and to capture the advice and directions of community personnel who work closely with the department and who are familiar with its clientele, the survey was also administered to non-profit and private partners with recent experience as contracters for at least one employment program of the department.

The sample frame chosen for community partner involvement was the 1999 list of province-wide partners who had worked with the Department on the youth *Linkages* program, as direct delivery agents in all four regions of the province. This sampling frame ensured widespread penetration across the province. An important additional feature of the *Linkages* sample was the knowledge that these partners have had relationships with HRE in other programming areas, so the CSC is confident the survey has captured the opinions of community representatives with considerable career development experience and knowledge.

In all, 288 persons from both groups received questionnaires of which 212 responses were completed in time to be analysed for this report, for an overall response rate of 73.6%. Regional response rates for both groups are shown in Table 2:1.

TABLE 2:1 Questionnaire Response Rate by Group and Region (Raw Numbers and Percentages)							CSC 2000
Recipient	Raw Numbers						%
	Total # Distributed	Returned Eastern	Returned Central	Returned Western	Returned Labrador	Total # Returned	Return Rate
HRE District Offices	**243**	84	52	23	14	**173**	71.2%
Community Partners	**45**	23	5	8	3	**39**	86.6%
TOTALS	**288**	107	57	31	17	**212**	73.6%

Table 2:2 summarizes some characteristics of the sample used in the final analysis.

TABLE 2:2 Sample Characteristics			(N=212)		CSC 2000
Sample Description	**Total Sample**	**Sample by Geographic Region**			
	Province (N = 212)	**Eastern (n = 107)**	**Central (n = 57)**	**Western (n = 31)**	**Labrador (n = 17)**
Classification of respondents					
• *HRE personnel*	80.7%	77.6%	91.2%	71.0%	82.4%
• *Community Partners*	19.3%	22.4%	8.8%	29.0%	17.6%
Total years of experience in career-related counselling and service					
• *Fewer than 5 years*	34.4%	29.9%	40.4%	35.5%	41.2%
• *More than 5 years*	65.6%	70.1%	59.6%	64.5%	58.8%
Geographic region of province where respondents work					
• *Eastern*	50.5%	100.0%	-	-	-
• *Central*	26.9%	-	100.0%	-	-
• *Western*	14.6%	-	-	100.0%	-
• *Labrador*	8.0%	-	-	-	100.0%
Community size where respondents work					
• *Fewer than 5000 people*	50.0%	34.6%	70.2%	54.8%	70.6%
• *More than 5000 people*	50.0%	65.4%	29.8%	45.2%	29.4%

2.2 Focus Group Inquiries

Focused inquiries were conducted in each region of the province to ensure that certain topics were examined in detail. Efforts were made to see that discussion groups included front-line and supervisory staff of HRE in addition to the Department's community partners. Invitations were extended to federal, health, education and literacy representatives wherever possible.

Table 2:3 shows the regions in which focus groups were held. They gave useful direction on issues of case management, assessment, general needs, data tracking, monitoring and partnerships.

TABLE 2:3 Number of Focus Groups by Region ***CSC 2000***

Region	Number of Focus Groups	Number of People Attended
Eastern	3	35
Central	5	46
Western	2	21
Labrador	3	35
Provincial Total	13	137

2.3 Analysis of Secondary Data

A brief secondary data analysis was conducted of statistics from the *Social Assistance Recipient* (SAR) database, gathered by the Department of Human Resources and Employment, and statistics from the *Community Accounts* compiled by the Newfoundland Statistics Agency (NSA).

The SAR database contains descriptive information on the financial assistance caseload, province-wide. The database is updated monthly. The areas of interest for this study in determining a client profile included the number of social assistance cases by region, family status and education levels.

2.4 Review of Literature

The research strategy began with a very broad search of social welfare literature and programs in the United States, Canada and Europe in order to provide a general picture of pre-employment practices.

Where possible, government and private agency Internet sites were used as a first source for *current* publications and program descriptions. Web pages provided an enormous supply of recent pre-employment literature as yet unpublished in regular print. In some cases, program administrators were contacted directly for further information. Print publications from the QEII library at Memorial University of Newfoundland were also reviewed. Details on all sources are appended to this report and listed in the attached bibliography.

2.5 Structure of the Report

A summary of key findings follows this introduction to provide the reader with context. A brief statistical overview of client issues is given, followed by a discussion of emerging issues in pre-employment. These are primarily from the literature on employment initiatives but include preliminary discussion on directions suggested by research participants, especially in the focus groups.

This review included an examination of dozens of programs of pre-employment in several countries to glean both common and differing practices. The result is a framework of three models of pre-employment from which the province could theoretically choose an overall approach. These have been summarized as *work-first*, *preparation-first* and *contextual labour market* models of pre-employment. Each of the three models are described in this report and descriptions of 19 programs which illustrate the models are appended in Volume II.

Survey and focus group findings on client need, roles and responsibilities and partnerships are presented together in a section on Research Results. Wherever possible, comparisons are made between survey and focus group findings.

The synthesis section which ends this report returns to the key findings and outlines strategies and recommendations for the Department of Human Resources and Employment. Readers are referred to Volume II for details on program descriptions from other jurisdictions, literature sources reviewed by the Community Services Council and secondary statistical data.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

Review respondents demonstrated depth of knowledge about client need, the barriers they face and what constitutes reasonable progress for HRE clients while respecting their right to participate voluntarily in pre-employment activity. Respondents also carved out a continuing and complex role for HRE staff while recommending a more stabilized arrangement with community-based partners, combined with the need to develop new working relationships. Merging this information with learning from other sources results in the following summary statements:

3.1 Key Points

1. Contextual approaches to pre-employment which combine learning, preparation and work opportunities are widely supported in the field.

Work-first pre-employment strategies are generally unsuited to the Newfoundland economy, policy environment or provincial labour market; they received no support in the review process. Preparation-first approaches were more often recommended but were criticized for lacking connections to real employment opportunities and for being short term without clear cut goals.

The wisdom of providing clients with real work experience is supported, but only in the context of a range of services. These start with assessment and counselling, move through preparation phases that *eventually* include work force attachment and end only when clients are self-sufficient and not income-assisted at all, even with supportive financial interventions such as allowances or extended benefits.

Contextual pre-employment requires knowledge of labour market opportunities, particularly local ones, and involves effort to locate the opportunities, making them available to income-assisted clients, and working with partners who share employment and community development goals. This review provided evidence that counsellors in the province are anxious to widen the range of agencies, individuals and departments with whom they work on pre-employment. Their choices and suggestions ranged from employers and educators to representatives of faith communities, early childhood advocates, literacy groups and economic developers. They see those parties as useful to HRE in particular, for access to labour market opportunities.

Adopting a commitment to contextual learning and work approaches, in the views of many, offers the opportunity to recognize both pre-employment and post-employment needs for their clients.

2. Desire for partnership in pre-employment is extremely high, however, knowledge of how to construct new or different working partnerships is not well-developed and should be increased.

Partnerships were often described as personal relationships made informally, dependent on knowledge of staff in other government departments or community groups, or co-location of office sites.

A framework for partnerships with contracted community groups has already been developed for HRE, but this review shows the desire to greatly expand both the number and nature of partnerships used by the Department. There are assumptions that employers, citizens, educators and other groups offer unique and untapped opportunities for income assistance clients. These have yet to be fully explored.

Thinking about developing new partners in addition to maintaining existing ones has to be accompanied by planning. Skills and opportunities to craft, negotiate and formalize new partnerships have to be developed and supported with policy, and ultimately, resources.

Provincially, HRE's policy framework should allow for partnerships of new and different kinds. These range beyond co-location with other government offices and beyond the well-understood ‘contractual’ partnership approach used with groups who run pre-employment programs. These newer partnerships would allow for a wide range of pre-employment approaches, many of which centre on early childhood interventions; school-based cooperation and forays into special needs ‘clusters’ of clients such as in corrections or other fields.

3. Recognizing and measuring client success will require new thinking, tools and protocols.

Challenges exist in at least three areas: new outcomes should be developed for measurement, client data must be collected and disseminated in different formats, and formats for sharing client information among service-providers should be negotiated and implemented. Each of the challenges will need to be met if the HRE case management process is to successfully track and monitor clients.

According to respondents, measuring achievement in terms of whether or not a client acquires a job is limiting for both clients and those who serve them. This form of evaluation overlooks successes in pre-employment related to building skills, competencies, and personal growth. New measures of success should take increments of growth into consideration, and the increments should be tied to individual pre-employment goals, which are jointly understood by clients themselves and the staff who are assisting them.

Data showing patterns and trends in age, education and family size provide useful snapshots of the income assistance client group, but have less value for pre-employment planning than measures of attachment to the workforce. Understanding the amount of work time and earnings as well as labour force categories experienced by clients who cycle in and out of income assistance will give planners more useful data on trends. This information can be used to plan skills building, locate work opportunities and develop job maintenance or expansion strategies. This information, therefore, should be collected and disseminated to HRE staff and partners.

Additionally, this review shows that pre-employment counsellors want the detailed assessment of clients to form the foundation for long-term intervention. They believe that assessment information should be captured in narrative form, be accessible for updating on a regular basis, and be shared, if necessary, among partners and service deliverers. This will require, minimally, electronic data collection formats and the development of policies for sharing client information across systems.

4. Local opportunities for developing a variety of pre-employment approaches must be recognized and incorporated.

The review showed that local personnel believe needs cannot be properly assessed on a provincial basis, and that ‘clusters’ of target groups exist throughout the province. Programs which are provincial in scope and allocated according to funding formulas may therefore not be regionally sensitive and may fail to consider opportunities for innovative approaches which meet local needs.

Correcting the current imbalance between urban and rural program opportunities, therefore, is not simply a matter of proportionate (to population) funding of existing projects or programs. Instead, it will mean allowing new program approaches to be tried and tested, perhaps on very small scales. Pockets of support exist, for example, for supporting mobility allowances or for working with children and cooperating with small local enterprises.

There was no emphasis in this review, incidentally, on quick-fixes or sweeping, province-wide changes. There were no suggestions for sanctions, workfare approaches or devolving client responsibilities to entrepreneurs outside government, not even a move, as has been mentioned in other Canadian sources (Evans, 1995) toward making employment action plans mandatory for social assistance recipients. Instead, recommendations from the review coincided with current thinking about “place-based” decision-making (SSP, pp. 8-9) wherein community approaches to solving problems are more highly valued than those which do not take regional differences into account.

4.0 CLIENT ISSUES

The Department of Human Resources and Employment produces a considerable amount of demographic information. Snapshot information is available monthly on the demographic profile of income-assisted clients in the province, and a major redesign effort is underway in the department to construct a new system of financial administration. Although there are statistical qualifications about accuracy on certain features, the SAR database is useful in identifying overall trends and regional variations in the population.

The format of the data and its dissemination to field workers could each be improved, however. Some research participants expressed interest in local data which compares their districts or regions to labour market trends in either the province or the country, in particular, a comparison of how social assistance rates in their region relate to unemployment figures.

4.1 Trends in Data

A brief review of secondary sources shows a slight drop in the overall SAR caseload, aging within its population, low levels of education and unskilled occupational profiles. Detailed tables are appended in Volume II.

4.1.1 Overall Caseloads Compared to Population

The province's population has declined by close to 5% in real terms over the past decade.

The decline has been reasonably steady,[1] relating to outmigration caused by poor ground fishery opportunities combined with the inevitable drop in birth rates when families of childbearing age leave the region. These population changes had real impacts on social assistance caseloads carried by the provincial government. Caseloads peaked in the mid 1990s, but leveled off recently and continue to decline.

[1] Early 2000 figures show a slight increase.

Caseload information, which connotes family units, is only partially informative. It is also interesting to look at the total number of persons who were in receipt of social assistance benefits (at some point) in each of the recent years. These numbers also peaked in the mid 1990s and have now leveled off.

TABLE 4:1		
Population of Newfoundland & Labrador		
1991	1996	1999
568,475	560,584	541,000
Total Number of People Assisted (at some point in each year)		
1991	1996	1999
93,025	102,327	80,560
Proportion of Provincial Population (Total Number of People Assisted)		
1991	1996	1999
16.3%	18.5%	14.9%

Source: Community Accounts, Newfoundland Statistics Agency

The province's rate of financial assistance remains persistently in the 15% range, but has been declining steadily since 1996.

The regional distribution of income assistance caseloads in the province is fairly proportionate to the overall population distribution. For example, the Eastern Region, which is by far the largest of the four regions designated by HRE with more than 58% of the population, also contains well over half of the province’s social assistance caseload. Similar proportions exist in the remaining three regions although the Western Region has a slightly higher than expected proportion of SAR caseloads and Labrador’s is (very slightly) less than might be expected based on population alone.

4.1.2 Sex of Head of Household

The percentage distribution of cases by sex of head of household remained fairly constant over a six-year period from 1991 to 1996, and as of 1998, males represented 49% of the distribution while females rose to 51% of the distribution.

4.1.3 Age of Head of Household

Like the population of the province, the caseload of assistance recipients is aging. Three age groups represent the majority of cases, and over time from 1991 to 1998 there have been some shifts:

- In 1991 the 20-24 age group was 16.6% of the distribution and by 1996 this 20-24 age group had increased to 18.2% of the distribution. However, in 1998 this age group decreased to 14.6% of the distribution.

- In 1991 the 25-34 age group was 29.3% of the distribution and in 1996 it was 28.0%. In 1998 this age group also decreased to 27.7% of the distribution.

- The 35-44 age group in 1991 was 19.7% of the distribution and in 1996 it was 21.5% of the distribution. However, in 1998 this age group increased to 24.0% of the distribution.

While the majority of assistance cases fall within the 20-34 age range in all three years, it should be noted in 1998 that the age groups experiencing increases are those in the 35-44 and 45-54 categories.

Age groupings are also consistent across the province's regions, including the slightly greater proportion of youthful income-assisted clients in the Labrador region of the province.

4.1.4 Family Type and Size

Family size of assistance recipients appears to be small throughout the province. An average of 57% of cases are either single individuals or couples without children. Families with one child make up 21% of cases. Those with two children make up 14% of the caseload and 7.5% of cases are families with three or more children.

Yearly figures show the following progression over time:

- In 1991 43.6% of social assistance cases were single individuals. Couples with no children represented 9.3% of the cases. Single parent families were 23.1% of the caseload and two-parent families were 23.8 % of the caseload.

- In 1996 the distributions change slightly. Single individuals made up 49.9% of the cases, and couples without children were 10.0% of the caseload. Single parent families dropped to 20.3% and two-parent families decreased to 19.7% of the caseload.

- In 1998 47.8% of social assistance cases were single individuals, and couples with no children represented 11.0% of the cases. Single parent families rose to 22.0% of the case load and two-parent families comprised 19.0% of the caseload.

In 1991 almost 47% of SAR cases included children, in 1999 this had dropped to the 40% range. In summary, family type and size is shifting toward even smaller family composition.

4.1.5 Education Levels

The caseload shows shifts toward improved education levels.

- In 1991 74.3% of the social assistance cases had not graduated from high school. Those with less than grade 7 represented 22.3% of the cases and those with an education level from grades 7-10 made up the other 52.0%. Those with grade 11 or 12 made up 20.2% of the distribution with 5.3% reported having some post-secondary education.

- In 1996 the number of cases of non-high school graduates declined to 62.1%. Those with grade 11 or 12 rose to 28.8% and those with some post-secondary education rose to 8.8% of cases.

- These were noticeable improvements in SAR education levels in the early 1990s, but have remained steady in recent years.

The regional distribution of social assistance cases by education levels shows that rural regions of the province (for example, regions outside the Avalon peninsula) have higher concentrations of clients reporting low education. The Eastern Region has the highest population of SAR clients with higher education, and Labrador and Central Regions report the lowest level.

4.1.6 Occupation of Head of Household

A sizable portion of SAR clients counted in the SAR database report no occupational history. Labour and service categories dominate the remaining categories.

This data, although descriptive, is the portion of the data collection process most in need of revision in the HRE profile of pre-employment information. The potential for coding error, changing work categories in the economy and the lack of earned income measures in the occupation data all point to a need for revisions in the way these figures are gathered and reported.

TABLE 4:2 Social Assistance Cases by Occupation

Occupation	1991	1996	1998
	N.B. Some percentage errors due to rounding.		
Labourer	25.4%	25.7%	22.9%
Other occupation	20.4%	21.3%	21.1%
No occupation history	18.6%	22.4%	23.0%
Service occupation	12.0%	12.7%	12.9%
Fish catching and processing	9.8%	6.4%	7.3%
Homemaker	10.3%	8.0%	7.9%
Student	3.1%	3.2%	2.9%

Source: Community Accounts, Newfoundland Statistics Agency

4.1.7 Length of Time on Assistance

The SAR population is not static. Clients move in and out of the provincial system of income support for a variety of reasons, not all of which are well understood. These include both labour force issues and personal issues.

- The average length of time on social assistance is now approximately 9 months (HRE 1999). This average has increased from 6.8 months in 1992.

- Close to half of SAR clients are within the system for fewer than the full 12 months of a given year.

The percentage of those who are receiving income support *year round* has increased steadily over the past decade. In 1992, 16% of SAR clients were assisted for one month out of twelve, and 31% of the client group were assisted year round.

TABLE 4:3 Social Assistance Cases by Number of Months on Assistance (Selected Years)

Number of Months	1992	1996	1998	1999
1	16.0%	10.0%	9.0%	8.0%
2	10.0%	7.0%	6.0%	6.0%
3	8.0%	5.0%	5.0%	4.0%
4	6.0%	5.0%	5.0%	4.0%
5	5.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
6	5.0%	4.0%	4.0%	3.0%
7	4.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
8	4.0%	4.0%	3.0%	3.0%
9	4.0%	3.0%	3.0%	4.0%
10	4.0%	3.0%	4.0%	3.0%
11	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	3.0%
12	31.0%	48.0%	51.0%	54.0%

Source: SAR Database, Department of Human Resources and Employment

By 1999, the profile has changed so that SAR clients assisted for one month amount to 8% of the client group, but 54% of the SAR population receives assistance for all twelve months of the calendar year. (See Volume II for data on selected years.)

This trend highlights the need to determine more clearly what employment factors, if any, have an impact on the trend towards year-round assistance. The trend may or may not be influenced by policy decisions to end short-term make work programs, economic factors such as the fishery or even data collection and reporting methods (such as whether the data report full or part-time assistance rates).

Pre-employment planners should examine assistance rates in conjunction with workforce attachment data and make the information more widely available to personnel in the department and the community partners who serve income-assisted clients. They will then be able to plan more effective programs, especially if the data show trends which indicate success at getting higher numbers of clients to ‘cycle’ out of assistance for longer periods. Correlating the information by age, region and education level would be of particular assistance.

5.0 EMERGING ISSUES IN PRE-EMPLOYMENT

Planners and service agencies are looking for new approaches to client work which respect the characteristics of the income support population. Program designers are broadening their ideas about how long to work with clients, how to measure their successes, and whether non-traditional strategies might increase success rates.

There is growing understanding, for example, that pre-employment is not a finite stage of service delivery and that clients cannot be expected to operate in isolation of their personal, family and social surroundings. This understanding was outlined in both the literature and the CSC review.

5.1 Nonlinear Approaches

> *"The path to employment... is not always linear and sequential, with a single outcome waiting like a prize at the end. Instead, finding a job often involves a combination of small personal achievements, sometimes in apparently random order."*
>
> (Reid, 1997, p. 32)

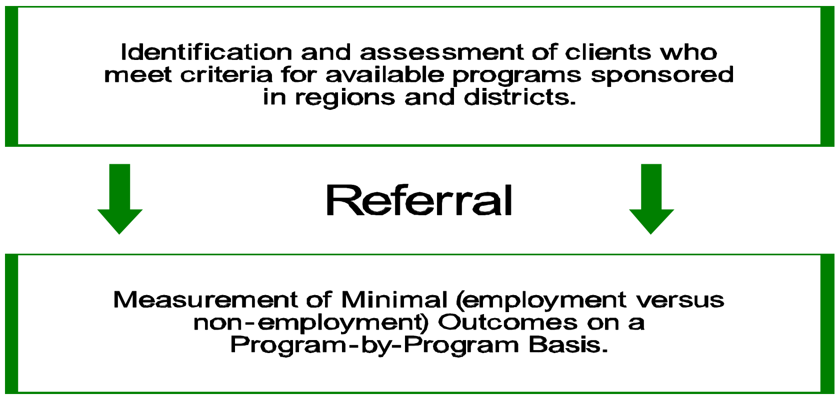
Nonlinear approaches to pre-employment assumes long-term and cyclical interventions with clients on income-support. A traditional linear approach to pre-employment services offers clients temporary assistance and operates on the assumption that the transition from being unemployable to employable is a standard process. Linear approaches tend to be based on short-term interventions which are presumed to meet the needs of all clients on income-assistance within a given population.

On traditional approaches.......

Programs based on this model...envision leaving welfare as a predictable, linear process that can be accomplished relatively quickly: a participant enters and completes an education/training or other job-preparation program, looks for and finds employment, advances in the labor force, and never returns to welfare....

(Herr and Wagner, 1995, p. 2).

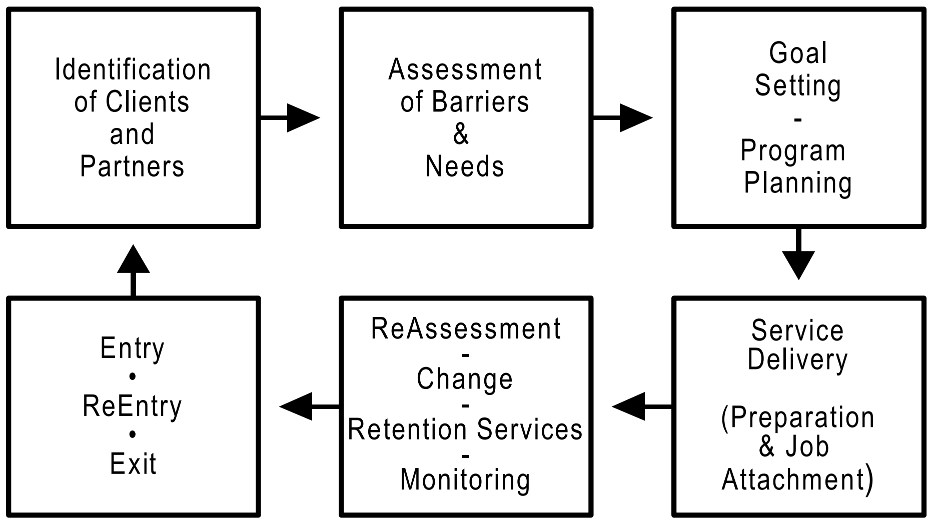
Figure 5:1 A Linear Approach to Pre-Employment



The limitation of a linear perspective is that end products tend to be finite, easily measured, and non-specific to the individual needs of clients (Herr & Wagner 1996). They generally subscribe to one central curriculum of activities that take place *prior* to employment and are intended to meet the one main objective of initial attachment to work activity. Linear programs would tend not, for example, to offer *post*-employment services or monitor retention of jobs. Non-attachment to the workforce would be considered failed activity or a negative outcome.

Nonlinear pre-employment services, on the other hand, offer clients longer-term, more flexible assistance in an attempt to accommodate both personal and career development goals. The approach assumes transition from the unemployed state will encompass a series of stages in a longer, cumulative process of career development in which employment or employability gradually develops while new and changing services are applied, tried and revised.

Figure 5:2 A Nonlinear Approach to Pre-Employment Services



Agencies that run nonlinear programs tend to develop individualized curricula of personalized activities that respond to the specific employment needs of clients. They attempt to accommodate individual growth patterns, at least to some degree. This flexibility on personalized services is enhanced through:

(1) extensive partnering with professionals in education, health and business

(2) increased time commitments to clients

Nonlinear programs are usually closely case-managed to ensure prompt response to continually emerging barriers and to increase the possibility of engaging clients in their own needs assessments. Clients are initially assessed for both strengths and barriers in order to create development profiles that describe client-specific areas for personal and career development training (Murphy & Johnson, 1998).

Any model of pre-employment may be either linear or non-linear. Two main features distinguish nonlinear from linear pre-employment programs in that nonlinear programs:

(1) accept multiple outcomes

(2) provide post-employment services after clients obtain work.

By accepting multiple outcomes, nonlinear programs recognize that "....for many participants, achieving a 'successful outcome' was not something that could be done in a single leap" (Reid, 1997, p. 31). Thus, a noncompliant client who has a history of poor attendance can achieve 'incremental success' by engaging in a continuum of increasingly challenging pre-employment activities.[2]

Through post-employment services, nonlinear programs add a new dimension to career development. Clients benefit from continued case-managed support, support services such as child care and transportation, counselling, employability skill training and on-the-job learning options (Trutko, Nightingale & Barnow, 1999). Clients who lose their jobs, or fail at some stage of incremental development, usually have the option to re-enter programming to pursue a less challenging or more suitable outcome. Post-employment services ensure that clients who fail can continue to be monitored. Such monitoring decreases 'program hopping' and service redundancies, and permits staff to redesign client development plans to assist the client in understanding the reasons for failure (Herr & Wagner, 1998).

The ultimate outcome of nonlinear programs is not job readiness, employment, or simply a match with the labour market, but is generally considered to be economic independence. Demonstrated labour force attachment is the clearest indication of this outcome, and the goal usually reflects a complete separation from income supports, including any transitional benefits for child care or treatment services.

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[2] The "Project Match" in Chicago pioneered the use of career ladders with income assisted clients by creating a success chart which could be shared with clients moving through the stages of pre-employment. A copy of the chart is appended to the program description in Volume II of this report.

5.2 Competencies Approach

Developing a framework for promoting personal competencies in a client group offers program planners an interesting new approach to program delivery and opens up possibilities for measuring success in new and different ways. In Canada, the move to a 'mastery' approach of pre-employment is exemplified in the cooperative federal-provincial *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (Draft, January 2000) which outlines the need for programs and services to build and measure competencies in three key areas of personal management, learning and work exploration, and employability or career skills-building.

The competency areas of the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* each have four levels of achievement (see figure 5:3) ranging from building and exploring life and work options to developing and improving mastery of personal skills.

The *Blueprint* recommends that work with adults may be able to concentrate on the fourth levels of achievement. The fourth levels are meant to respect the developmental achievements of adulthood and refer to "improving upon" or "building upon" existing competencies in the population. The CSC survey and focus groups' inquiries, however, indicated a clear desire by HRE staff and partners to meet very basic development needs in the income-assisted population.

Focus group discussions in particular repeated the following themes:

- Confidence-building is paramount in the client group because clients feel they will be unable to meet the demands of school or work.
- Overlooking confidence-building assures failure in programs, because clients are either unable to attend or unable to effectively acquire the skills and knowledge offered in the services delivered.
- Self-esteem growth takes time and personal contact with staff who develop long-term relationships with clients.

Additionally, focus group participants say the existing skills, many of which staff feel certain could be transferred to educational settings or work sites, are hidden to the clients themselves.

- The skills that clients bring to pre-employment, the competencies they have already mastered, are often unknown to them, and must be identified in a counselling process.
- Skills inventories should be built with clients to clarify their personal competencies.

Review participants said the best approach to developing competencies in the client group was to ensure a counselling environment, focus on identifying existing skills and building confidence about their ‘transferability.' Rather than work with a pre-determined list of personal skills to meet, therefore, they thought it appropriate to determine these individually and move forward from that point, within a supportive counselling environment. Knowledge was low about the actual *Blueprint* and how it outlines competencies, however, and its potential for application in programs was not explored in any detail during the focus groups.

The three competency areas outlined by the *Blueprint* (personal management, learning and skills building) were examined in the survey, though, as potential components for skills building in a pre-employment model for the province. The results of the survey indicate an assignment of equal weight and importance to each of the three competencies, all of them extremely high. (see Table 5:1 and Figure 5:4).

Blueprint for Life/Work Designs

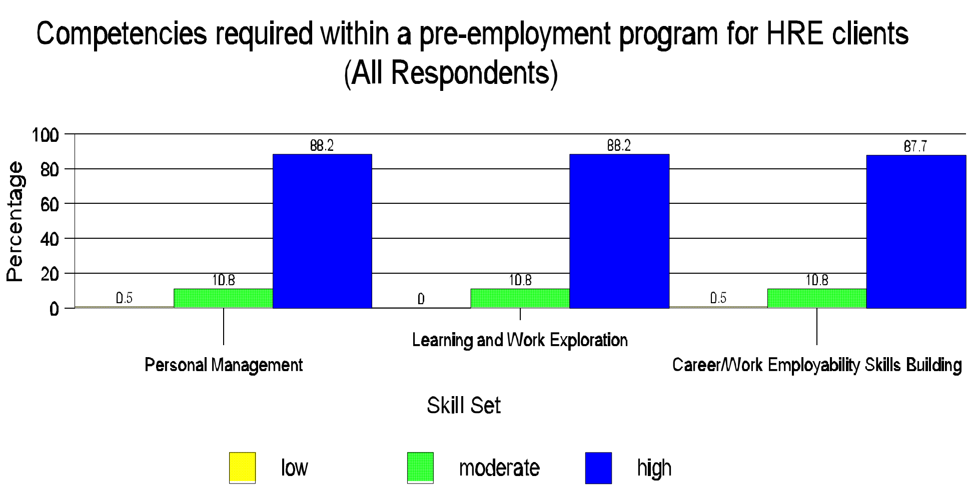
Competences by Area and Level and Learning Stage

COMPETENCIES	LEVEL ONE	LEVEL TWO	LEVEL THREE	LEVEL FOUR
AREA A: PERSONAL MANAGEMENT				
1. BUILD AND MAINTAIN A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE	1.1 Build a positive self-image while discovering its influence on self and others	1.2 Build a positive self-image and understand its influence on one's life and work	1.3 Develop abilities to maintain a positive self image	1.4 Improve on abilities to maintain a positive self-image
2. INTERACT POSITIVELY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS	2.1 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life (i)	2.2 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life (ii)	2.3 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work	2.4 Improve abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work
3. CHANGE AND GROW THROUGHOUT ONE'S LIFE	3.1 Discover that change and growth are part of life	3.2 Learn to respond to change and growth (i)	3.3 Learn to respond to change and growth (ii)	3.4 Develop strategies for responding to life and work changes
AREA B: LEARNING AND WORK EXPLORATION				
4. PARTICIPATE IN LIFE-LONG LEARNING SUPPORTIVE OF LIFE / WORK GOALS	4.1 Discover "lifelong learning" and its contribution to one's life and work	4.2 Link life-long learning to one's life/work scenario, both present and future	4.3 Link life-long leaning to one's career building process	4.4 Participate in continuous learning supportive of life/work goals
5. LOCATE AND EFFECTIVELY USE LIFE / WORK INFORMATION	5.1 Discover and understand life/work information	5.2 Locate, understand and use life/work information	5.3 Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information	5.4 Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information (i)
6. UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND SOCIETY/ECONOMY	6.1 Discover how work contributes to individuals and the community	6.2 Understand how work contributes to the community	6.3 Understand how societal and economic needs influence the nature and structure of work (i)	6.4 Understand how societal and economic needs influence the nature and structure of work (ii)
AREA C: LIFE / WORK BUILDING				
7. SECURE/CREATE AND MAINTAIN WORK	7.1 Explore effective work strategies	7.2 Develop abilities to seek and obtain/create work	7.3 Develop abilities to seek, obtain/create and maintain work	7.4 Improve on abilities to seek, obtain/create and maintain work
8. MAKE LIFE/WORK ENHANCING DECISIONS	8.1 Explore and improve decision making	8.2 Link decision making to life/work building	8.3 Engage in life/work decision making	8.4 Incorporate adult life reality into life/work decision making
9. MAINTAIN BALANCED LIFE AND WORK ROLES	9.1 Explore and improve the interrelationship of life roles (i)	9.2 Explore and understand the interrelationship of life roles (ii)	9.3 Link lifestyles and life stages to life/work building	9.4 Incorporate the "balanced life/work" issue in life/work building
10. UNDERSTAND THE CHANGING NATURE OF LIFE/WORK ROLES	10.1 Discover the nature of life/work roles	10.2 Explore non-traditional life/work scenarios	10.3 Understand and lean to overcome stereotypes in life/work building (i)	10.4 Understand and learn to overcome stereotypes in life/work building (i)
11. UNDERSTAND, ENGAGE IN AND MANAGE ONES'S OWN LIFE/WORK BUILDING PROCESS	11.1 Explore the underlying concepts of the life/work building process	11.2 Understand and experience the process of life/work building	11.3 Recognize and take change of one's life/work building process	11. 4 Manage one's life/work building proces

TABLE 5:1 Competencies Required Within a Pre-Employment Program					*CSC 2000*
Skills to Include in Pre-Employment	All Regions (N = 212)	Eastern (n = 107)	Central (n = 57)	Western (n = 31)	Labrador (n = 17)
Personal Management					
• low	0.5%	-	-	3.2%	-
• moderate	10.8%	10.3%	10.5%	19.4%	-
• high	88.2%	89.7%	89.5%	74.2%	100%
Learning and Work Exploration					
• low	-	-	-	-	-
• moderate	10.8%	13.1%	5.3%	12.9%	11.8%
• high	88.2%	86.0%	94.7%	83.9%	88.2%
Career/Work Employability Skills Building					
• low	0.5%	-	-	3.2%	-
• moderate	10.8%	12.1%	8.8%	12.9%	5.9%
• high	87.7%	86.9%	91.2%	80.6%	94.1%

It is not possible based on this survey, therefore, to differentiate competencies to which respondents assign more or less importance for inclusion in a pre-employment model.

Figure 5:4



There are no major differences on this finding by job category of respondents, whether they work in rural or urban regions, or whether they have less or more job experience than their counterparts. The only regional difference, and it is slight, emerges from examination of the personal management portion of the question, where Labrador respondents are somewhat more likely to assign weight to this area of skills building in a model, while Western region respondents are less likely to do so.

5.3 Early Intervention

The need for early intervention with the children of social assistance recipients was one of the most common and consistent themes to arise in the focus groups. It was not exclusive to any one group of participants or any region of the province. Participants want a model of pre-employment to include not only direct job-related services to adults on income assistance, but services which identify children in SAR families with employment or action plans of their own.

These action plans, which could be developed in cooperation with family resource personnel or schools, would not relate necessarily to direct employment. Rather, they would focus on meeting personal needs while young to increase educational and social success. The goal of the interventions would be to offset potential attachment to the income support system at entry to adulthood.

It is strongly felt that social workers or career counsellors who are in regular contact with income-assisted adults have access to information about the needs of their children and can devise long-term approaches to meeting those needs. School teachers and public health nurses knowledgeable about the children living on income support were seen as potential partners in the identification phase of this action planning. Actual program elements for children, as recommended by the focus group participants, included:

- support for assessing learning problems
- additional assistance with school work
- exposure to work programs, especially in cooperation with school
- additional learning resources, and
- confidence-building

Proponents of meeting pre-employment needs at a very early age said that immediate results could not be sought, measured or expected, that a long-term commitment to meeting the needs of children as an exclusive target group was essential and suitable for a human resources department committed to breaking cycles of dependence.

5.4 Working with Whole Families

Lack of family support for upgrading, training or entry level jobs for individuals has long been identified as a barrier to pre-employment (Work Information Network). This is especially true if employment strategies threatens subsistence levels of benefits or increase family child care responsibilities.

Focus group participants felt it was appropriate for HRE to adopt a model for pre-employment which attempts to work with whole families in the future. In particular, participants thought it would be useful to:

- have clients identify family barriers in the assessment phase of pre-employment
- get help with action plans that include other family members
- seek and obtain counselling support for family members other than the pre-employment client
- get family members to join pre-employment initiatives at the same time
- look at the whole family financial viability to ensure it is not threatened by participation in pre-employment activities

Family involvement was seen as a way to ensure 'holistic' approaches to pre-employment, but participants suggested it would be successful only if front line staff received additional training in family issues.

A word about resources is required on the issue of family work on pre-employment. This review was undertaken with the understanding that a model for pre-employment has to be determined within existing resource levels of the provincial government. No new resources would be allocated to the process of pre-employment servicing.

Research participants were well aware of budget constraints in human service delivery and expressed a measure of pessimism about expanding the career counselling and planning process to include family work without new resources. They recognized the need for family approaches, but were concerned about being unable to meet family needs, once identified.

5.5 Best Practices

The following is a summary of 'best practices' as adapted from literature sources which claim success in meeting pre-employment goals. Descriptions primarily anecdotal, rigorous evaluations of approaches are missing from the literature on pre-employment, although many sources mentioned forthcoming evaluation reports, spurred by a new emphasis on data collection and retrieval systems in this field.

- **Refer individuals with special needs to agencies that specialize in those areas rather than addressing the needs within the pre-employment program.**

Referral to professionals in other government departments and local agencies are vital to meeting personal needs of clients.

- **Provide training for pre-employment staff on assessment and identification of client barriers.**

Training staff in this area can save time and frustration for both staff and clients. Ignoring barriers in the initial stages will doom pre-employment efforts to failure over the long term. There is concern in the literature that inadequate assessments result in improper referrals, lost time (for staff and clients) and, eventually, poor outcomes. The only solution is improved training for those staff responsible for initial identification of needs.

- **Hire staff with case management training. Continue to provide staff training and development on emerging issues, including best practices, labour market needs, and counselling skills.**

This requires a resource commitment to lowered caseloads. The function of case management is a specialized one requiring skills in brokering, linking, referring, as well as knowledge of counselling, crisis intervention, domestic abuse and other social issues. Training decreases staff frustration, when faced with deep and long-term client problems.

- **Develop a trusting relationship with participants.**

Professional, sensitive staff who build healthy relationships with clients elicit crucial information that might otherwise remain hidden. Relationship building includes taking time to 'show' clients that they are progressing and achieving some measure of success. This may be done visually with written career ladders or charts, may include attention to self-assessment opportunities, and may simply mean regular contact with job developers or 'coaches' who point out individual success. In one form or another, however, clients need to be shown when they are moving in the correct direction. This practice permits clients to be actively involved in action plans, and offers opportunities to empower and encourage them. Clients who passively receive advice and direction do less well.

- **Help participants support each other.**

Group support puts clients in touch with others who share problems and solutions. Hard-to-serve clients who achieve success may be especially good mentors for other hard-to-serve clients. Fear of intimidating clients in group settings, or encroaching upon their confidentiality, has impeded group work in past pre-employment planning, but the approach is gaining favour in the field. Positive outcomes appear to overtake negative ones, especially if the work is done within supportive counselling environments.

- **Extend supports after placement.**

Job-retention services may offset job turnover for the hard-to-serve, in particular, and should be planned for in pre-employment services.

- **Establish partnerships and keep lines of communication open to partners at all times.**

Stand-alone programs or practices are unworkable in the field of pre-employment. The multi-faceted personal problems of clients, combined with the complexities of skills requirements and rapidly changing labour markets create program needs which no single agency, organization or government department can hope to meet.

Partnerships with employers are the most essential for advice on labour market needs and for gaining access to actual opportunities. A nurtured employer partnership is necessary if job coaching, mentoring or shadowing is to take place.

- **Commit to long-term client involvement.**

As hard-to-serve clients require long-term support, programs that exercise patience and deal with one serious problem at a time are best suited for this group. No programs described in recent literature, for example, supported taking a 'three strikes you are out' approach to program participation. They were much more likely to remain committed to individual clients until success was obtained.

- **Incorporate 'transitional' employment opportunities into pre-employment program designs**.

Volunteer and community service components of pre-employment continue to gain favour. This is not a straightforward workforce issue, where clients are expected to volunteer for subsistence benefits. The 'transitional' nature of volunteer work or community service, if properly supervised and tied to skills development and supervision, is increasingly identified as a best practice in pre-employment.

Transitional employment practices include subsidized wage programs for clients and employers. The delivery of wage subsidies is gaining a resurgence of support in the pre-employment field as offering the best prospects for long term workforce attachments which also provide clients with advancement opportunities that allow clients to rise above persistent poverty status (Brown, et al., 1998).

Wage subsidy programs are one practice common to the three models of pre-employment described in this report.

- **Move to 'one-stop shopping' approaches only if you know the client group will respond well**.

Centralizing services has many benefits. Improved communications between staff are clearly documented, and allowing clients to gain access in one as opposed to several locations has real merit. In widely dispersed populations, however, the one-stop approach may be counterproductive if it means closure of smaller offices in favour of bigger locales further away from clients who already face daunting geographic barriers.

6.0 A LOOK AT THREE MODELS

Pre-employment activities are those programs, policies and practices which prepare unemployed persons for entry to the labour market. They include the general services available to the public such as might be found at schools, colleges and human resource departments which have a legislated commitment to sharing labour market information, job banks and research assistance.

The more narrow definition of pre-employment as a specific set of practices to meet the needs of hard-to-serve groups, however, is the focus of this review. The following distinction between pre-employment models and pre-employment programs should be made:

- *Models* are general strategies that determine the selection and prioritization of particular practices. This report outlines three models of pre-employment.
- *Programs* comprise practices determined by a *model*. A number of programs are profiled in an appendix to this report, to illustrate how models are applied.

All models of pre-employment share the ultimate goal of lasting and economically satisfying attachment to the labour market. They differ in the premises and philosophies about how to accomplish the goal.

Traditionally, the approach to working with an income assisted population has been to review its problems and try to meet them with improved access to education, personal skills-building, and subsidized entry to the workforce. These are expensive approaches.

More recently, and predominantly driven by a strong American economy with a surplus of entry level jobs, there has been a dramatic switch away from *preparing* clients for workforce attachment. The value of simply entering the workforce and being exposed to its requirements has emerged as the dominant theme in pre-employment thinking and program development. This philosophy has become more global over the past decade.

Unfortunately, evaluation of the approaches, (and this is generally true of most models), is contradictory. Numerous models and approaches have been shown to decrease assistance caseloads, but whether these outcomes can be sustained over time is largely unknown. Their impact on quality of life, long term advancement in the work force, decreasing poverty or effects on families, remain particularly unclear (Hamilton et. al., 1997), an important point within a provincial policy environment aimed at increasing the self-reliance of a client population.

Regardless, governments responsible for income-assistance to individuals are becoming increasingly focused on goals of workplace attachment. Efforts are being made across North America to develop new mandates and program initiatives on pre-employment activities, career counselling, and support, often within a fiscal environment of restraint.

These conditions have caused a major shift in staffing procedures and requirements, as front-line workers familiar with determining income assistance eligibility now find themselves working on personal assessment, counselling and training placement functions (Reid, 1997). New models of pre-employment for any jurisdiction should be mindful of the emerging training needs of these staff.

Programs designed to meet multiple needs must be flexible in their approaches. No one model is entirely 'pure,' and the features of some will show up in others. Local circumstances will dictate changes to approaches regardless of an overall preferred model or strategy (Seefeldt, Sandfort, Danziger, 1998).

The *shared* features or practices which emerged from our review of the models include:

- Most models acknowledge the need to coordinate program activities in a logical way. This leads to varying uses of a case management model of practice, some more elaborate than others.

- Most models acknowledge the need to continue client counselling beyond the placement stage of pre-employment.

- Approaches to pre-employment increasingly pay attention to the need for data collection on client progress and outcomes (regardless of what the outcomes might be).

- Job coaching and job development activities, once the domain of programs aimed at developmentally or otherwise ‘challenged’ clients, are being incorporated into general models of pre-employment.

Additionally, models of pre-employment are more and more likely to subscribe to what they call a ‘partnership’ model of program development. However, the understanding of what constitutes a partnership is truly wide-ranging.

Model descriptions may refer to any or all of the following as partners: referring agents, groups who have written letters of support, counsellors who will accept referrals, contracted agencies supplying services, donors of money or in-kind supplies, clients themselves, mentors, and others, including employers.

If a partnership is an arrangement of joint activity based on mutually agreed-upon goals with shared decision-making capacity, not all models can truly be called partnership-based. Most models, however, at least attempt to deal with partnership as a design element.

6.1 Work-First Model: Defining Features

The 'Work-First' Model, at a Glance:

- Assessment is minimal
- Quick attachment to work force
- Education only for job retention purposes
- Job turnover accepted
- Outcomes are finite; outcomes are jobs
- Performance-based accountability features

Work-first pre-employment deems academic job preparation courses and formal training to be time-consuming, costly and frustrating for clients who simply wish to work. Work itself is considered to be the most productive starting point for successful attachment to the work force. For example, Michigan’s work-first strategy considers that “finding a job and developing work skills through direct experience - rather than participating in education and training - will move recipients off the rolls” (Seefeldt, Sandfort, & Danziger, 1998).

Clients of work-first programs are placed either in work environments that provide hands-on employment experiences or in intensive job searches designed to find such work environments. These experiences are deemed essential if clients are to learn the social and employability skills required in the workplace (Herr, Wagner and Halpern, 1996). In some cases remedial education and soft skills training maybe offered to help clients find and keep employment, but these interventions would be minimal. Education and training initiatives are considered secondary to job experience and are likely to be used only after direct work experiences have failed to produce satisfactory results.

The following six characteristics define the "work-first" model:

6.1.1 Limited or No Assessment

Detailed or comprehensive up-front client assessments are considered to be poor indicators of client development needs.

The work-first model avoids the use of *detailed, up-front* assessments to build development plans. Its supporters contend that assessments are often wrong, and using them to guide formal client training and education prior to employment is an unnecessary risk that wastes resources (Hamilton et al., 1999). Employment should precede elaborate diagnostic assessments which might bias the service response toward a focus on barriers (WIN, 1998). If necessary, work-first case managers might use brief preliminary assessments to identify special needs or assess whether a client can function in a work-first program. Case managers also use assessments to build job search plans prior to employment or job retention plans after clients start work, but their focus is only on identifying *immediate* problems that may prevent clients from starting or keeping work.

6.1.2 Job Searches and Work Placements are Predominant

The goal is to attach clients to the workforce as quickly as possible by finding work placements with effective job searches.

Unless prior work arrangements are made with an employer, clients first begin job searches with assistance from case managers. The level of assistance is determined either in advance by brief assessments or concurrently as clients encounter problems and barriers in their job searches.

In some cases, more involved assessments are necessary to identify or confirm serious barriers (such as special needs, addictions) if they become evident to case managers (Hamilton and Scrivener, 1999). Case managers respond to these emerging needs, barriers and capacities with direct assistance or through referrals. The objective is to place clients in real work environments where they can earn money while developing employability skills.

6.1.3 Education and Training Comes Later

Education and training are considered useful only if tied to job retention and career advancement purposes.

Case managers recommend education and training only if required to effectively search for and retain jobs (Trutko et al., 1999). Case managers may work closely with employed clients to identify potential education and training needs within post-employment assessments. The kinds of education and training recommended will depend on specific job demands more than identified client needs, barriers or capacities. Case managers refer clients to education and training partners for appropriate education and training services if the case management process has determined that continued workforce attachment depends on acquiring new skills.

6.1.4 Acceptance of Turnover

Lost jobs are considered learning experiences that teach employability skills.

While the main objective is to place clients in successful employment, case managers acknowledge that clients are not suited for every job they find. Staff at Project Match in Chicago feel: "Our experiences...as well as the experience of countless other programs around the country, have led us to believe that job turnover is a natural part of the welfare-to-work process, even when post-employment services are available." (Wagner, Herr, Chang and Brooks, 1998). Clients gain a sense of workforce reality when case managers help them deal with job turnover as a natural learning process.

Up-dated assessments, training programs and personal counselling are used as requirements overcoming the barriers to job retention. Case managers also refer clients to appropriate partners for these training and support services.

6.1.5 Finite and Measurable Outcomes

Outcomes are finite and easily measured simply by determining employment versus non-employment of clients.

Successful outcomes occur when clients obtain employment. The definition of 'employment' varies from program to program and may include community service placements or subsidized work.

6.1.6 Performance-Based Accountability

Regular measurement of program outcomes may be expected, or even demanded, by program funders (usually of a community-based or private agency, by a government department).

Performance-based program monitoring may apply to either program or agency performance (Hatry, 1999).

Program performance indicators usually relate to measures of client contact by field workers, or attendance figures for clients at counselling or required programs.

Agency performance is determined by government funding administrators concerned with maximizing cost-efficiency, usually to account to a base of taxpayers (Community Services Block Grant Network CSBGN, 1999). Performance-based monitoring requires administrators and funders to determine which outcomes must be achieved for particular programs. A work-first project program is likely to emphasize employment as the most successful outcome. Although performance-based accountability has been used as a reason to withhold project funds from contracted agencies who have not met specified client targets for jobs in work-first programs, it has also had a positive impact on client record-keeping practices. Client status records can be used by staff to identify client needs and to improve services by making client-specific recommendations. In a cumulative sense, agency records can be used, in turn, by funders to determine longer term trends in career development. They may also be used to measure return on investments (Knox, 1998).

Some performance-based accountability measures (mostly American) have included experiments with job vouchers. Vouchers which replace personal income entitlements or grants are provided to clients by funders and are redeemed at private agencies or at job sites for wage-subsidized positions. Initially considered to be motivating measures, they have fallen into disfavour, especially for hard to serve clients, perhaps because a voucher system lacks the personal approach inherent in a counselling relationship (Weiss, 1998).

6.2 Preparation-First Model: Defining Features

The preparation-first model considers formal academic education, job-preparation activities and specific training to be crucial starting points for pre-employment programs. Sometimes referred to as a 'human-capital' approach (Hamilton et al. 1999), the model asks programs to assume long-term developmental activities in assisting clients to complete distinct *stages* of career development. The reThinking unEmployment (RTUE) approach, for example, begins by teaching basic cognitive skills. “We hypothesized that if you can teach cognitive skills, you can give people the capability of generating better solutions to their problems” (Anderson, 1999). Case managers use detailed, up-front assessments to place clients in appropriate levels of formal education and training programs that address the general social and employability skills required to find and keep employment (Kazis and Koop, 1997).

The 'Preparation' Model at a Glance:

- Assessments are detailed and up front
- Barriers are addressed early
- Education and skills training are personalized
- Job readiness is an outcome
- Outcomes are measured program by program

The following sections discuss the defining features of the preparation-first model.

6.2.1 Focus on Assessment

Detailed assessments are considered crucial components for creating individualized profiles.

The preparation-first model recommends that pre-employment programmes invest a good portion of time and resources in the up-front assessment process to determine both formal client training and education requirements and to assess clients for barriers that might interfere with education or training. The ACES staff in Denver, Colorado *stress* the value of the assessment process in dealing with clients who face many barriers to employment, and believe that these barriers should be resolved before clients enter training. Case managers conduct preliminary interviews and intake assessments before a client obtains employment, and are likely to seek partnerships with education and health professionals to provide in-depth and comprehensive profiles for clients who may require clinical counselling.

Post-employment assessments may also be a part of the programs using this model. Its proponents see the value of assessments, not only up front, but over time, to monitor a client's changing or emerging needs.

6.2.2 Early Identification of Barriers

Client barriers to successful employment are identified early and addressed prior to employment.

Case managers use varying degrees of detailed, up-front assessments to provide client profiles. More comprehensive assessments take a holistic approach and produce profiles of clients' personal, family and employment histories. They are likely to describe individual needs, barriers and capabilities within the client's larger 'life' context of family, health and educational issues. These detailed assessments also identify physical barriers, child care, clothing, transportation, etc., that can interfere with a client's employment potential. Specialized assessments may have a more acute focus and produce profiles that address specific client problems. The Washington State Learning Disabilities Project, for example, relies on specific, up-front assessments because, "the greatest learning disability barriers may not be the disorders themselves but the failure to diagnose them" (US Department of Labor, 1998).

The goal of preparation-first program is to remove as many barriers as possible before clients obtain employment.

6.2.3 Education and Skills Training

Client profiles are used to develop personalized training programs that address barriers.

Case managers use the identified barriers in a client's profile to develop an individualized training profile of job-preparation activities. The objective is to remove barriers with strategically case-managed training programs that improve the chances of finding and keeping employment. Training profiles are individualized, however, in cases where clients lack basic education or general employability and social skills, pre-set training programs may take place in larger groups. Assessments, however, are more likely to result in referrals to strategic services as indicated in a client's personalized training profile (Johnson, 1995).

6.2.4 Attainment of Job Readiness

Clients are considered to be ready for work after barriers have been removed.

Some preparation-first programs consider that job readiness is obtained after a client has successfully completed the activities in the training profile (Brethour and Gorlick 1998), assuming there are accurate ways of determining whether training has removed all barriers. Reassessments may be used to confirm barrier removal so that case managers can be confident that clients are ready for work. Other preparation-first programs consider job readiness to be obtained only after a client demonstrates barrier removal by obtaining and retaining work (Brethour and Gorlick, 1998, p. 69). These programs are likely to assist clients with job searches and job-retention practices, and may also rely on reassessments to confirm that clients are job ready.

6.2.5 Outcomes

Outcomes are usually program-based.

Preparation programs are usually evaluated on the basis of successful graduation rates. Completion of training, especially with certification, is considered a successful outcome for a client whose profile required the acquisition of a skill or the removal of a barrier. Successful outcomes may include completion of training, graduation or confirmed removal of identified barriers as determined by re-assessments.

6.3 Contextual Labour Market Model: Defining Features

The 'Contextual Labour Market' Model, at a Glance:

- Labour market needs are a starting point
- Builds specific skill sets
- Partnerships are crucial between employers and educators
- Outcomes are successful matches between clients and employers
- Debate in usefulness with hard-to-serve clients

Pre-employment programs that exhibit contextual learning strategies assist clients by using a combination of job-preparation/retention practices and real work experiences (Torjman, 1999). They consider formalized, job-based learning experiences to be the most productive pre-employment starting points. Kazis and Koop (1997) support this position in a Casey Foundation report evaluating new initiatives to address youth unemployment. According to their report, “the evaluation literature has found that programs that combine treatments -- work experience, training, and remedial education in one package -- appear to have the best results” (p. 38). As a result, clients can either be immediately hired through pre-arrangements with employers and placed in structured training activities at the work site or in a classroom, or they can be placed in classroom-based instruction (academic or job-specific) followed by apprenticeships or job trials with actual employers. These integrated pre-employment experiences impart crucial social and employability skills to clients in a manner similar to work-first approaches; the difference is in degree of assessment, formal instruction and real-life contexts. The most innovative feature of the contextual labour market mode is the incorporation of employer needs, capacities and labour market insights into program designs and training curricula (Johnson, 1995).

Five defining features of the contextual labour market model are as follows:

6.3.1 Responsiveness to Local, Regional or District Labour Market Needs

Collaborative partnerships with public employers, private businesses and educational institutions are formed to facilitate learning within a 'context' of labour market potential.

In the initial stage of many contextual learning models, administrators identify potential employment options by collaborating with economic partners, employers and service agencies in a given area. New and existing businesses, development projects and other economic initiatives are evaluated for their potential as training sites. A potential employer’s commitment, ability to meet client needs, resource requirements and other interests are considered. As Kazis and Mills (1999) report, “successful initiatives require strategic planning and high-level corporate commitment” (p. 11).

Once a clear, collaborative employment-training initiative is established, the physical resources are put in place. There is latitude for employer involvement in this process, and because employers perceive benefit from their contributions, they usually need little encouragement to stay closely involved (Trutko, Nightingale and Barnow, 1999). There is shared agreement, often in writing, prior to client selection or program development, on the labour market needs to be met.

6.3.2 Acquisition of Specific Skill Sets

The goal is to provide a cluster of clients with a strategic set of workplace skills matching the labour market needs of a particular region.

Clients are recruited after administrative and physical resource requirements have been put in place (US Department of Labor, 1998). Recruited clients are usually assessed by qualified partners in health and education as well as by case managers and job supervisors. These joint assessments determine the potential of clients to meet the work demands set out in the employer partnership agreement. Case managers and job supervisors select those clients whose assessment profiles best match the job profile.

Flexibility is key to accommodating the changing needs of employers and clients. “Customized training provides a flexible arrangement; companies can help choose the training provider, suggest selection criteria for training applicants and provide their own instructors for the training” (Trutko, Nightingale, Barnow, 1999, p. 23). Training may occur before or during the initial stages of employment, and may be at the job site or at an education partner site. The training goal is to provide skills which match work force demands.

6.3.3 Partnerships

Extensive partnerships utilize new and existing community agencies to implement different program components.

The key factor distinguishing context-based models is the reliance on strategic practices to attract employers to the field of pre-employment. These programs acknowledge the potential in mutual partnerships with interested employers (Roberts and Padden, 1998) and usually begin with analysis of labour market needs and opportunities to create a 'job profile,' followed by a formal partnership agreement to work on fulfilling the profile.

Depending on the partnership agreement, case managers and job supervisors may be supplied by either of the partners. Initial collaboration and partnership sessions are usually opportunities to increase the proportion of community involvement with the program. Partnerships with Health and Community Services, Education, Justice as well as private and public education providers are all used to identify and remove client barriers. Employer contributions often include access to vital job information, access to work sites, mentoring and the promise of paid employment (Johnson, 1995).

6.3.4 Pre-defined Outcomes

Success is determined by attachment to the labour market as measured by matches between clients and available jobs.

The initial collaboration process and extensive labour market analysis of contextual programs usually ensures that clients will be employed for at least the duration of the program. Program duration would be written into the partnership agreement, and employers may or may not guarantee to retain clients at program end. However, the final selection process that pairs assessment-based client profiles with the job profile does increase the possibility of continued employment. The approach allows employers to essentially 'manufacture' employees, and they may be reluctant to let them go. A recent Urban Institute report supports this claim and adds, "Customization of the training program ensures that companies have input into the curriculum and get workers who will be productive from the first day on the job" (Trutko, Nightingale, Barnow, 1999, p.23). Depending on the details of partnership agreements, however, it may not be feasible for clients to retain their positions at the end of all contextual programs. They may, therefore, incorporate training to generate a range of employability skills that clients can bring to future jobs and job searches.

6.3.5 Application with Hard-to-Serve Clients

Contextual approaches may be targeted to those with multiple barriers, but this possibility remains subject to debate.

This approach offers the most opportunities for individualizing services or making program changes as clients progress through stages. The model is inherently flexible with an ability to 'tailor' program delivery to personal needs, even as they change (Johnson, 1995). The model is also the one which most respects the need of clients with multiple problems to make transitions between stages of preparation, readiness, entry, and retention because all stages are usually considered in the planning process. This model supports programs which maintain case-manager-client contact over time.

A note of caution: not all contextual learning strategies are suitable for hard-to-serve clients. The Caledon Institute argues that 'customized training,' because it operates on the basis of candidate selection, may be used to 'cream' superior candidates while overlooking the needs of clients with serious barriers (Torjman, 1999). The response to this argument is to place an onus on job developers and funders for the availability of specialized work opportunities in the labour market, and possible introduction of remedial education opportunities into certain programs (Marks, 1998).

7.0 RESEARCH RESULTS

Research inquiries covered client need, roles and responsibilities, partnerships and the management of client services.

7.1 Questionnaire Findings on Needs to Be Met in Pre-Employment Programming

Survey respondents across regions, across job categories, and regardless of community size, identified job related pre-employment needs over personal counselling, career counselling and education initiatives. The top three needs assigned importance by respondents, were:

- Job Skills
- Job Search Assistance
- On the Job Experience

In each of these three categories, community partners were inclined to assign higher needs values than HRE staff. For example, 92.7% of community partners assigned high importance to Job Skills whereas 81.3% of HRE personnel did so, but both groups gave Job Skills their highest single ranking. The three needs assigned least importance by all respondents were:

- Life Skills
- Advanced Education
- Personal Counselling

Again, both HRE and its partners are in substantial agreement on where these program services ranked. For example, even though partners gave Personal Counselling a slightly higher rating, this category was ranked lowest by both groups.

Overall, community partners were more likely to assign higher levels of importance to life skills and personal counselling, while HRE staff attached a slightly higher significance to the need for advanced education, although not a statistically significant one. Table 7:1 presents the findings.

TABLE 7:1		(N=212)			CSC 2000
Client Needs: Ranking (All Respondents)					
Ranking		Low	Moderate	High	%
		N.B. Some percentage errors due to rounding & occasional missing values			
1	Job Skills	2.4%	13.2%	83.5%	100%
2	Job Search Assistance	2.4%	16.0%	78.3%	100%
3	On the Job Experience	5.2%	20.3%	72.2%	100%
4	Career Counselling	3.3%	18.9%	71.7%	100%
5	Basic Education	4.7%	24.5%	70.3%	100%
6	Labour Market Information	4.2%	24.1%	67.9%	100%
7	Life Skills	7.1%	28.8%	62.7%	100%
8	Advanced Education	11.3%	28.3%	59.0%	100%
9	Personal Counselling	8.0%	34.9%	54.7%	100%
10	Other[3] (N = 31)	3.2%	7.0%	9.5%	

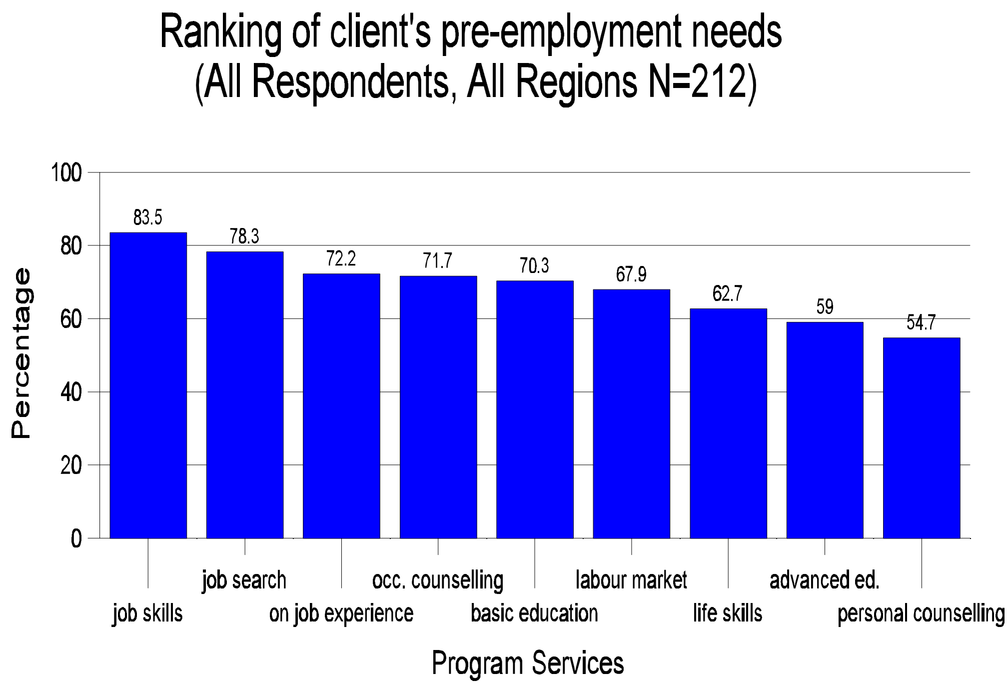
Cross-tabulation of the data by years of experience in the career counselling field (more or less than five years) shows a statistically significant relationship on one variable only: survey respondents with more than five years of experience were more likely (65% versus 50 %) to give a high needs rating to Advanced Education as a pre-employment service need, than were their counterparts with less than five years of experience in the field.

In all, however, the ranking from high to low, from Job Skills on the high end of needs to Personal Counselling on the low end, remained constant regardless of years of experience.

[3] Other needs identified and ranked by respondents included child care, transportation and financial assistance with daily living, in that order.

A visual description of the ranked needs clearly demonstrates where respondents have placed their emphasis.

Figure 7:1



Similar needs were repeated in open-ended responses on the questionnaire, at least 10% made additional references to either job counselling or career counselling when asked how to improve pre-employment for clients on their caseloads.

But are there regional variations in what respondents consider the needs to be? Although slight, these differences do exist as presented in the following figures.

Figure 7:2

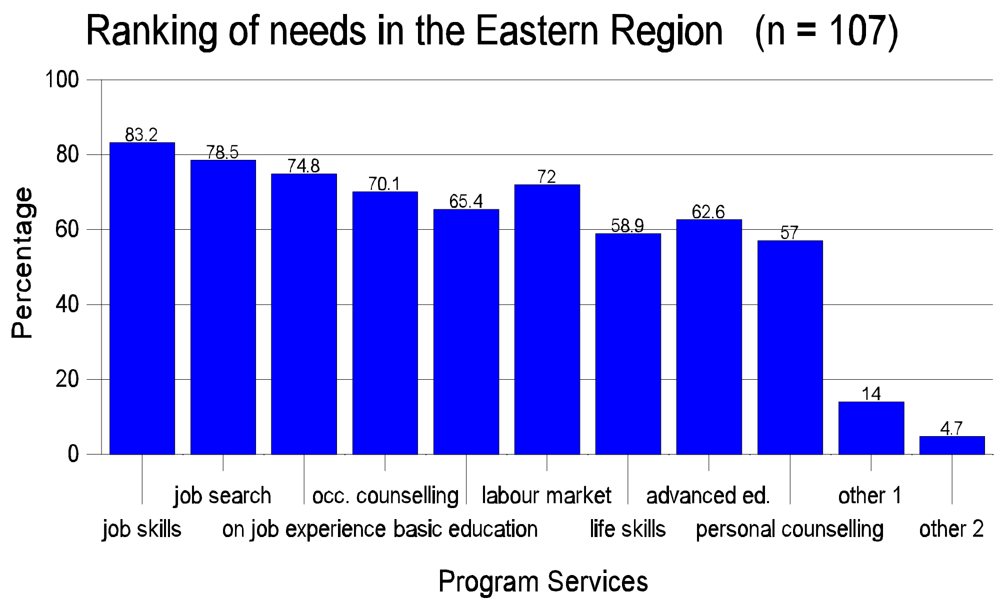


Figure 7:3

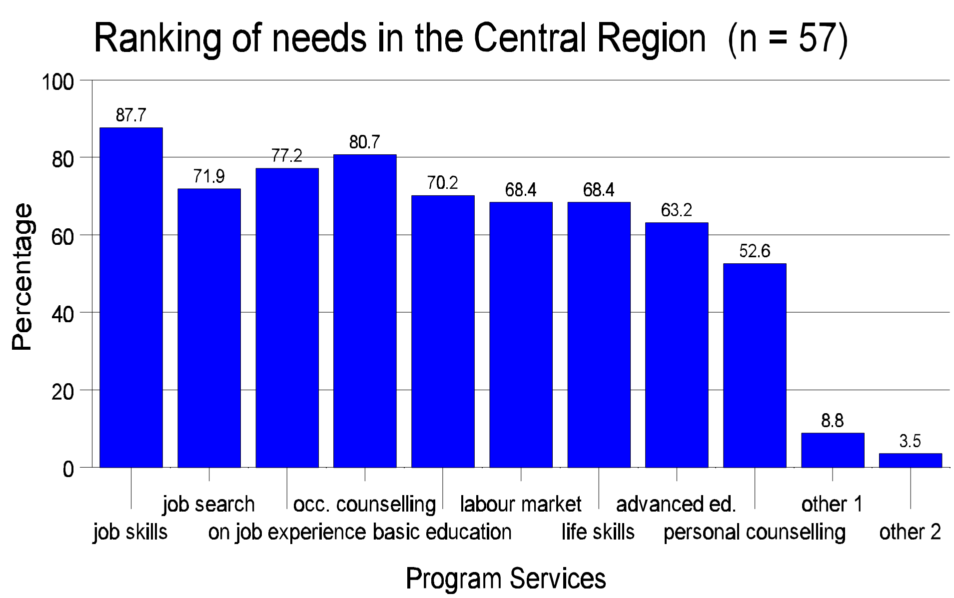


Figure 7:4

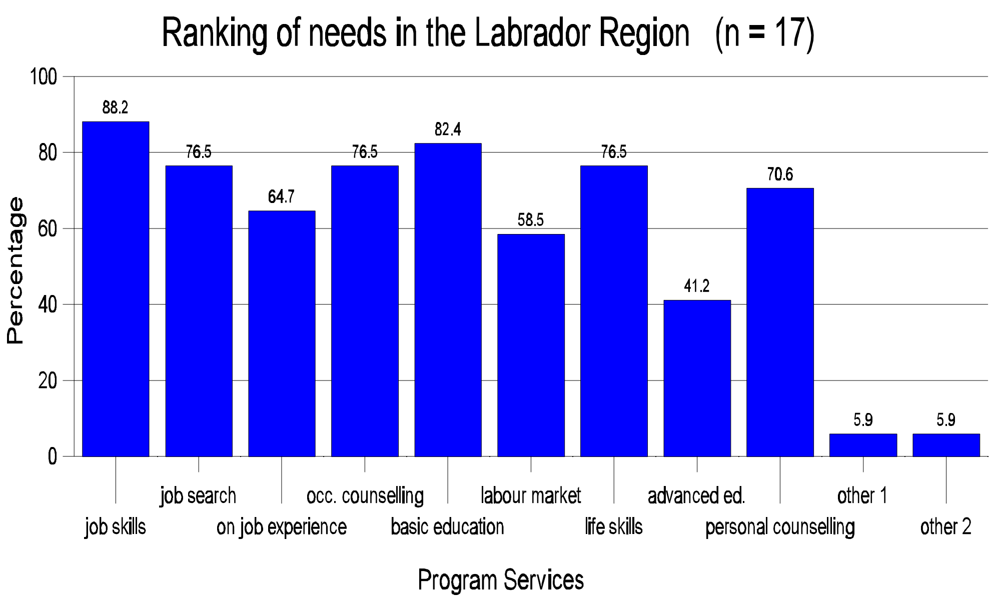
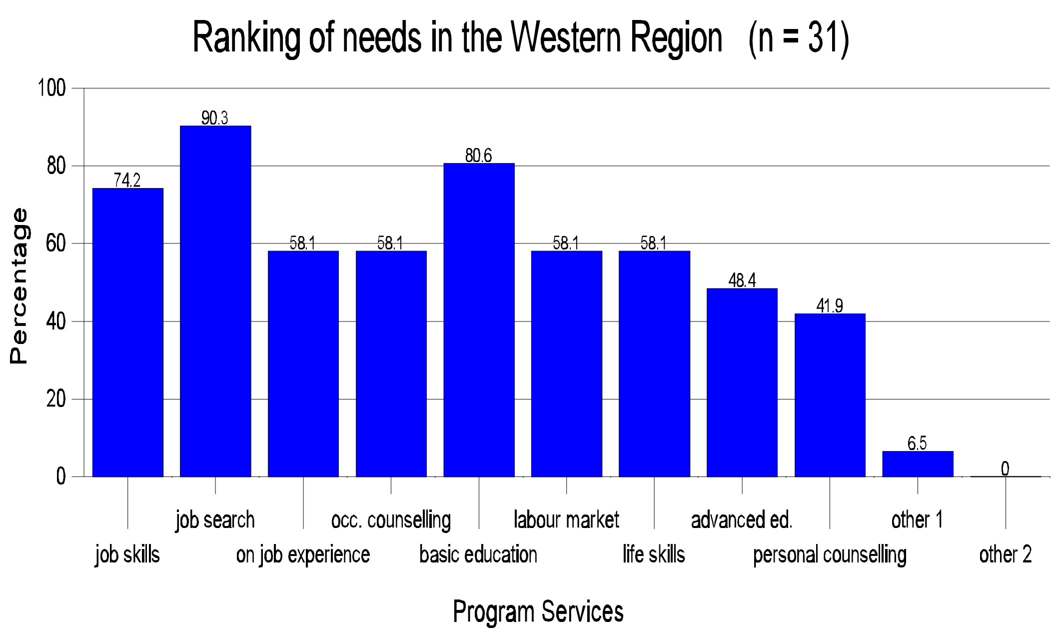


Figure 7:5



Eastern and Central region respondents are somewhat more likely to assign high value to the job skills and job search components of pre-employment, and less to the need for life skills and personal counselling.

Within the Western and Labrador regions, however, the trend is more towards identifying needs for basic education and life skills with personal counselling ranked more highly than in any other region.

Overall, however, regional differences are slight. Regardless of region, more emphasis has been placed on the skills components of pre-employment and less on the need for personal counselling. Where differences in ranking do occur, they are not sufficiently far from the average (mean) to create statistical significance.

7.2 Focus Group Findings on Needs to be Met in Pre-Employment

If the survey research identified client needs, then, the focus groups concentrated on where and how to start meeting them. It was abundantly clear that identifying and meeting the personal barriers to acquiring skills was their primary consideration.

During the focus group inquiries, participants moved discussion away from talk about need for hard skills or job-seeking assistance towards basic humanistic approaches for meeting the personal and social needs. Typical comments from the focus groups, included:

> *"It doesn't make any difference how much skills building you do if a client has no self-esteem. That's where pre-employment has to start. There is no point in assigning them to a skills project when they can't get out to go to it."*
>
> Focus Group Participant, Western Region

Confidence-building is important at a number of pre-employment levels. Clients may lack the confidence to check out educational and work options and run the risk of being labelled unmotivated. They may lack confidence in their abilities especially when faced with upgrading in a school or college setting because school represents an area where they have already experienced a measure of failure. Clients may require confidence-building around labour market issues because they feel defeated about a lack of jobs before they even begin to prepare for workforce participation.

> *"Pre-employment is actually a phase of complex investigation. You have to find out what the client needs and then identify those things with the client and then work on ways to overcome the barriers. It takes confidence to do that, and in pre-employment, that confidence has to be built up."*
>
> Focus Group Participant, Central Region

Confidence- building takes time, skills, and long term relationships within which clients and staff have an ability to establish rapport and trust. It may require more than one counselling method, and may extend to the use of group work or require a series of interventions, over time.

> "*Confidence-building is an important feature of pre-employment - perhaps even the most important. One on one counselling is needed but may not be enough. It may not be adequate, confidence grows out of interacting with people over time. There is no single best way to foster it."*
>
> Focus Group Participant, Western Region

7.3 Implications for Assessment

Focus group participants spoke at length about the need for both accuracy and detail in client assessments. They have high expectations that the initial assessment stage of pre-employment, if done well, provides a balanced picture of both skills and barriers. In addition, they see assessment as an opportunity for relationship-building and client empowerment. If assessment is done poorly, either too quickly or inaccurately, clients will be subjected to inappropriate referrals and eventual failure in programs.

> "The start of a genuinely mutual employment program should be an assessment of individual barriers to employment as well as an assessment of the participant's needs."
>
> *andy@welfarewatch.toronto.on.ca*

Most assessments compile historical records of what clients have done rather than what they are capable of doing and the majority of career counsellors want the assessment process to be more focused on client potential. This concern is shared by community partners. An educator said that colleges, for example, spend an inordinate amount of time re-assessing students who have been referred for upgrading or skills purposes because special needs have not been accurately determined.

Concerns about educational assessments are well-placed. Literacy is positively correlated with success in the workplace but accurate assessment of literacy levels remains difficult. Recent Canadian research indicates that status as a social assistance recipient (SAR) can represent a difference of from two to 2.5 years between reported grade levels and actual mastery of literacy functions. For example, a social assistance recipient reporting a grade nine credential, when tested, may function at approximately a grade seven level of mastery (Kapsalis, 1998).[4]

Component parts of the assessment process, as identified by participants, were:

- Determining basic demographic descriptions of clients
- Determining skills sets, either credentialed or transferrable skills based on prior learning
- Determining client motivation and interests
- Identifying barriers and ways to meet and overcome them
- Determining opportunities for programming and labor market attachment
- Arriving at joint agreement on an action plan

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[4] This finding might support attempts to move social assistance recipients into a work force quickly because a two-way relationship between literacy and employment is evident. Literacy improves employability but employment has a positive impact on literacy. Capturing the benefits of this 'virtuous cycle' appeals to proponents of a 'work-first' pre-employment strategy or those who support workfare programs (p. 18).

Importantly, research participants felt that client assessment cannot be done in isolation from the greater communities in which clients live and may hope to work and raise families. The following themes were prominent in the focus group:

- Assessments should be portable so that clients can take them to and from other programs once they have been developed.
- Assessments must be flexible and open to change over time as clients make changes in their lives. These changes need to be part of their record.
- Assessments are not checklists or snapshots of client need, they take time and are only successful when they result from a personally-developed relationship of inquiry and discovery. They are 'labor intensive,' and must allow staff to 'gain a sense' of a clients' employability.
- Options for client 'self-assessment' do not exist and should be explored, especially if they might save money; as self-assessment might be motivating and empowering.
- Assessment should focus less on 'credentials' of clients and more on what 'transferable skills' they bring to the assessment.
- Clients may need to have their skills both identified and laid out, as in an inventory, in order for them to appreciate the skills they do bring to the assessment. This will reduce their fear of the future.
- An assessment should record the level of client motivation - there is no point working with a client who does not wish to engage in pre-employment activity or who has repeatedly left programs.
- The process should include some assessment of labour market opportunities for clients based on their needs, wishes and interests, but realistically looking at opportunities. Not to do so is to engage in 'smoke and mirrors, brass and glass.'

In brief, it was recommended that assessments for pre-employment be detailed and well documented, that they be carried out over extended periods and be anecdotal as opposed to check-listed or pre-determined.

7.4 Roles and Responsibilities in Pre-Employment Programs

> *"At present, there is a lack of clarity regarding the specific roles and responsibilities of HRE staff and 3rd sector agency staff with respect to the delivery of employment and career services. The provisions of career counselling services was cited as one example of the lack of clarity within the current system. At present, there is a perception of duplication of these services between HRE staff and community agencies. Roles and responsibilities of both the department and 3rd sector agencies should be identified and clarified within the suggested framework."*
>
> (1999, Gallant, pp. 47-ff)

The CSC survey was designed to assist HRE in clarifying roles for both HRE staff and its community partners, especially in areas where earlier research (Gallant, 1999) indicated either confusion about responsibilities or potential for duplication. Examples might include responsibilities for assessment services to clients, control of the case management process and distinctions over which parties should be delivering counselling or career supports.

Respondents were asked to rank where HRE should put its major emphasis in pre-employment. In descending order of importance, survey respondents in all job categories and classifications ranked 'assessment of client need' highest, and 'delivery of life skills' lowest for the Department. This information brings a measure of clarity, therefore, to the role issues and it is reassuring that agreement exists on the findings.

TABLE 7:2						*CSC 2000*
Ranking of Program Stages in Descending Order						**(N=212)**
Ranking		Low	Moderate	High	Total	
		N.B. Some errors due to rounding				
1	Assessment of Client Need	1.9%	10.8%	86.8%	100%	
2	Linking Clients with Appropriate Interventions	2.8%	11.8%	84.9%	100%	
3	Counselling and Developing Employment Plans	3.8%	14.6%	79.7%	100%	
4	Identification of Clients	4.2%	16.0%	78.8%	100%	
5	Tracking Client Progress	3.3%	19.3%	76.4%	100%	
6	Measuring Outcomes	4.2%	21.7%	73.1%	100%	
7	Providing Work-Related Skills	13.2%	20.8%	65.1%	100%	
8	Delivery of Life Skills	17.5%	25.5%	56.1%	100%	

The CSC research indicates a clear acceptance, therefore, for HRE roles in identifying clients, assessing client need and linking to interventions with supported action plans and counselling. Respondents also agree that HRE's role includes the tracking and measuring components of pre-employment.

Room for duplication and dispute over roles will not be erased by the findings, however. They do lay the groundwork for agreement, but it is likely that negotiation and mutual goal-setting between HRE and its partners will be needed within both the partnership framework developed in 1999 and any new directions taken in pre-employment practices as the result of the CSC review.

HRE staff and the Department's community partners are in strong agreement that client identification (for pre-employment services) and preliminary assessments rest with the provincial government.

TABLE 7:3				*CSC 2000*
Agreement on Identification of Clients as a HRE Role				
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
• HRE	4.7%	14.6%	80.7%	100%
• Community Partners	2.6%	23.1%	74.4%	100%
Agreement on Assessment of Clients as a HRE Role				
• HRE	2.3%	9.9%	87.7%	100%
• Community Partners	-	15.0%	85.0%	100%

This agreement is widespread, not only across job descriptions, but between longtime career counsellors and front-line workers and less experienced staff.

TABLE 7:4				*CSC 2000*
Agreement with HRE's role as career counsellors and developers of employment plans for clients				
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Number of Years	*N.B. Some errors due to rounding*			
<5 years experience	3.6%	15.4%	81.1%	100%
>5 years experience	5.1%	12.8%	82.1%	100%

More than 80% HRE staff assign high importance to the 'linking' role and 90% of community partners are in agreement.

Again, this is a highly congruent finding which remains true, at the 80% plus range, regardless of length of time spent by staff in the workforce as employment or pre-employment workers.

TABLE 7:5				CSC 2000
Agreement with HRE's role to link clients with interventions				
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
• HRE	2.9%	12.9%	84.2%	100%
• Community Partners	2.5%	7.5%	90.0%	100%

The finding suggest the need within the Department to be knowledgeable about opportunities for interventions in their communities. Survey respondents from both groups were clear in open-ended responses that correct and detailed program information should be made available to them on a regular basis. At least 22 % referred to the benefit of inventories, categories, lists and bulletins to apprise them of available programming. This corroborates the information gap identified in the 1999 partnerships review (Gallant p. 38) as inhibiting the ability of HRE staff to make client referrals to appropriate community agencies. The finding is reported here for two purposes:

(1) to highlight the importance for any model of pre-employment programming to include structural remedies, and

(2) to indicate that the finding is province-wide, rather than confined to a particular region or as a function of community size.

Providing work-related skills to income-assisted clients is less likely to be considered an appropriate role for HRE. Approximately two-thirds (65%) of HRE staff or their community partners assigned importance to the role for HRE. This finding fits with the general direction of the Department in contracting with partners to provide direct skills, and leaves open for HRE the much higher expectation that linking clients to interventions is the appropriate challenge to be met by HRE staff.

There is even less perception among HRE personnel (55%) that HRE should directly provide life skills to its clients, although, interestingly, community partners were more likely (62.5%) to suggest that HRE should place its pre-employment emphasis on that role. (The difference is noted only in passing, and is not statistically significant.)

Roles are further clarified, however, in the way respondents rated where community partners should be placing their efforts. Respondents ranked the provision of skills highest for community partners and client identification lowest in an overall model of pre-employment services. In descending order, they rank:

TABLE 7:6						***CSC 2000***
Efforts by Community Partners (ranked in descending order)						**(N=212)**
Stages		Low	Moderate	High	Total
		N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
1	Providing Work Related Skills	2.8%	11.8%	84.4%	100%
2	Delivery of Life Skills	7.5%	22.2%	68.4%	100%
3	Tracking Client Progress	14.6%	28.3%	54.7%	100%
4	Measuring Outcomes	16.5%	27.4%	54.7%	100%
5	Assessment of Client Needs	15.6%	28.8%	54.2%	100%
6	Identification of Clients	22.2%	25.0%	50.9%	100%

7.5 Tracking Client Progress

Tracking the progress of income-assisted clients as they move into and through pre-employment has emerged as an essential component of any model of pre-employment.

Whose responsibility is it to track and monitor client progress? In an emerging case management system, these roles must be clarified in order to establish practices, assign resources and initiate procedures. This is essential if a model of pre-employment is to provide measured outcomes.

Survey respondents feel that HRE staff should assume the role of tracking clients. Community partners are also more likely to rate the role highly (82.5%) for HRE staff than Departmental staff themselves do (75.9%) but the difference is minimal. The same trend is true when respondents are asked about the importance of a role for HRE staff in measuring outcomes. Not quite three quarters (72.9%) of HRE staff assign a 'high' level of importance to their own role, while more (77.5%) of their community partners are willing to assign the role to HRE.

Career counsellors with fewer than five years of experience were slightly more likely to assign high importance to HRE's role in tracking client progress (80.8%) than their more experienced colleagues (75.2%) but again the difference is only slight. It may reflect, for example, increased familiarity with computer tracking possibilities in the case of younger employees. Or it may reflect the fact that new career-related staffing positions, perhaps filled by employees newer to HRE, have benefited from training opportunities which increasingly emphasize accountability measures.

7.6 A Note about Outcomes

The recent partnerships review (Gallant 1999) indicated a need to clarify outcomes (p 16). This problem is not unique to Newfoundland or even Canada. All jurisdictions reviewed by the Community Services Council are struggling with increased pressures, in resource-poor environments, to come up with proper results for program dollars. Pre-employment programming is no exception. The term itself - "pre-employment" - presupposes an employment outcome, and the majority of initiatives have used workforce attachment as a measure of success.

> In the language of the welfare bureaucracy, a "successful outcome" occurs when a client finds work or enrols in a training program that will launch him or her into the job market. But that perspective didn't correspond to the experience of OP participants, many of whom had worked diligently and made great progress with their 'action plans,' yet were still a long way from returning to the labour force.
>
> *"A New Model of Success," Waterloo, Ontario Opportunities Planning (OP)*

A model of pre-employment, even if concentrated on the early stages of client work, must be subject to measurement of success. But what might the outcomes be? The literature shows that many programs are rejecting narrow outcome definitions such as employment alone; much more likely to be encountered is the desire to measure 'increased self-sufficiency' in some form or another. However, little concrete direction is given on how this is to be done aside from anecdotally, beyond anecdotes in case files.

True outcomes must be measurable, therefore, benchmarks, either for individuals within programs or globally among target groups, will be required. There is a need for caution in this matter. Getting the outcomes right will avoid wasting resources on poorly designed data collection procedures, inappropriate staff training or 'measurement' time spent with clients who do not understand measurement procedures.

> *"For many years, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) have diligently reported aggregate "raw" data such as numbers of unduplicated clients, basic demographics, services offered and expenditures. These categories are mutually exclusive so that data from one category cannot be integrated with data from another. For example, an agency using this management reporting system could not differentiate a group of clients by age, race/ethnicity, family status, and income for any operating program or service offered. More than one CAA has wondered what the value of this data is or why it has been collected at all."*

(ROMA)

Ellen Marks (1999) developed a rural concept with four suggested outcomes in employment programming, each requiring the construction of suitable measures for Canadian purposes. Slightly adapted from the American (draft) paper, the outcomes are:

- dependency on the income support system (as measured by assistance dollars)
- economic well-being (as a measure of household income taking non-cash supports into consideration)[5]

[5] In Newfoundland these would include drug card benefits, transportation allowances, child care allowances and special needs allocations.

- employment status (measured by amount of time attached to the labour market, or earned incomes)
- child and family well-being (as a measure of child health, quality of interactions with parents, and measures of economic and emotional stress).

These outcome measures make sense in an environment committed to self reliance, but the complexity of developing measurable outcomes is increased when considering the findings of the focus groups.

The HRE system of career staff and community partners want measures which reflect personal gains as measured against personal goals.

General points which arose in the focus groups, and applicable to all regions surveyed, included the following:

- Find some way to measure the 'intangibles' of client success, or clients can look like failures when in fact many are not. This is especially true of the clients with the most problems and barriers, whose successes are seldom noted.
- Allow HRE to see and record outcomes over long periods.
- Other government departments who track client work should share their outcomes with HRE.

Importantly, focus group participants want the outcomes for clients graded or tiered. They want this done in two ways:

- A model should define 'acceptable outcomes' for pre-employment in a general way and then further determine how that definition applies within various target groups and local areas.
- Acknowledge that greater costs are associated with meeting the deepest needs and measure and report success differently for these clients and the programs or workers dealing with them.

Someone noted that a dropout in one system may in fact become a success in another system, at another time, yet HRE never gets credit for interventions which may have improved that person's eventual chances to succeed.

7.7 Targeting Clients for Pre-Employment

The Department of Human Resources and Employment has identified its pre-employment target groups to be youth, women, disabled persons and those on income assistance (Investing In Our Future: 1999). Youth entering the system as new clients are particularly worrisome to a department wishing to promote self-reliance and to offset dependence on income support systems. Women, especially householders, require targeting for themselves and as providers of nurturance for children. Disabled persons are understood to have special barriers requiring intervention and were the subject of a separate HRE-sponsored review in 2000.

The 2000 CSC research attempted to discern the opinions of staff and partners on which client groups should be targeted for pre-employment services. Respondents chose to identify clients with the deepest needs and gave them the highest rankings on this question.

Survey respondents were far more likely to say that long-term clients of the department are in need of pre-employment services than are short-term clients. They were also more likely to rate the need for services as higher for those clients with the least education.

TABLE 7:7 ***CSC 2000***

Need for pre-employment services

Target Group (Potential)	low	moderate	high	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
• long-term clients	3.8%	17.0%	77.4%	100%
• short-term clients	19.3%	41.5%	36.3%	100%

TABLE 7:8				*CSC 2000*
Need for pre-employment services by education				
Target Group (Potential)	low	moderate	high	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
• clients with lower education	2.8%	9.4%	86.3%	100%
• clients with higher education	22.6%	50.0%	25.9%	100%

Both findings point to a desire of Departmental staff and partners to tackle deep and enduring problems of the client groups served by HRE. Newer entrants to the Department are known to have slightly improved levels of education in recent years (HRE, 1999) and may, therefore, be thought of as having fewer pre-employment needs by respondents.

Department of HRE targeting for youth makes sense when the potential for early intervention is considered, and some respondents see hope in working with young adults entering the system.

> *"The best clients to access on these issues are the 18-21 year olds. Most have no employment history and these should be the main target group to help with employment. This could save a lot of money now and in the future."*
>
> Survey Respondent, Central Region

Others, however, wanted to broaden the spectrum of client services:

> *"Not only the youth are at risk. We have clients in their early thirties or mid forties who for various reasons have not worked for several years or perhaps never worked, although they have completed post-secondary diploma courses. They need services similar to those provided for youth life skills training, job shadowing, paid work placements. They must prove that they can be depended upon to have a serious attitude to work and will show up for work every day."*
>
> Focus Group Participant, Eastern Region

In fact, any age group of SARs may carry a unique argument for targeting services. Youth may represent early intervention possibilities, but slightly older clients, especially if they have established households, may represent higher income support costs, both in the short-term and the long-term. These sentiments may be reflected in responses to questions about targeting age groups in the SAR population. Respondents were unwilling to promote the needs of youth over others, at least to any significant degree.

TABLE 7:9				***CSC 2000***
Ranked Age Groups by need for pre-employment services (all respondents)				**(N-212)**
Age Group	low	moderate	high	Total
	Total are rounded			
• 19-24 year olds	0.9%	16.0%	82.5%	100%
• 25-34 year olds	1.9%	21.2%	76.9%	100%
• 35 plus year olds	8.0%	25.0%	65.1%	100%
• 15-18 year olds	13.7%	16.5%	63.2%	100%

Although there is a slight tendency towards favouring services for 19 to 24 year olds, the ranking is not much stronger than for 25 to 34 year olds. In addition, overall age distinctions are unclear, especially when the least likely group to be targeted is the youngest.[6]

In general, therefore, survey respondents appear to have taken a generalist approach to targeting clients for pre-employment, placing need across age groups and towards those who have been clients the longest. Those clients with the least education are seen to have the highest needs.

6 Few 15 to18 year-olds, of course are income-assisted clients. But the overwhelming desire to focus on early intervention strategies raised in province-wide discussion groups might have been reflected here, considering the amount of attention it received in the focus groups.

7.8 Partnerships

> *"You make partnerships with people you know and it's great for us and our clients that I can just walk down the hall and talk to someone at HRDC. On the other hand, I used to work with Health, so I'm likely to call someone at Health & Community Services, just because I know someone in that office."*
>
> Focus Group Participant, Central Region

Partnerships and potential linkages to other government departments were examined in both the survey and focus group inquires.

In focus group discussion, participants were asked to identify the stages of pre-employment at which it would be most strategic to develop partnerships. Invariably, the answer was at the service delivery stage, where clients could receive funding, skills, education or counselling support.

7.8.1 Partnerships in General

The word 'partnership' is used so often it has lost any real meaning, according to some focus group participants. Many believe that partnerships need to be more formal, otherwise no one knows what they are supposed to be doing. Letters of agreement, contracts and memoranda of agreements would be more useful than a 'handshake' approach, according to some.

> In designing your project it may be helpful to consider:
>
> - What are the common principles, beliefs and values upon which the partnership will be built?
> - What are the major collective objectives of the partnership?
> - Is a formal relationship necessary, or would a memorandum of agreement suffice?
>
> *Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada*

Others are more comfortable with personal partnership building, office by office, staff team by staff team. They resist what they believe might become a 'top down' approach to forming partnerships, perhaps too quickly and without sufficient attention to local needs or abilities to deliver service. In particular, they fear being told to establish partnerships with other departments whose staff are already overworked and operating with separate mandates. This was mentioned most often in connection with health care services, which are seen by participants in this review to be struggling with their own and resource constraints.

There was, nevertheless, a strong general agreement on moving ahead with partnership approaches in the pre-employment model. Provincial government departments were considered particularly useful in helping HRE gain access to clients with pre-employment needs.

Participants in the review advised that HRE offices should, through demographic surveys or joint discussions, determine where unemployed clients are ‘clustered, then develop working relationships with the departments serving these special needs populations. The provincial Department of Justice was mentioned at a number of focus groups. Participants saw this as an appropriate way to strengthen HRE's 'identification' role in two ways: (1) income-assisted clients do not self-refer for a host of reasons, and (2) even programs dedicated to identification of clients (such as Labrador’s native ‘search and recognition’ process) need help in reaching the hardest to serve clients.

In addition, there was discussion in focus groups about the need to engage ‘whole communities’ in pre-employment partnerships. Some participants felt that HRE should look further into the potential for skills building for clients with:

- the faith community, where a tradition of helping is matched with organization skills, philosophies of equalitd support for personal well-being and community growth
- the emerging economic zonal board structure, where expertise is developing on how to identify economic opportunities and potential job sites

A small number of participants recommended the development of a pool of interested citizens who might be open to personal mentoring with income-assisted clients who require support and confidence-building in addition to job skills.

7.8.2 Ranking of Partnership Opportunities

The CSC survey instrument asked respondents to reflect on future partnership arrangements and rate with whom they should be developed. This question, therefore, was aimed at future directions for the Department. In descending order, they are:

TABLE 7:10				*CSC 2000*
Ranking of Pre-Employment Partners (All Respondents)				**(Descending Order)**
Potential Partner	A Little	Some What	Very Much	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
HRDC	0.9%	2.8%	95.8%	100%
Employers	1.9%	11.8%	85.8%	100%
Department of Education	3.8%	14.2%	81.6%	100%
Non-Profit Groups	6.6%	20.8%	71.7%	100%
Health & Community Services	8.0%	28.3%	63.2%	100%
DDRR	10.8%	31.1%	57.1%	100%

7.8.3 Partnerships with HRDC

The potential partnership arrangements most highly valued by both respondent groups, regardless of community size, is the one with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

TABLE 7:11				*CSC 2000*
HRDC as a Pre-Employment Partner				
Community Size	A little	Somewhat	Very Much	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
< 5,000	0.9%	4.7%	94.3%	100%
> 5,000	1.0%	1.0%	98.1%	100%
Job Status				
• HRE Staff	1.2%	2.4%	96.5%	100%
• Community Partners	-	4.9%	95.1%	100%

This congruence is understandable. Both departments share human resource goals. In addition, the 1999 province-wide training on Enhanced Screening and Assessment (ESA) by HRE has substantially heightened awareness of federal benefits for provincially income-assisted clients and resulted in benefits which HRE staff wish to continue.

Co-location of HRE and HRDC sites in several Newfoundland centres has increased knowledge of federal funding opportunities, procedures and services. Importantly, co-location in general has improved opportunities for personal relationship building.

7.8.4 Partnerships with Employers

The desire to partner with employers, ranked second by respondents, was also clearly felt regardless of community size or job status of respondents.[7]

TABLE 7:12				***CSC 2000***
Employers as Potential Partner				
Community Size	A little	Somewhat	Very Much	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
< 5,000	3.8%	13.2%	83.0%	100%
> 5,000	-	10.5%	89.5%	100%
Job Status				
• HRE Staff	2.4%	11.8%	85.9%	100%
• Community Partners	-	12.2%	87.8%	100%

Employers generally enter into partnerships only if they perceive potential value for their own operations. They may hope to get more highly skilled workers, an improved corporate image (Brown, Buck & Skinner, 1998) or even direct financial gain. These factors have not been

[7] Open-ended responses in the summary, interestingly, seldom mentioned employers. Two brief statements were made about 1) having employers offer more job opportunities, and 2) asking employers to advise HRE of job openings.

examined in this research, but they will need to be explored if HRE decides to pursue partnerships with employers.

The pre-employment literature shows that the majority of employer partnerships related to economic development have been with educational institutions, rather than government departments alone. Examples of employer partnerships include mentorships, scholarships, career planning advice, job shadowing opportunities, expert advice on curriculum, and the supply of labour market information.[8]

If a model of pre-employment in the province is to use employer partnerships, it must be determined which employers are open to partnerships and what form they might take. The CSC survey indicated a strong desire to partner with employers but focus group inquiries could not elicit specific details of a partnership beyond the idea that employers have job opportunities which HRE staff wish to tap for clients. Job shadowing, apprenticeship opportunities and work experience were all raised briefly in focus groups, but questions about how to approach, engage or entice partners went largely unanswered.

7.8.5 Partnerships with Community Groups

Effective use of community partners is a stated goal of the Department of Human Resources and Employment. This goal is rooted in the province's *Strategic Social Plan*. The SSP advocates movement away from institution-based service delivery systems toward use of services governed

[8] An excellent local example of an education employer relationship on pre-employment would be the Iron Ore Company of Canada (IOCC) partnership with the College of the North Atlantic (CONA) in Labrador City where CONA has developed a three-year Mining and Mineral Processing Program (MMPP) for 120 students. It includes advanced science, math and technology training in addition to trades programming and will hopefully meet labour needs at the mine caused by an aging and retiring work force. The college administers seven academic semesters, students pay personal tuition and IOCC provides three paid work terms. Planning and developing the partnership took 18 months. Similar compacts to fill labour gaps have been made between the auto industry and American community Colleges for many years and are characterized by high levels of trust (Harrison, Weiss, 1998, p.140. 5).

in the non-profit sector, whenever possible (p. 28). The issue was examined in both focus groups and the survey.

Focus group participants felt the success of many pre-employment programs depends on the availability of community staff who are good at facilitation, and have experience meeting client needs.

Keeping these personnel available to the Department as community partners makes it essential that HRE develop longer term partnerships with community groups so that staff turnover is reduced and good people are kept active in the field.[9] Participants believe that time spent by their community partners in negotiating funds to stay in business is ‘daunting’ and drains energy away from client service.

Participants felt:

- Fundable projects go ‘in and out of fashion’ so a pre-employment ‘model’ might consider adopting one approach; sticking to it, and encouraging federal funders to do the same.

They see this approach as leading to a stable supply of community groups with staff skills maintained over time. Local, as opposed to regional, personnel should be asked who the community partners should be and how long partnerships should last, according to participants. Otherwise, regional needs have a tendency to ‘overcome’ local needs, which workers feel differ quite dramatically around the province.

An interesting response profile emerges from the survey when respondents were asked about the appropriateness of non-profit partnerships in providing future pre-employment services.

Two-thirds of HRE personnel indicated they 'very much' believe the Department should partner with such groups, whereas community partners consider themselves essential to pre-employment partnerships.

[9] A number of focus group participants referred to related findings from the 1999 partnership review.

TABLE 7:13				*CSC 2000*
Non-profit Community Groups as Potential Partners				
Job Status	A little	Somewhat	Very Much	Total
• HRE Staff	8.3%	25.4%	66.3%	100%
• Community Partners	-	2.4%	97.6%	100%

The lowered response to the idea of non-profit groups as partners appears to be a rural phenomenon on close inspection. It possibly reflects the need to strengthen non-profit capacity in smaller regions before staff will prove willing to enter into pre-employment partnerships. Partnerships, in general, tend to be developed with those we know and understand. In larger communities, where a number of non-profit agencies already exist, the agencies are more highly valued as potential pre-employment partners. For their part, community groups express interest in partnering with HRE, regardless of community size.

TABLE 7:14				*CSC 2000*
Non-Profit Community Groups as Potential Partners				
Community Size	A little	Somewhat	Very Much	Total
> 5,000 population	3.8%	15.2%	81.0%	100%
< 5,000 population	9.5%	26.7%	63.8%	100%

The responses need to be reviewed in context. Two things are worthy of note: community groups exhibit a sincere desire to remain in partnership arrangements with HRE, and HRE staff, while enthusiastic, may need more support for partnership development.

7.8.6 Partnerships with Department of Education

Partnerships with educators, whether school boards, the provincial department or local schools, were most often raised by focus groups as prevention strategies. Participants feel HRE should be working more closely with educators to offset problems they feel are looming in schools. These are easily identified, they feel, yet are unsuccessfully dealt with until youth have aged and entered an adult support system. Aging simply takes them out of the eligibility time frame for school opportunities - they turn 19 and then have few options besides assistance.

Schools already know which youth will do poorly or who are at risk of adult dependence on an income assistance system. They should impart this information to HRE and, jointly, the departments should work on interventions. Related recommendations are as follows.

- Educators must more fully embrace the practices of exposing youth to the workforce and should work with HRE and other partners to arrange for this to happen.
- Schools must put more emphasis on teaching life skills (particularly decision-making and goal-setting) at earlier ages because many pre-employment clients seem to have missed these skills in their background.
- Schools might consider tracking graduates for outcomes, and sharing the information with HRE on a local basis.
- Local schools and HRE offices should jointly discuss reasons for dropping out of school, and why graduates or drop-outs leave without essential skills.

Recognizing that partnership is a two-way process, some field workers were also willing to suggest that HRE more actively insert itself and its staff into the school process:

- HRE staff who are knowledgeable about how to ‘maintain’ jobs with coaching, life skills and mentoring should pass this expertise along to educators willing to work with youth in co-op programs.

There was substantial agreement, in the 80% and more range, on the appropriateness of partnerships with Education, ranked third overall as a potential partner for pre-employment within the survey responses of this review. There were no discernible differences by community size or job status as to the potential for pre-employment partnerships with the provincial Department of Education, indicating widespread support for making stronger links to education, in particular those in the K-12 system.

TABLE 7:15				CSC 2000
Department of Education as a Potential Partner				
Community Size	A little	Somewhat	Very Much	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
< 5,000	4.7%	14.2%	81.0%	100%
> 5,000	2.9%	14.3%	82.9%	100%
Job Status				
• HRE Staff	4.1%	13.5%	82.4%	100%
• Community Partners	2.4%	17.1%	80.5%	100%

7.8.7 Partnerships with Health Care Providers

The Health and Community Services partnership potential, ranked fifth in the survey responses, is more often cited by HRE's community partners than by its staff. Responses are consistent across community size.

TABLE 7:16				CSC 2000
Health & Community Services as Potential Partner				
Job Status	A little	Somewhat	Very Much	Total
	N.B. Some errors due to rounding			
• HRE Staff	9.4%	32.4%	58.2%	100%
• Community Partners	2.4%	12.2%	85.4%	100%
Community Size				
< 5,000	11.3%	26.4%	62.3%	100%
> 5,000	4.8%	30.5%	64.8%	100%

The greater likelihood of partners identifying Health and Community Services (85.4% versus 58.2%) is a statistically significant difference, and may relate to the greater use by community agencies of HCS staff for counselling referral services.

The goal of a health care organization is to improve the health of the population it serves. This goal may or may not extend to direct assistance with pre-employment measures. Health care providers in Canada are increasingly subscribing to a 'population health' model of service delivery which measures the general indicators of health in a population and works toward amelioration of conditions which decrease health status. Recent Newfoundland research confirms that rural health status in this province, as reported by citizens, is lower than it is in urban centres (Segovia, 1998).

The nine indicators of population health:

1. Income & Social Status
2. Social Support Networks
3. Education
4. (Employment) Working Conditions
5. Physical Environments
6. Biology & Genetics (& Gender)
7. Personal Health Practices & Coping Skills
8. Healthy Child Development
9. Health Services

Population Health Promotion Model: A Resource Binder (1998) Population Health Branch, Saskatchewan Health

Although Health and Community Services was less highly ranked as a potential partner for HRE staff and its existing community partners, the changing philosophies of health offer an opportunity for shared goals and program planning which should be explored for greater use of partners in an integrated system. HCS and its own partners (usually community-based counsellors on a contract) were suggested at various points in the research phase as partners for direct social and personal counselling to pre-employment clients. As in the case of employer partnerships, however, there was little clear direction given on how the partnerships would be struck or executed. Most respondents simply indicated that health referrals for counselling amounted to a partnership arrangement, especially if HRE staff had personal working relationships with health workers.

7.8.8 Partnerships with DDRR

TABLE 7:17				*CSC 2000*
DDRR as a Potential Partner in Pre-employment Services				
Community Size	A little	Somewhat	Very Much	Total
< 5,000 (Smaller)	11.4%	27.6%	61.0%	100%
> 5,000 (Larger)	10.5%	35.2%	54.3%	100%
Job Status				
• HRE Staff	11.8%	30.2%	58.0%	100%
• Community Partners	7.3%	36.6%	56.1%	100%

Professionals who serve clients in smaller communities are somewhat more likely to identify DDRR as a potential partner. HRE staff are (very slightly) more likely to do so than their community partners. In general, however, DDRR is perceived much less often by everyone as a potential partner.

Rural populations present the greatest difficulties in moving income-assisted clients from dependence on income support to self-reliance or employment-based earnings (Marks,1999). There are fewer employment partners in rural areas, incomes are persistently lower, and distances to travel for support services or employment opportunities are greater. All of these challenges were articulated in the focus groups conducted by CSC.

This challenge is generally met, according to the literature in the American model, by alliances between income support providers and community or economic developers who work in tandem to create employment or to identify opportunities for employer expansion.[10] A pre-employment model for Newfoundland and Labrador, therefore, may need to explore much closer relationships between HRE, its goals, and the practices of economic recovery.

[10] American and European efforts in rural communities have focused on tourism, creation of retirement communities, niche marketing for rural products, and information technology (Bollman, Bryden, 1997).

Survey results indicate that support for such initiatives exists in rural parts of the province, but is weaker in urban areas.

7.8.9 Partnership Development

For the most part, both survey respondents and focus group participants assumed that 'partnerships' referred to contractual arrangements made by HRE with service contractors, for the benefit of clients with needs. Examples of open-ended survey responses about the need for new, as opposed to existing, partnerships illustrate this point where the desire for partnerships most often articulated were about educational opportunities. In particular, respondents outlined the desire for literacy partnerships and basic educational opportunities. The following response was typical, if somewhat longer than most:

> *"Partnerships should be developed with local literacy groups who should offer ABE walk-in programs. A basic education is a must for many clients who want to expand their education to post-secondary training. HRE should sponsor and financially support community ABE. The closest ABE classes (CONA) are over 130 km. from our towns. This is too much of an inconvenience and cost for clients."*
>
> Questionnaire Response, Central Region

Partnership development takes time, energy, skill and, ultimately, resources, even if costs and risks are shared among partners.

The CSC 2000 research represents only an initial phase of partnership development, that of identification of potential partners. Even that process has been one-sided, in that the inquiry has been limited to HRE staff and existing partners who are already dedicated to pre-employment services in the province. It has not examined what employers, educators, federal government departments or health care workers may seek in pre-employment partnership with HRE.

At the very minimum, partnership development beyond the identification phase will require:

- C outreach to selected partners
- C negotiated agreement on being partners
- C development of joint goals and objectives
- C planning tasks of each partner
- C agreement on how to review progress.

The model for pre-employment, if it is to have a significant and successful partnership component, will have to develop skills within the HRE and community groups on identifying partners, negotiating partnership arrangements and executing and evaluating partnerships over time. Partnership development steps are appended to this report.

7.9 Case Management Approach and Data Tracking

> *"I'm not always sure what clients do want, but I know what they don't want - they don't want to tell their story over and over again, every time they come in or meet a new staff person."*
>
> Focus Group Participant, Labrador Region

Case management is originally a medical tool now being adapted to other fields. It is of particular help when a single agency is primarily responsible for the care or support of a client, but treatment, services, or support options are available at other agencies. Recommendations from focus group discussions suggest that case management:

- should be provided to any client of the Department who wishes to work on an employment goal.

- should be co-ordinated by career development specialists but receive input from front-line staff and community partners.

- should begin with non-intimidating procedures such as an 'information' session laying out the option of being case managed.

- should be carried out over time rather than extended as a 'life line' and then withdrawn at some later point.

- should be combined with the efforts of other partners working with clients.
- requires staff training and development.

Case management has become a marked feature of pre-employment and employment counselling over the past decade (Marks, et al., 1999). It fills the need for a central role in organizing services in order to get the maximum service with minimal duplication of effort and it creates opportunities for measuring client success over time and across disciplines. Combined with up-to-date electronic data sharing systems, case management holds out the possibility that employment action planning can become truly client-centred. Research participants are enthusiastic about the potential for case managing pre-employment clients.

The Department of HRE is currently revising its financial management procedures by measuring how clients ‘cycle’ in and out of the social assistance caseload (HRE, 1999) and by keeping track of earned incomes. This will ensure that clients are reviewed for financial assistance only as often as required for prudent accountability purposes. The new system will be automated and allow determination of eligibility to be based on client case history rather than on a standard annual or quarterly review.

This measurement procedure should be used to provide workforce attachment information to HRE staff with pre-employment assessment duties, who are interested in reviewing the data for building employment action plans and developing job maintenance functions into their counselling procedures. As a result, they recommended in the CSC review that pre-employment case management practices be tied more closely to the financial management procedures now under review in HRE.

Our review of the program profiles in Volume II and the literature on case management indicates that an employment plan usually follows both the initial assessment phase and at least a portion of the client’s participation in a program. In other words, the in-house assessment phase alone is unlikely to provide sufficient information for a comprehensive action plan. A personal plan is likely to be more meaningful, or to offer a better chance of successful completion, if it is combined with active programming.

The movement to case management, whether in health care, legal circles (where it is enjoying a boom) or pre-employment has not been done solely to create orderly management systems, but to make effective use of limited resources (Mullally, 1997). This strengthens the argument, therefore, to manage only a portion of cases. The province's pre-employment approach must include a process for determining priorities in establishing caseloads, because overall need by sheer numbers or even target groups, as currently articulated, suggest very large numbers of potential cases.

A‘ saturation’ approach to client service has some advantages in that staff overlook no one who may wish to be case managed. It is fair in offering the same opportunities to all clients, and some work-first programs have adopted the practice to eliminate assessment costs (WIN, 1997) and allow clients to self-select for programs. Case management is an intensive process, however, and financial and staffing limitations may dictate fewer numbers, a process known as ‘funneling’ in health care literature (Zander, 1998).

Case management works best when certain features fall into place. Some principles of successful case management include:

- Central ownership of the case management role is recognized.
- All parties, including clients, understand their roles.
- Client information is shared on a need to know basis.
- Clients have some control over what information is shared.
- Success is measured and reported so that evaluations can be conducted.
- Cases are selected for management on the basis of known criteria.

Adapted: Various Sources

Criteria needs will have to be met in any model which links, as this review was meant to do, pre-employment with a system of data tracking and monitoring. Expectations for data tracking are high.

Research participants foresee a system with the potential to track a great deal of data over long periods of time and which will allow sharing of data between service delivery systems. They assume a tracking system will allow the collection, storage and retrieval of the very detailed assessment data described earlier in this report. They hope a data system will provide quick access to undated personal information which is of use to both them and clients in making career decisions.

In addition, they want some assurance that the system will be built with not only their own, but overall departmental, requirements in mind so that requests for client data can be filled easily and swiftly when sought by departmental heads.

Focus group finding on data tracking and monitoring included:

- Monitoring clients requires more than a 'spreadsheet' approach to keeping numbers; data sources must contain significant amounts of narrative descriptive information.
- Sharing data must be possible:
  - T between two levels of government
  - T within provincial government departments.
  - T between and with community agents who are delivering services
- Data tracking and monitoring will require confidentiality protocols for internal and external use.
- Clients should have some control over what personal information can be shared with whom, under what circumstances, and over what periods of time.
- Data tracking will require equipment and physical resources in addition to training.

The ability to track clients engaged in pre-employment activities is of more interest to some staff than others. In particular, staff and community partners who have had exposure to the HRDC client adjustment and tracking systems (CATS) seem far more likely to be interested in the potential for client tracking than those who have not.

The amount of detail research respondents want tracked on behalf of clients will impact on criteria for case management selection. This review suggests that criteria will have to consider and measure client motivation, the skills brought to pre-employment by clients, the skills they must acquire within a labour market context, the barriers they must overcome and the long term nonlinear retention and advancement strategies needed to improve their self-reliance. Tying case management to a tracking system, therefore, will require sophisticated data collection, storage and retrieval systems.

8.0 SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This review examined pre-employment models and structure in other jurisdictions and gathered advice and opinions of HRE staff and community partners on the best approaches to meeting client needs.

8.1 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is presented as an overview of the environment within which pre-employment approaches must be taken and which highlights challenges as outlined in the research process. Different economic circumstances in the province, in particular an abundance of entry level jobs, might have allowed for more radical approaches to pre-employment, such as quick entry to job sites or sanctions for failing to adhere to job search plans.

Instead, the Department of HRE, as it redesigns itself in an atmosphere of continued restraint, must make effective use of existing resources and links to other departments with resources. Moving forward in this regard, however, requires more than identification of potential partners. Ideally, it would become the subject of a concerted, joint effort among government departments.

8.2 Parameters

Research participants made recommendations for positive change and focused their suggestions on long term strategies. Their suggestions fit with emerging knowledge on pre-employment in many instances, but depart from the overall trend in welfare-to-work strategies which focus on punitive measures and sanctions.

This report builds on the advice of career counsellors and practitioners who recognize the need to take the following approaches to building its model:

- Meet both personal and skills needs in the client groups
- Commit to long term interventions
- Make connections to labour markets
- Start earlier in the life cycle

- Adopt outcomes based on achievable goals set locally
- Work with both established and new partners
- Measure progress in ways which make sense to clients and staff

The suggested design elements build a framework for practices and programs to enhance the ability of clients to improve self-sufficiency and, in the long term, to reduce reliance on income assistance measures.

The design elements which follow build on established best practices, the professional opinions of employment staff and partners, and client need. They accept that pre-employment needs of income-assisted clients are not simple and will not be easily met.

The elements also acknowledge that many directions being taken within the provincial Department of HRE are congruent with emerging knowledge in the field, and overlay this with new knowledge about directions which suit the provincial context.

8.3 Model Characteristics

A model of pre-employment, therefore, should link (Figure 8.2) HRE, clients and partners with a shared commitment to contextual pre-employment approaches. Doing so in this province will require HRE to commit its resources to pre-employment activities that combine education and skills development with labour force attachment strategies and post-employment services. In turn, this requires HRE to seek, build and maintain partnerships which are able to identify new opportunities for income-assisted clients.

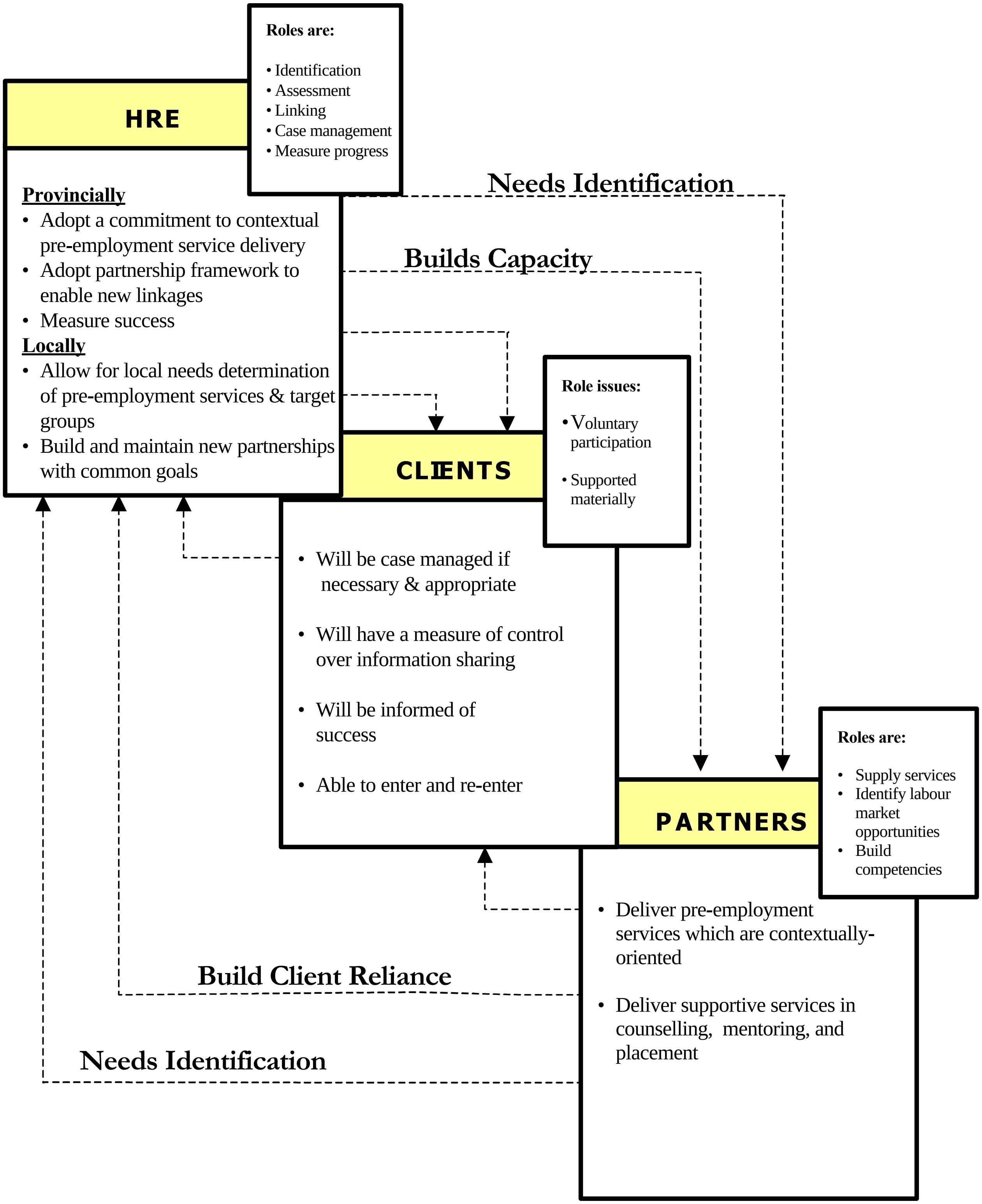
Conceptual Framework

ENVIRONMENT

- HRE provides services for a dispersed population of clients with generally low levels of education and varying degrees of attachment to the work force.
- Employment conditions, while improving, do not offer sufficient entry level jobs and labour market conditions are affected by seasonal changes.
- Rural services and partnerships opportunities have lagged behind those in urban centres.

Skills & Knowledge Base	Challenges	Model Design Elements
Client needs are basic and non-linear	Build personal competency & skills of clients	Concentrate on contextual learning arrangements
Employment is a long term goal for clients	Determine and adopt acceptable outcomes to show success	Measure success incrementally
Needs are understood locally	Flexibility to design local programming	• Vary target groups & program services by local need & capacity
Desire for linkages & partnerships	Build capacity in rural & urban regions	• Develop expertise on partnering

Figure 3: MODEL OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT



8.4 Key Recommendations

Clients require intervention and supports which range from personal counselling through the provision of basic education to the development of job skills and support in both securing and maintaining employment. There is no evidence from either the literature on hard to serve clients or the extensive review carried out with staff and partners that working on either end of this spectrum of need will improve the self-reliance of clients. Intensive and long term pre-employment services, rather, regardless of the region within which they live, their age, or education level, are the recommended approaches for HRE clients.

Career counsellors who work with income-assisted persons clearly expect a model of pre-employment to concentrate on the assessment of both skills and barriers in the client population. They expect, in fact, that assessment will form the foundation for all case management and client planning activities, which fits most closely with the contextual model of pre-employment described in the review. There is strong support for the development of new partnership approaches in pre-employment, which is vital to a contextual model of support.

Taking a work-first approach to pre-employment would demand more of the provincial economy than it is currently able to supply in terms of entry level jobs. The literature review raised concerns about the ability of work-first approaches to increase the self-reliance of income assisted clients, if reliance is measured by long term attachment to the workforce with opportunities for advancement, and reductions of poverty.

Taking a preparation-first approach to pre-employment activity has more support in the field, but literature findings indicate higher costs associated with the approach and frustration among staff when the achievement of educational goals does not equate with meeting workforce goals. These concerns were aired in some of the focus groups held during the review.

8.4.1 Contextual Approach

The model of pre-employment which best meets the needs of the province is a *contextual labour market* approach which sets out to meet personal, educational and skills building goals while planning eventual attachment to specific labour market opportunities. This approach fits well with case management service delivery, a focus already adopted by the department, and allows for the development of broad measures of client success.

Adopting the approach has some challenges, in that review participants identify those who have been clients longest, and those with the least amounts of education, as having the most needs to be met in the model. The challenge will be to develop contextual learning and skills opportunities, which meet the needs of those who are hardest-to-serve.

Based on the key findings, as outlined in Section 3.0, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration:

Recommendation Number One:

The Department should support pre-employment strategies and programs which demonstrate a contextual approach to learning and labour market attachment on behalf of individual clients.

Some of the strategies which could be helpful in adopting a contextual model or approach would include:

- Select, for contractual purposes, those programs for pre-employment funding which demonstrate contextual principles in their designs.
- Accept that clients, either self-referred or identified by staff and partners, will follow non-linear paths to success and require a variety of interventions.
- Maintain the commitment to material supports such as child care, transportation and financial allowances throughout the stages.

Steps which need to be taken for successful implementation of the model include:

- Advise internally and externally that this approach to pre-employment will guide the department's choice of service deliverers and partners.

- Ensure the case management system is adapted to long term client involvement and allows the measurement of incremental goals.

- Prepare not only HRE's staff, but its community partners to participate in the case management process with training and support.

8.4.2 Outcomes

Staff and partners are in agreement with literature findings on desired outcomes for pre-employment activities. The measurement of success by work force attachment *alone* is not acceptable and dooms a large number of clients to failure and their supportive staff to frustration.

Acceptable practices in pre-employment now call for the development of outcomes which measure client success incrementally and show movement along a continuum of readiness for work force attachment. This requires the development of success measurements on which several parties agree, and which are amenable to data collection, usually in an electronic format.

Competency measures for personal growth and decision-making have already been developed in draft form (*Blueprint*) which should be more fully discussed by staff and partners. There was evidence, however, that workers in the pre-employment field want to develop tools for measuring other factors. In addition to personal competencies (on which there is strong agreement for programming) they wish to record and measure the *individual* building blocks of client success and have these 'count' as positive increments. Some pre-employment clients will succeed at improved child care, voluntary opportunities, literacy learning, part-time versus full-time work, community service and other activities which staff and partners want to record as stepping stones toward self-reliance.

Rather than meet a pre-determined standard against which they would be measured, clients should be able to cooperatively determine these steps, with counsellors, and be advised of success in meeting incremental goals. Counsellors who participated in the review said that goal-setting was an integral part of the assessment activities which will form the basis for case-managing their clients and they want data collection procedures, when developed, to allow for charting progress toward *individually-determined* outcomes. Doing so goes beyond the approach to outcomes outlined in the contextual-labour market model already discussed, but was considered critical by review participants. Based on the key findings, therefore, the following is recommended:

Recommendation Number Two:

Human Resources and Employment should develop pre-employment outcomes which are realistic given the client population and environment. These must be measurable and reflect individual goal-setting practices.

Some of the strategies which could be helpful:

- Develop an information system which collects data that is both quantitative and qualitative.
- Share data with partners, including clients.

Necessary Steps:

- Establish benchmarks of client success which are agreed to by staff, partners and clients and which reflect more than the acquisition of a job.
- Prepare confidentiality protocols for data-sharing and information-sharing.
- Develop an inventory of existing data systems in other departments which may be adapted to HRE use or which may be used to collect or share HRE data.
- Train staff and partners in cooperative data sharing procedures.

8.4.3 Partnerships

Contextual pre-employment approaches are highly characterized by partnerships which themselves require time, energy and resources to construct and maintain.

Existing partnerships with HRE are valued for their ability to deliver program services to clients and to accept referrals for counselling or funding. These should be maintained, and HRE has developed a framework for doing so. However, not all partnerships necessary for pre-employment are contractual.

Intellectual partnerships which result in shared goals and identification of possible client services are needed and the review shows interest in a series of potential partners with whom this could be done. Employers, health providers and educators are all seen by pre-employment counsellors as providing untapped potential for client interaction and assistance. Partnerships with employers fit with a contextual approach to pre-employment because of their potential for gaining access to labour market opportunities and post-employment activity by workers.

Community service, mentoring and coordinating partnerships are all possible according to the review, and there is evidence that counsellors want to initiate and then strengthen partnership arrangements with formal agreements. This may be particularly needed in rural parts of the province where community development interests are thought by counsellors, especially experienced ones, to intersect with the needs of HRE, but where partnership ties were not as highly rated in the research as they were in urban areas.

This review showed ample desire for building partnerships but less evidence of skills on how to establish or maintain them and the following should be considered:

Recommendation Number Three:

Partnership development must be extended beyond the service delivery stage of pre-employment to include the needs assessment phase of pre-employment and to determine labour market trends and opportunities.

Strategies which would assist include:

- Train HRE staff on partnership development.
- Require the job descriptions of client service workers to include partnership development.

- Encourage outreach to potential partners by staff so that they seek partnerships on a regular basis.

- Establish decision-making mechanisms for obtaining and accepting the advice of partners on pre-employment.

- Establish formal guidelines for goal setting and allow for local revision by HRE staff and community partners.

- Examine the goals of existing economic and social development partnerships and seek to participate in these.

Next steps which could be taken include:

- Develop local inventories of potential partners in the areas of interest (education, employer issues, funding opportunities).

- Share this information internally and externally.

- Target potential partners and initiate the process of joint goal setting.

8.4.4 Place-Based Decision Making

The research showed that HRE staff and partners believe their resource allocations should respect local differences in need and allow them to make local decisions about how pre-employment dollars are spent. They are reluctant to single out broad, sweeping target groups by age, sex or skills requirement (except for very low education) because they recognize that supports are needed throughout the client population.

There is also belief that ‘clusters’ of need can be isolated and worked on, outside the constraints of current programming, a local HRE office might have a youth allocation of funds, but be more disposed to work on pre-employment issues with a men’s group or a justice agency. (Local preferences might include desire for a mobility budget - inter or intra-provincially, life skills, targeted job skills, literacy preparation, basic education, customized training opportunities, etc.)

The preliminary review of client data did not isolate major regional differences in need or target groups, but more detailed analysis might do so. It is more likely that clusters of ‘opportunity’ are recognized by local offices whose staff and partner agencies understand the complexities of geography, market opportunities and local options for change Therefore:

Recommendation Number Four:

Target groups for pre-employment must be determined locally within a framework which allows for rural and urban differences, district-level opportunities within labour markets and the input of new and existing partners.

Strategies which could be adopted include:

- Allow a range of pre-employment practices as determined by local areas, rather than allocation of provincial program criteria or program-based resources on a pro-rated basis.

- Allow innovative pre-employment practices involving child or family interventions to be developed in local areas.

Steps which would assist include:

- Develop and disseminate an inventory of potential practices by region and locality to stimulate interest and creativity on meeting local needs.

- Some areas of the province include HRE staff and partners who have given considerable thought on how to do this, but who need the flexibility to plan or carry out new programs and projects.

8.5 Future Directions

Although this review suggests a contextual approach to pre-employment activities, to the exclusion of work-first or preparation-first models, it endeavours to ensure room for developing and nurturing new ideas or partnership arrangements and new thinking about target groups. In essence, this is done by recommending greater flexibility in choosing and building linkages and partnerships at a local level, if and when such arrangements can identify or provide opportunities for HRE clients. However, certain challenges exist for HRE regardless of its overall pre-employment approach or the choice of one model over another. These challenges exist in the areas of training, information-sharing, developing linkages across departments and resources.

8.5.1 Training

Exposure to training on enhanced screening and assessment procedures heightened enthusiasm about doing new kinds of client work in the field and HRE should capitalize on this learning. There is a desire in the field for setting individual goals for competencies, skills or workplace success, but there is not yet a standard way to do so, and research participants were reluctant to agree to pre-existing checklists. The move to outcomes-based decision-making or program delivery requires agreement on which successes or failures have to be measured.

- Training is needed in the area of competencies, to (1) expose workers to current thinking on outcomes, and (2) to refine their own procedures for recording success.

Data collection and case management functions require a high degree of skill and pre-employment workers have very ambitious expectations for both functions in the future operations of a redesigned HRE.

- Training is required to assist them in developing selection criteria to support case management and data collection procedures to support the system.

Successful identification of barriers is a key feature of a contextual approach to pre-employment so that remedial action can be sought and secured for clients. Assessments are currently considered inadequate by counsellors and educators or contracters providing direct services. The level of agreement on this factor leads CSC to conclude that training is needed to improve the effectiveness of referrals and ultimately the success of clients.

- Training would be needed on identifying learning, social and personal barriers.

Because a contextual approach to pre-employment requires consideration of labour force opportunities, training on how to identify structural barriers around mobility and the transferability of skills would also be helpful.

8.5.2 Training for Community Partners

An integrated system of pre-employment would extend training to community groups, for whom the role of service delivery has been clearly defined. There is evidence that capacity-building needs attention because many community organizations lack access to stable funding to enable them to maintain and promote the trained staff whose skills are appreciated but who may be available to HRE only in the short term. Expanding the partnership framework of HRE to include co-training would assist. Co-training opportunities:

- Could increase capacity in rural areas
- Will be needed to meet the expectations for cooperative data sharing
- Is needed in many of the areas of direct service delivery such as family work and post-employment strategies.

Combined with the partnership framework already under consideration (Gallant 1999), co-training would substantially increase the sustainability of the partners on which HRE relies on for direct service delivery.

8.5.3 Information-Sharing

Field workers continue to say they lack up to date information on funding opportunities, program areas for clients and what is available for their clients both in their own and other departments. They also report being unaware, at times, of innovations in other parts of the province, even if these innovations include staff from their own department. Adopting a model of pre-employment for the province will require a commitment to information-sharing beyond what happens because of co-location at a number of sites.

8.5.4 Effective Linkages and Existing Opportunities

Although the provincial social policy context supports integration of goals and decision-making among departments, agencies and citizens, there is substantial room for improvement on how to do so in the field of pre-employment. It was clear in this review that opportunities exist for shared goal-setting but that they will require joint effort on setting priorities for self-reliance. Two things are worthy of note:

C Although HRE serves a primarily adult client group, the potential linkages identified for the Department of Education were almost entirely about interventions with children and youth.

- The connections, either philosophical or material, between the health of a population and its self-reliance or socioeconomic status were seldom made.

These findings lead CSC to conclude that effective linkages to other provincial government departments will require not only the interest and goodwill or enthusiasm of local personnel, but an overall effort among the Departments, likely at a senior level. An example relates to the previous point about information-sharing. Current efforts at developing individual student service plans (ISSPs) are well underway in many regions of the province on a cooperative basis between health and education representatives, but are less well known by pre-employment personnel, even though they represent opportunities for planning interventions with youth.

8.5.5 Resources

The need for pre-employment resources was mentioned in a majority of focus groups and was proven in many of the survey responses when the opportunity was given for open-ended commentary. Financial resources were mentioned in the contexts of training, need for additional career-oriented staff in the Department, budgets for client mobility, incentive allowances and education fees for clients, sustained funding for community groups and the need for child care and transportation, especially in rural communities.

There is considerable enthusiasm about changing the mandate of the HRE toward employment action goals but concern that policy and program efforts will not be accompanied by budget allocations.

Achieving self-reliance for clients will not be done by making change only within HRE, either by adopting a new pre-employment model, by changing its own practices and programs, as helpful and forward-thinking as they may be. The vision and goals for the new HRE will only be realized when other departments and agencies share the same goals and become willing to share information and resources.

Based on our meetings, research and experience, CSC concludes that numerous opportunities exist to do so and that HRE should share its pre-employment goals more widely.

Recommendation Number Five

The Department of Human Resources and Employment should invite specific participation in local pre-employment practices within a symposium dedicated to aligning the practices of other departments of government. The symposium will need to be interdepartmental, and include community partners.

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