



# YMCA OF WESTERN NL

NOVEMBER 2023

# YMCA - YES! EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS AND SERVICES



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NOVEMBER 15, 2023

**YMCA Employment Services - YES! Pilot Project** is a research project led by **YMCA of Western NL** and funded by the NL Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC).

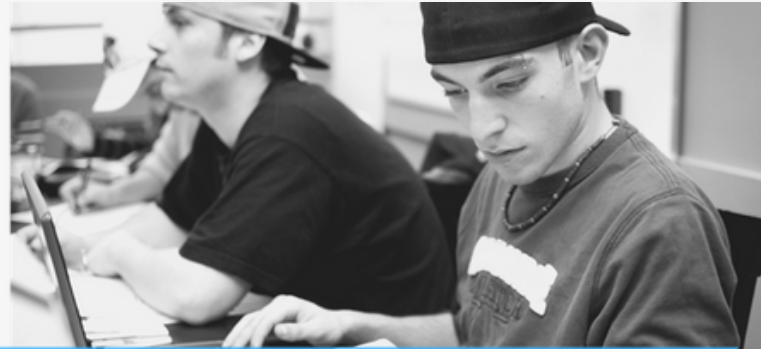
Established in 2017 by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and administered by College of the North Atlantic, NLWIC has a provincial mandate to provide a coordinated, central point of access to engage all labour market stakeholders about challenges, opportunities and best practices in workforce development.

The Centre's goal is to promote and support the research, testing and sharing of **ideas** and models of **innovation** in workforce development that will positively **impact** employability, employment and entrepreneurship within the province's labour force and particularly underrepresented groups. Funding for NLWIC is provided by the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills (IPGS) under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement.

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YMCA Employment Services- YES!  
Pilot Project





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since our work began on the YMCA of Western NL - YES! Pilot Project in 2019 there have been many who we have consulted, worked together with, and worked for. The contributions of stakeholders, partners, employers and the people we have served deserve the highest recognition for their involvement in this project.

Employers: Bay of Islands SPCA, Rejuva, Fox's General Store, K's Konvenience, The Community Youth Network Bay St. George YMCA, Riversea Motel, VinBrew, Blackstar, Bay of Islands SPCA Thrift Store, Crimson Arts, Cabinet and Design Studio and The Community Youth Network - South Shore.

Goss Gilroy Evaluation Team: Marie Ryan and Selina Collins

Consultations: Sareena Hopkins and Donnalee Bell CCDF, Elayne Greely The Community Employment Collaboration. The input you provided helped shape our project pivot in the best way possible.

Our Community Partners, Thank you for taking the time to participate in focus groups, provide referrals, and collaborate to provide a needed and necessary community service.

Our YMCA of Western NL team: You have all impacted our day to day operations in so many beautiful ways. Thank-you.

To the people we have served: You are the reason we do what we do.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A barrier is an obstacle that prevents movement or access. It is a stoppage of forward momentum and a block in the path. When people face a barrier there are choices. They can dig around on their own until they find a way or they can join forces with someone who walks the path with them, someone who listens to them when the dig gets too tough and the barrier seems 100 feet high. Connecting with someone who is equipped to deal with the hard and decipher the barrier piece by piece so the path becomes clearer helps the person feel supported and worthy.

Current employment supports and services can be unpredictable. Various factors converge to influence an individual's capacity to secure and sustain meaningful employment. The YMCA - YES! Pilot Project emphasizes the growing demand for employment support services in Corner Brook and Bay of Islands. It has brought attention to barriers; established services and practices to deal with those barriers; and assisted individuals in progressing at a pace that suits their needs.

The research focused on answering the questions:

- What employment supports are needed to address the identified gaps and barriers for at-risk individuals aged 12-40 in Corner Brook-Bay of Islands?
- How can this research on employment supports and the evaluation of the pilot project be used to develop best practices for the delivery of employment services using YES! drop-in Employment Services?

We crafted comprehensive and client-driven employment services, placing the individual's health, safety, and well-being at the forefront of our service delivery. This report details our research findings, our project evaluation findings, as well as our recommendations for moving forward. This project has been a testament to the need for general employment services, and the processes necessary to effectively serve the people of our communities.



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# ABOUT THE YMCA OF WESTERN NL YES! PROJECT

## OUR HISTORY

Founded in 1981, the YMCA of Western NL (YMCA) is currently located in the Millbrook Mall and delivers Health, Recreation and Wellness programs, Youth Employment Programs, and Community Outreach from this address. This location is also the site for the Community Youth Network Corner Brook- Bay of Islands, Inc. The YMCA serves approximately 32,000 people in the Bay of Islands area including City of Corner Brook, Towns on the North and South Shores of the Bay, Town of Massey Drive, Steady Brook, Pasadena, and Deer Lake. In 2014 The YMCA extended its reach by opening a branch in Stephenville to serve the communities in the Bay St. George region.

Since November 2019, the YMCA of Western NL with the support of the Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre has been engaged in a research project focusing on identifying what employment supports are needed to address the identified gaps and barriers for at-risk individuals aged 12-40 in the Corner Brook-Bay of Islands area. This research has been used in the development of best practices for the delivery of employment services.

The YMCA of Western NL has a lengthy history of supporting individuals as they gain the knowledge and skills necessary to transition to employment. We avail of myriad resources and coaching techniques to guide program participants along the path to self-sufficiency and employment in an area related to their expressed interest and aptitude. Our YMCA Career Coaches have a proven capacity to identify activities and resources that will best serve the needs of individuals and address any unique challenges that may emerge.

The YMCA of Western NL has a commitment to our region and has a proven track record for success in making a positive difference in individuals' lives. Our ability to remain current and responsive to community needs has often been enhanced by community partners, and stakeholders.

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# OUR EVALUATION PLAN

## METHODOLOGY

The YMCA's YES! (Youth Employment Supports & Services) project credits its evaluation of the methodologies employed to Goss Gilroy Inc. The use of this professional service improved data driven learning, provided continuous improvements from feedback, and enabled the project team to learn what worked and what didn't. From the beginning stages of the project in the fall of 2019 to the end of the working relationship, the evaluation team provided breadth and incredible scope for the project. They established a close working relationship with the YES! project staff to collaborate on all steps taken throughout the project to ensure methods and content used to complete the evaluation stayed true to the project's research questions and objectives.

The Goss Gilroy evaluation team were responsible for the creation of data collection tools, the data collection process, and the analysis of data, which was presented as a Final Report to the YMCA YES! Staff, and project partners regarding their first-hand experience with varying aspects of the project. The methods used are as follows:

- Intake Forms
  - At the onset of a participants involvement in the YES! Project they were asked to complete an intake form. 70% of the participants agreed to complete the document. The data collected through this intake form were both qualitative and quantitative in nature.
- Interviews (See Fig 1.)
  - 35 individuals were interviewed which can be broken into 4 groups - participants, employers, YMCA project staff/additional YMCA staff, and project partners.
    - Participants - 17 individuals were approached to take part in an interview and 16 were completed. In order to coordinate these interviews multiple attempts were made on behalf of the evaluators to connect with each participant via email, phone, or through coordinating with YES! project staff. Interviews were completed via phone and took 20 minutes, on average, to complete.
    - Employers - 10 employers were approached to take part in an interview and 8 were completed. To coordinate these interviews the evaluator made multiple attempts to reach each employer via email and/or phone. Interviews were completed via phone and took 15 minutes, on average to complete.



- YMCA & YES! Project Staff - All 8 individuals affiliated with the YMCA that were invited by YES! Project Staff to take part in an interview were completed. Interviews were completed via Zoom and took 45 minutes to an hour to complete.
- Project Partners - Of the 5 individuals that were invited to take part in an interview 3 were completed. The partners represented diverse organizations with a focus on one or more of the following - employment, disability and/or newcomers. Partners were inspired to take part in this evaluation process for multiple reasons. These reasons included, the community-based nature of the project, lack of similar services in Corner Brook, and viewing the project as a valuable pre-employability step to individuals since it takes on an individualized approach not often available to clients but critical to their success.

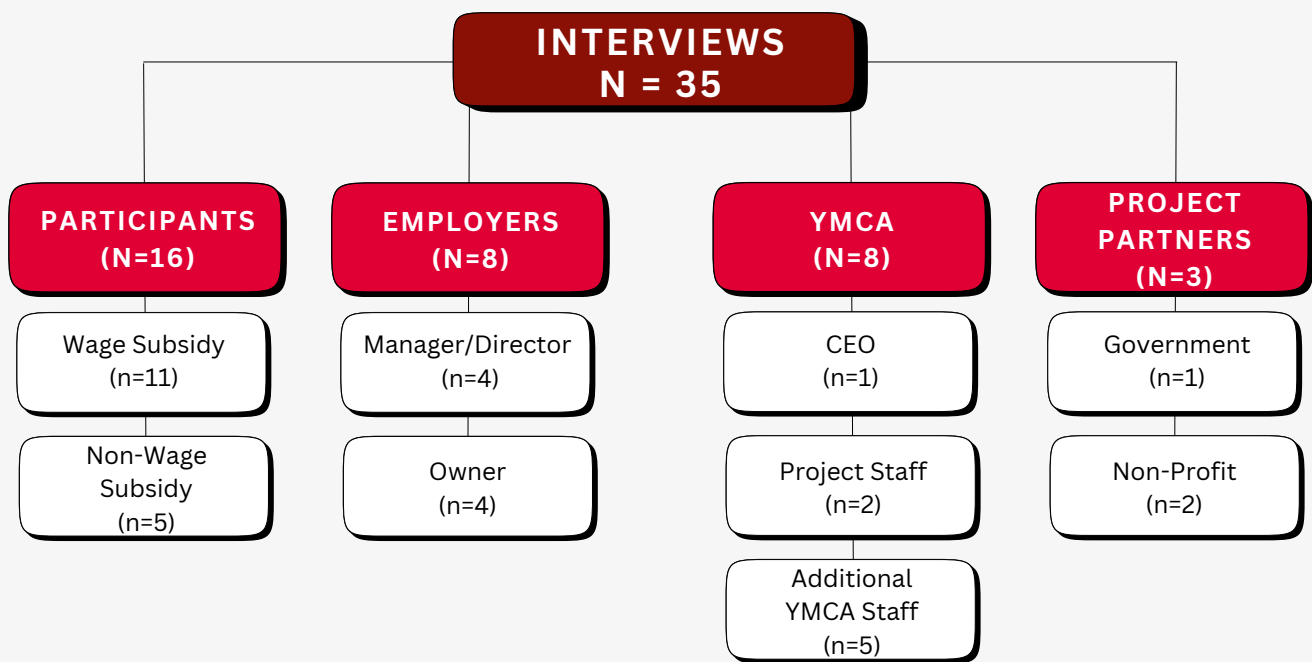


Fig 1. Interviews completed during evaluation process



Fig 2. Employer/Employee Focus Group

- Focus Group (See Fig 2.)
- Career and Employment Sector Perspectives (See Fig 3.)
- PRIME Data (Quantitative & Qualitative)
- Developed by CCDF (Canadian Career Development Foundation) - "PRIME is a robust online employability assessment tool that uses the Employability Dimensions framework and integrates a range of powerful indicators of health and well-being, social integration, and labour market attachment." (CCDF, *A Tale of Transformation*, 2021, pg.4 <https://ccdf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NLWIC-FINAL-REPORT-2021-04-01-CCDF-submitted.pdf>)

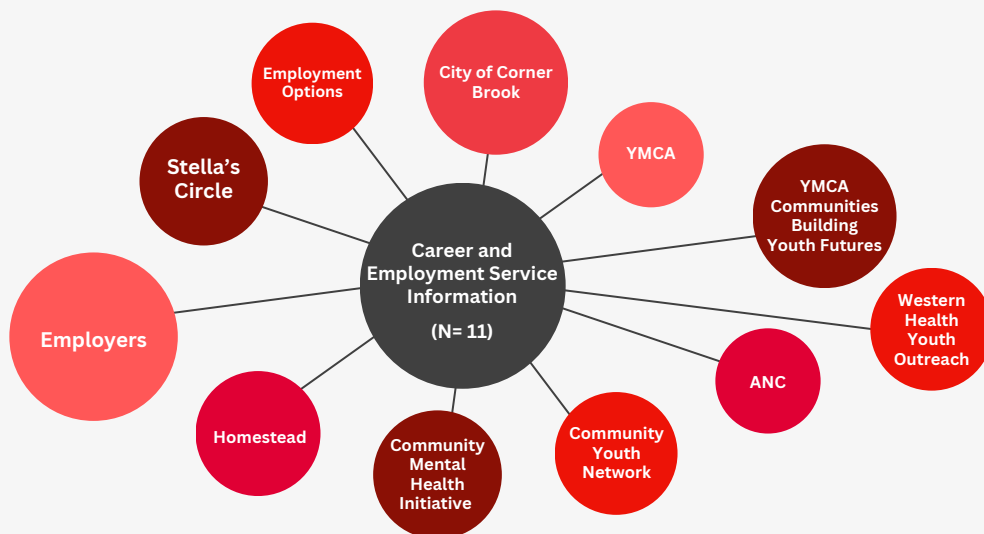


Fig 3. Career and Employment Sector Perspectives

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## SCOPE

The demographic profile of the project participants includes their age, level of education, source of income, and the strengths they brought to the program. This information was obtained from the intake forms, which were successfully completed by 70% of the participants in the evaluation procedure. The following graphics provide a depiction of this profile. Additional categories of the participant profile include participants training history, and their employment history/reasons for leaving these jobs previous to beginning the program. This information was collected from intake forms and supplemented by information from participant interviews.

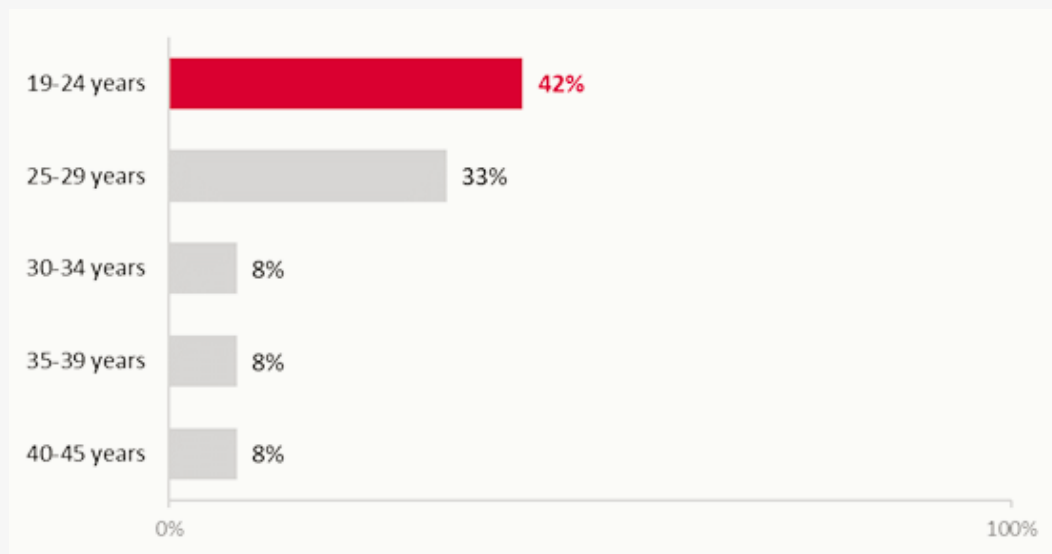


Fig 4. Age range of participants (n=12)

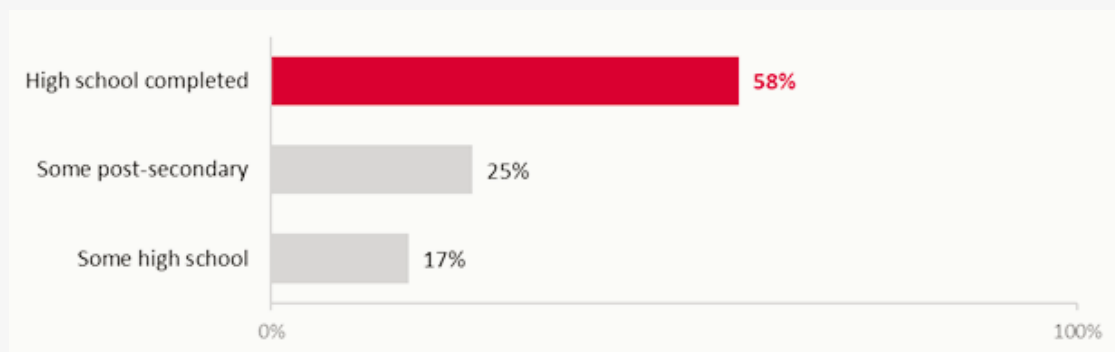


Fig 5. Participants highest level of education (n=12)

- High school was not always completed through traditional streams, some participants completed high school through the ABE or GED program

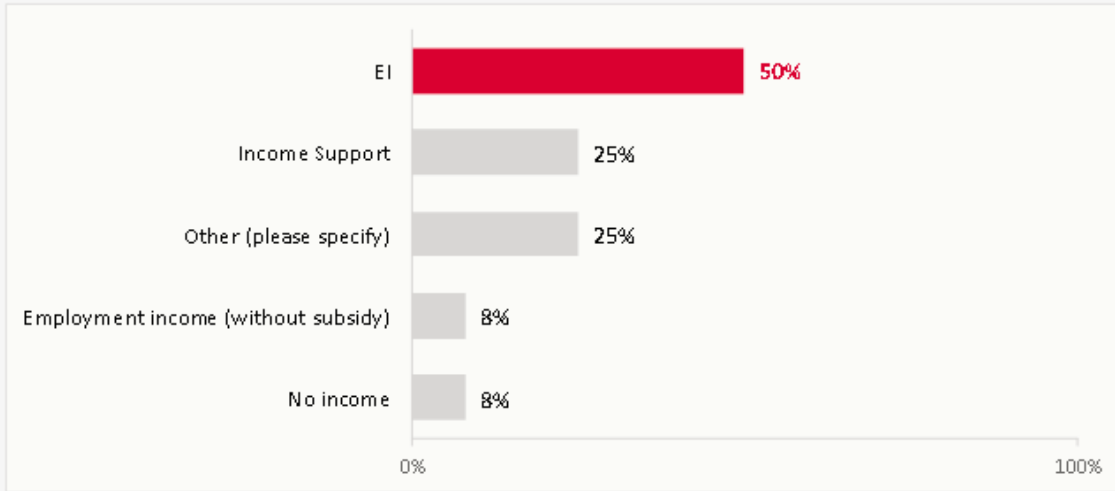


Fig 6. Participants source of Income (n=12)

- Participants could provide multiple responses
- “Other income” refers to participant’s receiving funds from family members or Western Health

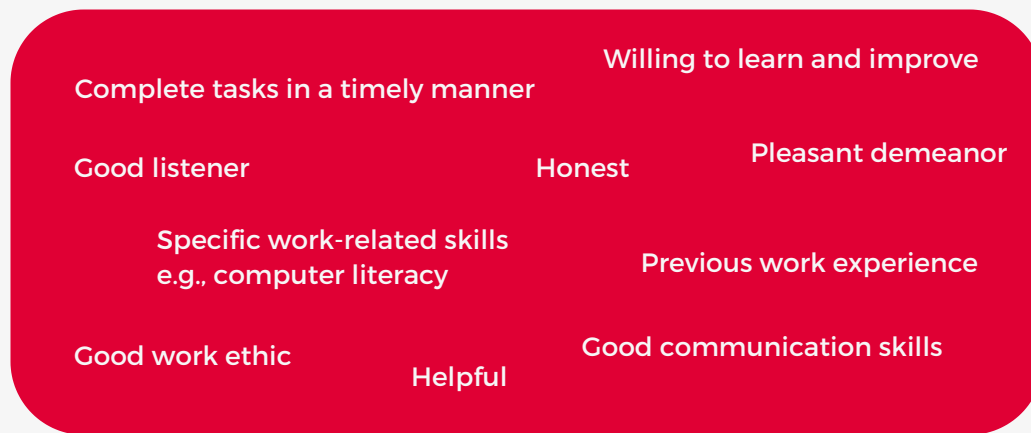


Fig 7. Strengths participants bring to a job (n=12)

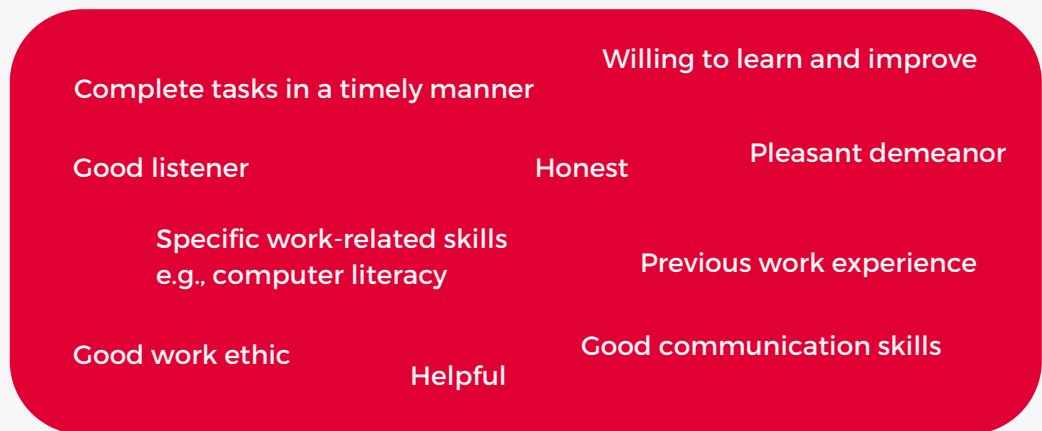


Fig 8. Participants training history (n=16)



Fig 9. Participants employment History and reasons for leaving work (n=16)

At the time of their interviews, the large majority of wage-subsidy participants had been with their employer for one to three months. Two remaining participants had already completed their work placement and said they spent three or four months on the job. Of note, one participant who had finished their work placement was unsure of the duration. All the non-wage subsidy participants had been working with YMCA Employment Supports for one or two years, with the exception of one who cited a few months. At the time of their interview, three were unemployed, with two explaining they were deciding on their next steps (e.g., pursue further education or pursue employment). The remaining participant had been let go and was working through some issues with EI related to their termination.



# DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

**The YES! Project Focused on providing the people we serve with:**

- Drop-in Employment Supports Center
- Client led career development services
- Pre-employment services and programs
- Capacity building through training and certifications
- Resources for colleagues and clients

We provided a service model that met individuals where they are, assessed their immediate needs and then worked with the individual to move forward at a pace they were comfortable with. Providing an environment where one felt equal, supported and most importantly heard and listened to was paramount to implementation of the YES! project.





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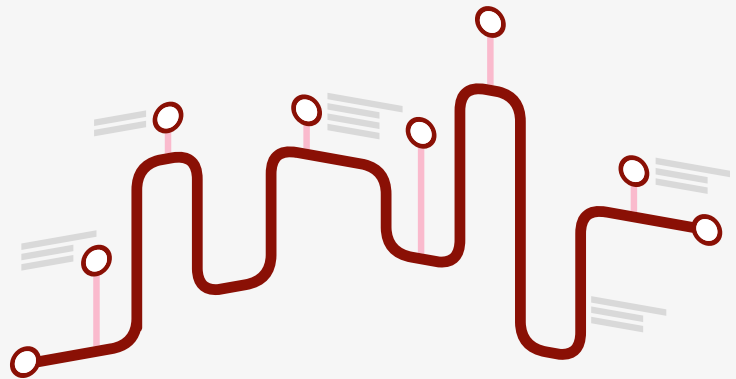
# PROJECT TIMELINE

## THIS SECTION INCLUDES THE PROJECT TIMELINE, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EXECUTION OF ACTIVITIES

The YMCA - YES! Pilot Project began in the fall of 2019. Phase 1 of the project focused on Research and program design. The primary researcher completed an environmental scan and literature review (Attached in appendix) along with community stakeholder interviews, focus groups and questionnaire's for individuals and youth that centered on answering the primary research questions:

- What employment supports are needed to address the identified gaps and barriers for at-risk individuals aged 12-40 years in the Corner Brook - Bay of Islands area?
- How can the research on employment supports and the evaluation of the pilot project be used to develop best practices for the delivery of employment services using the YES! drop-in employment services?

The research was conducted to determine and identify the gaps and barriers to employment for vulnerable individuals residing in the Corner Brook and Bay of Islands region of Newfoundland & Labrador and from there, design a model of service to be tested, based on best practices, that will meet the needs of vulnerable individuals. (A full overview of these findings can be found in Appendix.). Through the research, 84 different barriers to employment were clearly identified by stakeholders, partners, community organizations and individuals. These barriers were compiled (as seen on the next page) to determine what were the most imminent. From the information gathered through surveys, focus groups, and consultations, a model of service was developed that is client-led, holistic in nature and has a “needs first” approach to support.

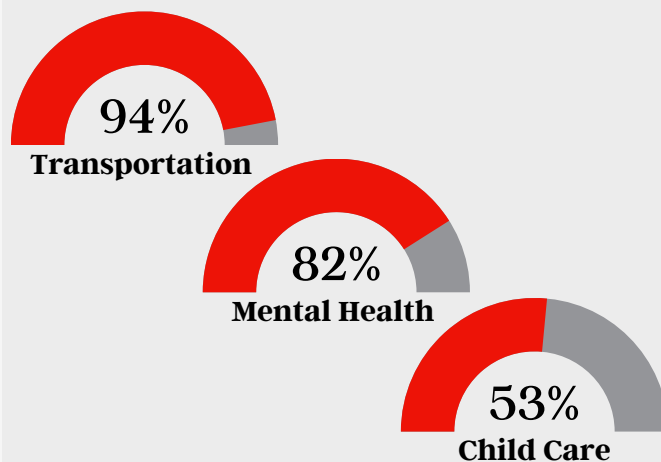


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## DEVELOPING FOCUS

### Phase 1 of the project:

**3 key barriers** in our region were identified and a **model of service** focused on being holistic in nature and client led was developed paired with the identification of **key approaches**.



**Three key barriers - Most frequently identified barriers to employment for at-risk individuals in Corner Brook and the Bay of Islands, as identified by community Stakeholders over 17 meetings**

### HOLISTIC & CLIENT LED MODEL OF SERVICE:

- Employment supports drop-in center
- Suite of resources for clients and colleagues
- Delivery of pre-employment programs
- Capacity building through training opportunities
- Client-centered career services reflecting best practices

### KEY APPROACHES:

- Ensure the needs of employees and employers are reflected in the services to clients
- Stronger, more comprehensive assessments with individuals to better meet their needs (PRIME)
- Stronger community partnerships increasing client access to wrap around supports
- Stronger referral system from agencies (such as Government) for client services

Fig 10. Main barriers to employment identified in Phase 1 research

### Phase 2 of the project:

From the research findings, the primary researcher, along with the Career coach began to develop group based employment programming that would address the identified barriers with a collaborative approach to service delivery, Utilizing theories of collective impact and community partnerships to address the identified gaps. With access to wrap around support services and a focus on soft skill development, both proposed employment programs were set to begin in the spring of 2020.

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## IMPACTS OF COVID-19

In March of 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic halted all group programming intentions. The YMCA - YES! Project was temporarily unable to providing employment services as the effects of the pandemic were yet to be seen.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to implementing the typical group setting approach to employment services. In order to continue meeting the needs of participants, the following changes were made to the YES! Pilot:

- Pivot from a group setting to an individualized, client-centered approach to service
- Focus more on individualized services than program-based learning
- Less of a focus on blunt measures to individualized interventions and more focus on meeting basic needs which are integral to entering/staying attached to the labour force - i.e., shifting focus from “I need a job” to “I need to secure housing before I find a job”

### Phase 3 of the project:

Phase 3 began with the beginning of our employment services through our drop-in center and our employer wage subsidy component.

By Focusing on the people we serve as individuals we were able to implement a holistic, needs based model of employment services that compliments Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. By using the motivational theory to provide a service that focused on Physiological needs first (ex. Food, shelter, warmth) then the safety needs (ex. Safety, security) we found the people we were working with to experience an increase in confidence, relationships, self esteem and feelings of accomplishment as we progressed through our service delivery, matching Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model.

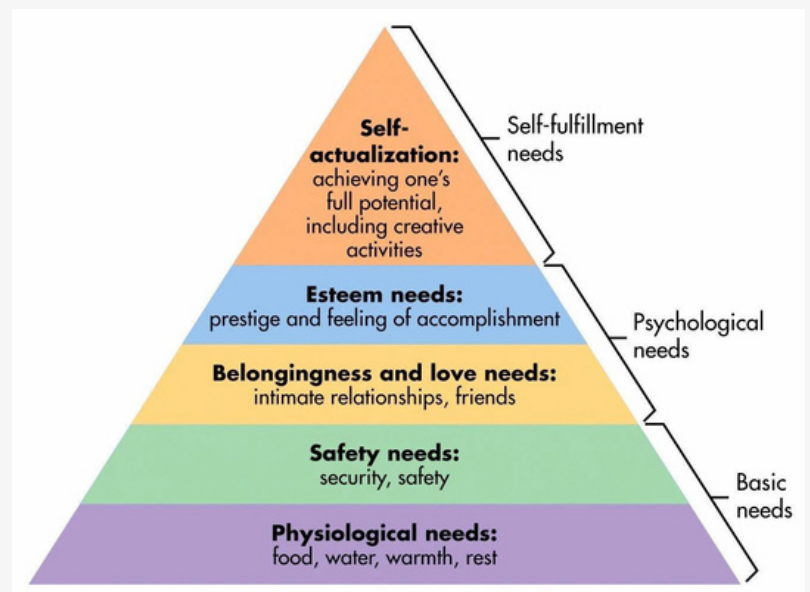


Fig 11. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs SOURCE: Mcleod, S.A. (2018, May 21). *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

# OUR PROJECT MODEL

THIS SECTION REPRESENTS OUR PROJECT MODEL IN COMPARISON TO MODELS OF PAST EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMING

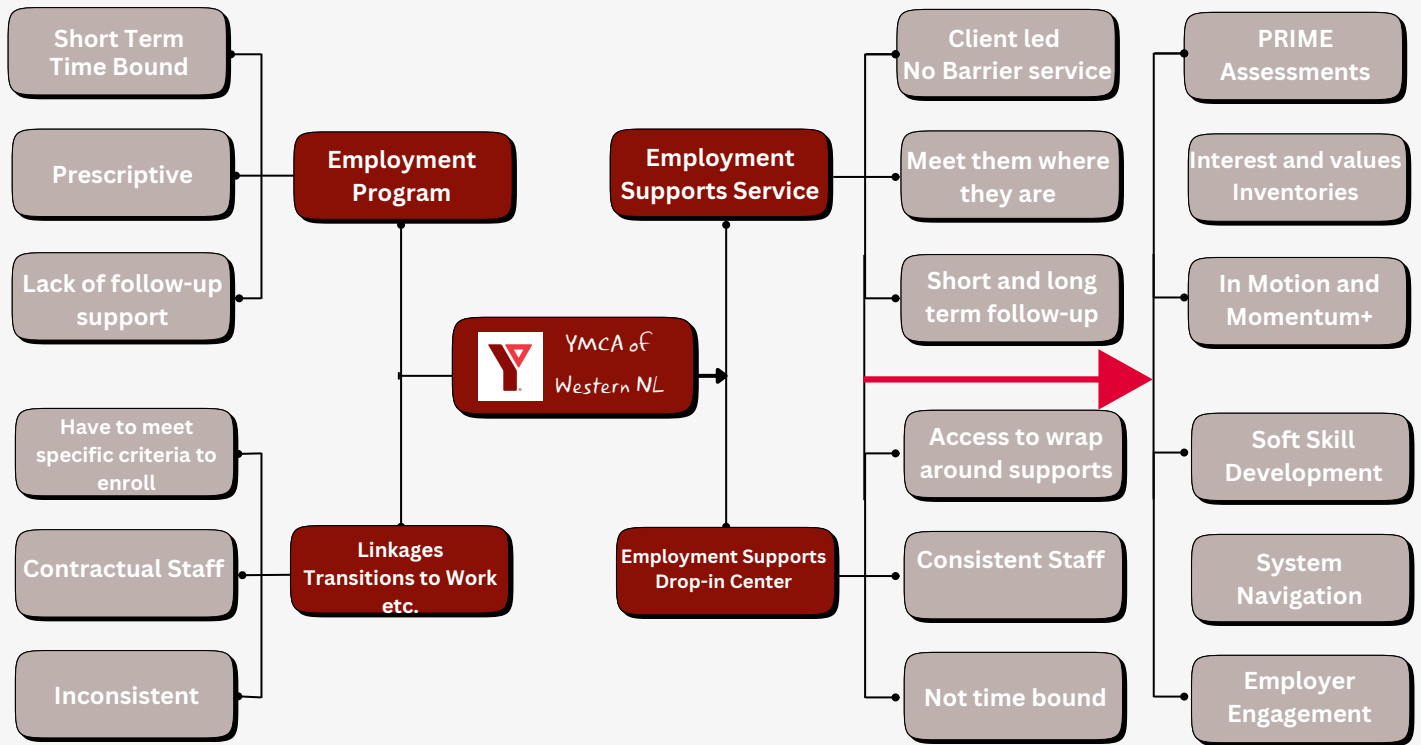


Fig 12. Employment programs vs current employment service model

On the left side of the image, we have used Employment Programs, such as linkages, and transitions to work to model past services. These programs, while worthy and beneficial to a point, were prescriptive in nature, required specific criteria to enroll and were bound by time and design. Lack of consistent staffing (or funding for staffing) severely hampered the ability of a delivery organization to provide consistent, and frequent follow-up. In recent years, both programs lacked updated course design and were simply not meeting the needs of program participants.

To combat these issues, we developed a system that focused on deep assessments, interest and values inventories and a set plan for consistent follow up and ongoing support, specifically in the first year post employment service. Systems navigation and employer engagement became integral parts of our service delivery. A focus on soft skill development with programming such as In Motion and Momentum+ ensured the people we serve were receiving the highest level of care possible.

# FINDINGS

## THIS SECTION INCLUDES THE 13 KEY FINDINGS THAT RESULTED FROM THE EVALUATION

1. There are few employment focused projects in the Western Region which are available to a diverse population, and the community based nature of the YES! project provides a welcoming environment for them.
2. Employers felt participants were equally or better prepared than other entry-level employees.
3. Over half of the employers said they would maintain their participants if given the opportunity.
4. Employers developed an increase in awareness of resources and programs for engaging staff while gaining new appreciation of the value of hiring entry-level employees through the YES! project.





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5. The Work of the Career Development Practitioner is complimented by the Social Work education and experience

6. Lack of direct referral processes from government to community is a gap in serving individuals with barriers to employment. *\*Most participants heard about the program through word of mouth.*

7. Relationship and trust building are necessary to build client relationships where people feel safe and secure.

8. Employment Services to individuals has to be flexible, with a focus on meeting the people we serve where they are in their journey to meaningful employment.

9. Individuals experienced both personal and employment based positive outcomes over the duration of the project.



10. Individuals formed a valuable connection to the YMCA of Western NL while working towards training and employment while overcoming barriers.

11. Increased independence and confidence of participants.

12. Identified need for additional human and financial resources such as an employment Support worker and increased ability to offer additional employer subsidies, especially to new and local businesses

13. The project model was strong, with the client centered and client led approach to service delivery.



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# PROJECT CENSUS

THIS SECTION INCLUDES A SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHED TASKS

## Work Terms

- 24 Complete (double what we projected)

## How many are still working/pursuing education

- 16 Individuals

## Individual employment supports

- 33 individuals who consistently (weekly or biweekly) avail of services and ongoing employment training
- Other individuals (one time supports): 450 since September 2021
  - this number accounts for individuals who need minimal support and would require only 1 or 2 interventions before moving into employment/education or other next steps

**Longer term and more in depth follow-up practices will help provide continuous support as well as early interventions for the people we serve. Helping to alleviate the cycle of Income support to work to EI back to Income Support.**

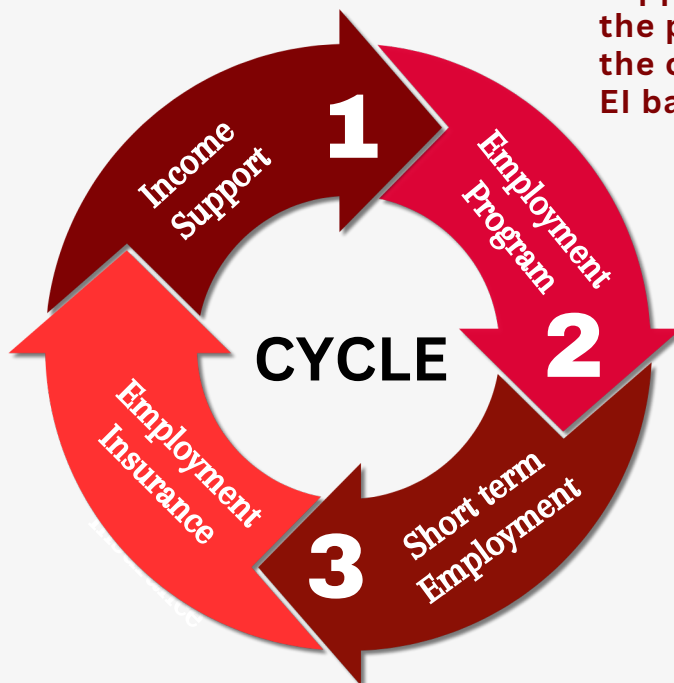


Fig 13. Representation of the cycle of system dependence and reliance

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# RECOMMENDATIONS - GENERAL

## THIS SECTION INCLUDES THE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE YMCA - YES! PILOT PROJECT

The recommendations presented in this report, through our evaluation, learnings and research provide evidence based information around the delivery of employment programs to the general population in Corner Brook and Bay of Islands. These recommendations are scalable, transferrable to any sector and provide a map for the future of employment service delivery in our region.

1. Acquire additional staff resources and strategically position resources to ensure participants and employers are fully supported and administrative tasks and project data collection and reporting are robust.
2. Strengthen existing partnerships and expand collaborative activity: both to act as referral sources to the project and to enhance the level of support available to participants. (see fig.14)

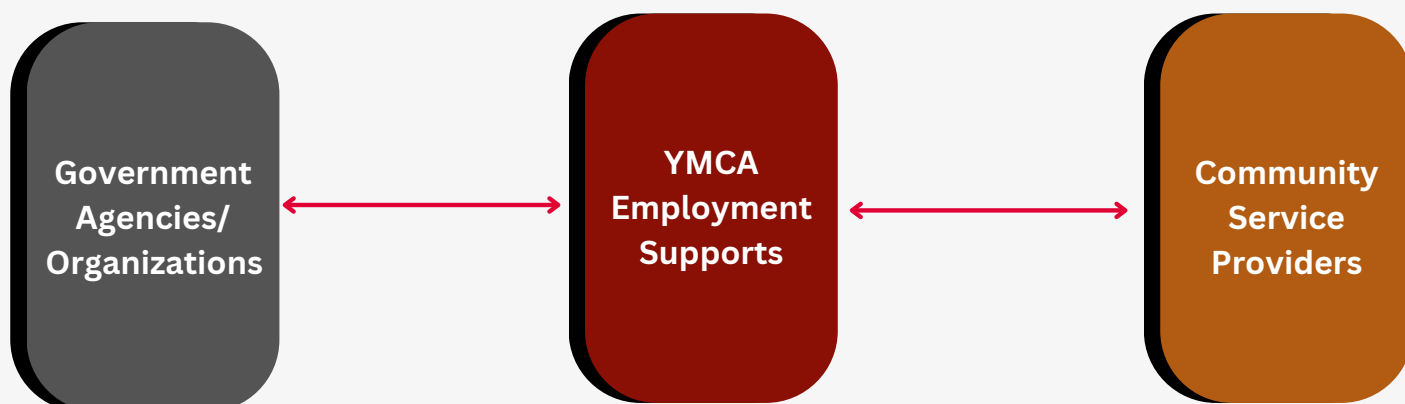


Fig 14. Referral services between government and community based agencies

**The above figure demonstrates how a referral system could work between government agencies, funders and organizations including the YMCA of Western NL and other community service providers. An increased awareness and policy around community referrals for individuals wanting employment services at the community level can help offset case loads as well as provide additional, barrier free employment services and assist with system navigation and employer engagement.**

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3. Continue for another year as a means of ongoing support to existing participants who would have little individualized assistance going forward without the project, given the lack of such services in Corner Brook. As the staff now have a range of experience on which to build, this also would allow for effective intake and support to a new cohort of participants who also would benefit.

4. Continue with individual client-centered interventions focused on being responsive to their life realities, addressing their barriers to employment and supporting development of key employment skills.

5. Ensure employers have an opportunity to meet and/or interview participants in advance of a work placement to ensure a good fit.



## RECOMMENDATIONS - POLICY, PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY

### THIS SECTION INCLUDES RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY, PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY

1. **Adaptable Service Models:** It is acceptable and often beneficial within a pilot to learn as you go and modify service as necessary to meet the individual needs of people.

2. **Funding:** Increased funding and opportunity for community based organizations to provide employment support and services.

3. **Referral Sources:** Enhanced referral policy from government agencies to community for employment services. Most of our referrals come from community partners and word of mouth. Working with Government Departments can help off set heavy caseloads and provide accessible service for the people who need it.

4. **Partnerships:** Utilize partnerships to allow for ease of systems navigation and access to wrap around supports for individual.

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5. **Service:** prescriptive models of program delivery are often ineffective and not in the best interest of the people we serve. Client led service practices are often more effective and meaningful for the person
  6. **Follow-Up:** Consistent (3/6/9/12 month follow-ups) within the first year of service provides more meaningful and continual supports for the people we serve.
  7. **Flexibility:** It is important to adapt services to the needs of the person. Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, one cannot move to employment if they need to focus on where they are sleeping tonight, where their next meal is coming from or where they can find supports for mental health or addictions treatment.
  8. **Technology Divide:** Addressing that access to technology is often a barrier for people. When an individual cannot or does not have access to the technology (wifi, working device, or education around computer literacy for example) that is required to learn, the community service is often held back from providing these things due to budget constraints.



## BENEFITS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

### Benefits:

- Benefit of social work perspective and knowledge combined with employment supports
- Benefit of a client-led approach versus prescriptive programming
- Benefit of recognizing the increase in barriers post COVID
- Benefit of participant access to/knowledge of technology

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The recommendations from evaluation of the YES! Project bring many benefits of employment service delivery for vulnerable people in the Corner Brook and Bay of Islands region. Because barriers to employment have been heightened post-Covid, a need for systems navigation protocol has become apparent, and is now a part of the work we do with the people we serve.

The need for barrier free employment services that put the client's needs first was apparent from the beginning. As we moved along the timeline, client-led services became the focus of delivery. Prescriptive programming that had rigid acceptance and was time-bound in nature were not working to the benefit of the individual.

The need to address the Technology divide was also heightened during COVID and after. Many funding opportunities presented at that time were ineligible to cover costs associated with providing devices that worked for individuals when programs and services went virtual. There were also cases where the people we were serving did not have access to wi-fi or the ability to utilize consistent wi-fi, therefore limiting their ability to continue receiving services or participate in programs.

Throughout the course of our work, we have also come to realize that early interventions for school aged individuals could be better incorporated into school systems to offer impactful guidance and support to young individuals to prevent them from slipping through the cracks of systemic challenges.





# ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACTS

THIS SECTION INCLUDES IMPACTS ON OUR ORGANIZATION, EMPLOYERS STAKEHOLDERS AND GOVERNMENT

- Raised awareness of YMCA of Western NL services and programs
- Strengthened and expanded relationships with stakeholders and partners
- Expanded skillset of staff and tool kit of resources for partners and the people we serve
- Employers felt that the YES! participant they hired was an invaluable resource and filled a gap in the workplace

The Impacts of the YES! Project on the organization are deep. Working with the people we serve over the last four years has changed perspectives, as well as service models. Allowing the YMCA of Western NL to increase capacity in Career Development services, enhance collaborations with community partners, groups and employers, increase our level of community engagement and increased innovation. While providing measurable outcomes that spoke to the need for such a service in Corner Brook and bay of Islands.





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# UNEXPECTED LEARNINGS

## **The YMCA -YES! Pilot project highlighted some unexpected learnings, Including:**

- The need for stronger referral system between government entities (such as CSSD and IPGS) and Community
- The increased need for systems navigation and access to wrap-around support services
- The need for rich assessment and services designed to address gaps identified during those assessments
- The need to adapt to client led, individualized supports versus traditional group based settings
- The need to incorporate Social work into employment supports and services
- The need for strong and more in-depth follow-up with the people we serve
- The need for additional services (such as Employment Support Worker)
- The need for increased employer supports
- 
- The need for early intervention strategies in secondary school systems

The unexpected learnings of the project has led to a solid plan moving forward by embracing the ability to adapt and learn from unexpected experiences. By embracing these learnings and incorporating them into the plan, we hope to increase the likelihood of success and create a more resilient and dynamic project framework moving forward.



# FUTURE PLAN

THIS SECTION INCLUDES PLANS FOR FUTURE WORK AND INITIATIVES

The future plans for YMCA Employment Supports and Services in Corner Brook and Bay of Islands involve advocacy for the people we serve and the services we offer, increased community awareness and capacity, and continuing to provide support to the broader community.

We hope to continue bridging the gap in employment by working with the recommendations and findings from the YES! pilot project by engaging our community and people.

The project has identified further needs for employment services in our region and we aim to elevate our service delivery model to include:

- A system of navigation and employment support work with policy for service to individuals experiencing barriers to employment
- Continue to develop a network of employers and mentors
- Provide learning and early interventions for secondary and post secondary
- Build community capacity through training and support services
- Facilitate community events around employment and employment factors
- Provide learning opportunities and interventions for people and the broader community





## CONCLUSION

This project has impacted our organization in so many incredible ways. From the beginning, our goal was to bridge the gap in employment services in Corner Brook and Bay of Islands by providing a space that is open, welcome and left the people coming in feeling accepted, validated and cheered on.

To say we have achieved just that would be an understatement. The focus of our client led services has always been forward momentum, in whatever way that looks for each individual. Recognizing what needs have to be met before someone is ready to take the next steps in their career journey is key in helping someone find their footing and move along.

The project illuminated the obstacles to employment within our region, enabling us to establish networks and resources that assist people in overcoming these barriers within a supportive and secure environment. By providing a service to the general population, we engaged hundreds of people in their path to employment while they gained confidence, motivation and self worth. A large part of employment services is recognizing that a person's journey to meaningful employment is not a straight path. It ebbs and flows and there is need for consistent follow-up with a person of trust. So much of the work we do lends itself to the fact that our people trust that we are doing our best to support them, with them.

The findings of the research combined with the findings of the evaluation of the project speak to the need for a general service in our region. Distinguishing between a universal service and one tailored for income support recipients, individuals receiving Employment Insurance benefits, or those who did not graduate high school diminishes barriers. This differentiation empowers marginalized individuals, allowing them to progress and gradually dismantle their employment obstacles.

The project's insights and recommendations have steered our future plans, specifying the collaborative efforts required to continually support our community. The integration of employment, education, and engagement is collectively contributing to the enhancement of our community. We've acknowledged that employment services extend beyond job placement, encompassing the interconnected elements of people, places, and resources, all working together to address the needs of individuals facing employment barriers in Corner Brook and Bay of Islands.



# APPENDIX A:

## EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE FOCUS GROUP

# Employer/Employee Focus Group

## Highlights

### Barriers to/in Employment

- Challenges in recruiting staff - job opportunities exist but few applicants.
- Government funded opportunities for post-secondary employment was down, leading to learning loss for hands on work experience for students
- Rapid increase in demand for technology skills across all sectors for current and prospective employees
- Resources and dialogue has an urban centre focus
- Ability to meet all basic needs prior to starting work

### Learnings as a result of the COVID- 19 Pandemic

- Physical and psychological safety considerations have been pushed to the foreground
- Exposed gaps in how we best serve clients/our employer/our business
- Every person is vulnerable to circumstances changing their reality, employed or unemployed

### Recommendations

- Staying in tune with employees/coworkers to recognize when they are struggling and support them appropriately
- Supporting staff's continuous professional development to fill gaps and meet needs
- Ensuring reasonable accommodations are implemented so individuals can maximize their potential in the workplace



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# APPENDIX B:

## CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES INFORMATION

# Career and Employment Service Information

Highlights from learnings through interviews, conversations and events

## Service delivery changes for the people we serve during and post Covid

- Over the course of 2020-2023 Service delivery models fluctuated due to Covid and at times, the restrictions put in place for group learning
- Services for those with barriers to employment had to change to allow services to continue, individually (in-person) or virtually (group)

We spent the last 1.5 years talking to community partners, stakeholders, evaluators, and the people we serve to determine how Covid affected the delivery of employment programs, services and supports.

## Key Findings

### From the people we serve:

- Physical and psychological safety considerations have been pushed to the foreground
- Exposed gaps in how we access resources and supports
- Every person is vulnerable to circumstances changing their reality, employed or unemployed
- Decline in Mental Health and increase in Addictions
- Decrease in primary healthcare
- Increased financial stress
- Overall feelings of instability and uncertainty
- Fear of going back into the workforce

### From Community Stakeholders, stakeholders, evaluators:

- Service delivery changed from group to individual or virtual
- Highlighted the technology divide
- Changed delivery of supports and resources to accommodate restrictions (eg. gift cards instead of preparing meals during programming, meal kits instead of cooking events etc.)
- Overall structure of services has changed
- Increased empathy from provider to the people we serve leading to compassion fatigue
- Increase in frontline mental health struggles
- Decrease in job security







# APPENDIX C: DISSEMINATION PLAN



## DISSEMINATION PLAN:

The YMCA of Western NL plans to host a Community Dissemination early in 2024. Final plans will be shared once available.