

# Employment Services Transformation Pilot

## Final Evaluation Report

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and Skills Development**

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# List of Abbreviations and Glossary

## List of Abbreviations

<b>AP</b>	Action Plan
<b>CaMS</b>	Case Management System
<b>CAT</b>	Common Assessment Tool
<b>EAP</b>	Employment Action Plan
<b>EI</b>	Employment Insurance
<b>EO</b>	Employment Ontario
<b>EST</b>	Employment Services Transformation
<b>ICF</b>	Incentive and Consequence Framework
<b>IES</b>	Integrated Employment Services
<b>MC</b>	Matched Community
<b>ODSP</b>	Ontario Disability Support Program
<b>OW</b>	Ontario Works
<b>PES</b>	Pre-Employment Services
<b>PMF</b>	Performance Measurement Framework
<b>SA</b>	Social assistance
<b>SA-R</b>	Social assistance referred
<b>N-SA</b>	Non-social assistance
<b>NSA-R</b>	Non-social assistance referred
<b>SAMS</b>	Social assistance Management System
<b>SLD</b>	Service Level Determination
<b>SP</b>	Service Provider
<b>SSM</b>	Service System Manager

## Glossary

- Action Plan** – A social assistance client’s individualized plan that records their goals, support needs and referrals in SAMS.
- Case-Managed** – Case management is a collaborative and client-centered process supporting timely access to the right services and supports to help a client achieve their employment goals and monitoring their progress in achieving those goals. It may include identifying further needs and supporting access to community-based services that may affect the client’s readiness for employment, such as income support, family support, transportation, and health care services. The intensity and duration of case management will vary depending on the individual client’s needs, which may extend beyond a job placement to job retention supports and services. Case management will also support Indigenous clients to receive culturally appropriate and safe services.

3. **Client Segmentation** – Also known as streaming; a model which assesses each client's relative disadvantage in the labour market, assigning a stream based on each client's unique characteristics
4. **Common Assessment Tool (CAT)** – A standardized intake tool and approach to assess individuals' employment service and support service needs; part of Client Segmentation.
5. **Employment Action Plan** – Employment Action Plan captures Integrated Employment Services (IES) client employment goals, the implicated parties, integrated case management with social assistance or service coordination and referrals (for life stabilization/wraparound supports), the range and sequence of service activities, and client progress and outcomes based on their employment goals (recognizing they may vary and evolve depending on individual circumstances).
6. **Financial Supports** – Provided by Employment Ontario (EO) to support Integrated Employment Services (IES) clients and their employers to address temporary financial barriers to participation in employment or employment-related activities.
7. **Francophone** – Persons whose mother tongue is French, plus those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, but who have a particular knowledge of French as an Official Language and use French at home, including many recent immigrants to Ontario.
8. **Indigenous** – “Indigenous” encompasses First Nation, Inuit and Métis groups and replaces the collective term “Aboriginal” except in legal or official contexts. “Aboriginal” is used in the Canadian Constitution (the Constitution Act, 1982) to refer to certain constitutionally protected rights and the people who hold those rights. The Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples – Indians (First Nation), Inuit and Métis. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.
9. **Integrated Employment Services (IES) Client** – An individual accessing assisted or unassisted employment services through Employment Ontario (EO) or have completed Module 1 of the Common Assessment Tool with their social assistance (SA) caseworker.
10. **Integrated Employment Services (IES) Client Served** – Integrated Employment Services (IES) clients who have completed pre-employment services (i.e., the number of clients who have an Employment Action Plan (EAP) Outcome or a Closed case with a reason of "Referral to Employment Focused Training").
11. **Integrated Employment Services Early Exits** – Occurs when an Integrated Employment Services (IES) client exits the Employment Action Plan (EAP) prior to completing all Pre-

Employment Services (PES) activities (i.e., is NOT a client served); or, achieving employment at the funded outcome level.

12. **Life Stabilization Supports (LSS)** – supports for Integrated Employment Services (IES) clients in coping with personal, systemic and / or environmental barriers that may precede or preclude employment and training activities (for example, addictions, chronic disease, trauma, stable and safe housing). Life stabilization focuses on enabling individuals to gain self-sufficiency, addressing preparatory and / or urgent needs through referrals to health, legal, crisis response, social supports, family support and other human services. These services and wraparound supports could be provided concurrently with employment training activities, depending on an individual's circumstances and capacities.
13. **Matched Communities** – Collections of census divisions, grouped into three Employment Services Transformation (EST) catchment areas, that were selected based on statistically significant similarities to the three EST prototype catchment areas. These Matched Communities have service providers which deliver employment services as EST prototypes would prior to transformation.
14. **Matched Community Client Served** – Clients who received services and a follow-up questionnaire from their service provider in a Matched Community (MC), as outlined by the program guidelines of the given services.
15. **Matched Community Early Exit** – Occurs when a client does not receive a follow-up survey due to not receiving enough services as outlined by the program guidelines of the given services.
16. **Newcomers** – IES clients whose Common Assessment Tool completion date is within five years of their date of arrival in Canada. International Students and Temporary Foreign Workers with a 900-series Social Insurance Number (SIN) are not considered newcomers since they are ineligible for service program components.
17. **Non-Social Assistance (SA) Referred** – Clients not referred by social assistance (SA) to Integrated Employment Services (IES). These may include Employment Ontario (EO) clients, and clients that are on social assistance (SA) that self-referred to EO and had module 1 and 2 of the Common Assessment Tool (CAT) completed by an EO caseworker instead of an SA caseworker. Depending on the IES client needs, SA participation benefits and supports may be provided concurrently with additional IES supports and services.
18. **Non-social Assistance Client** – Clients that self-declared their source of income in either the Common Assessment Tool (CAT) in Employment Services Transformation (EST) catchments

or their Employment Services (ES) intake forms in Matched Communities (MCs), to be anything other than Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

19. **Person-centred Supports** – A category of supports such as assistance in finding housing, health and mental care that social assistance (SA) clients access through a referral process independent from Employment Ontario (EO). However, person-centred supports require case conferencing with EO caseworkers.
20. **Persons with Disabilities** – People with Disabilities have a wide range of abilities, skills and experience with varying needs that can be served through “mainstream” employment services as well as specialized services. They are defined under the Ontario Human Right’s Code, represent a qualified and underused talent pool that can help businesses address talent needs as well as anticipated labour and skills shortages. For ODSP purposes, a person with a disability is defined under section 4 of the *Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997*.
21. **Pre-Employment Services (PES)** – Only for the purposes of funding and administration of Integrated Employment Services (IES), Pre-Employment Services are the suite of activities available to a client as part of their Employment Assistance Plan (EAP) that would precede or occur concurrently with obtaining employment. It encapsulates all employment services, including services leading to a potential job placement, but excluding services that may only be provided once a client is employed, such as retention service
22. **Racialized** – When answering the question “Which race category best describes you?” in the Common Assessment Tool (CAT), client has identified as being part of one or more races that are part of a racialized group, as defined by Statistics Canada. See here for more information: [Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/subject/001/visible-minority-and-population-group-reference-guide-census-of-population-2021/00000-eng.cfm).
23. **Reference Period** – Dates that are in scope for the purposes of evaluation in this report; specifically, January 2020 to June 10, 2022. These dates denote earliest data point (the planning period experienced by staff in the Services System Managers) up to the latest entry of client data from the Case Management System given by the ministry. All relevant data to this period was collected between February 2022 and September 2022.
24. **Returned Clients** – A Social assistance (SA) client that was not accepted into EO services for reasons specified in the Common Assessment and Integrated Case Management - Business Process Guide and is sent back to their SA caseworker using the Common Assessment Module 1.

25. **Self-Directed** – A Client that receives services without being case managed by the Employment Ontario (EO) network where the clients participate in an SSM's self-directed services.

26. **Social Assistance (SA)** – Social assistance refers to the provision of assistance to people in financial need. Social assistance can include financial support related to basic needs, shelter, health and other benefits, and employment assistance. In Ontario, social assistance is provided through two programs: Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

27. **Social Assistance (SA) Client** – SA participants who sought service in either the Employment Services Transformation (EST) catchments or Matched Communities (MCs) and self-declared their source of income as either Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

28. **Social Assistance (SA) Referred** – Clients referred by social assistance (SA) to Integrated Employment Services (IES) that had a module 1 of the Common Assessment Tool (CAT) completed by a social assistance (SA) caseworker and submitted to Employment Ontario (EO) using the CAT. Unless otherwise specified and defined in the body of the report, SA referred is simply stated as “Referral”.

29. **Social Assistance (SA) Self-identified Participants** – Clients who receive payments through Ontario Disability Support Program and/or Ontario Works, to enable their ability to participate in employment services (e.g., related to person-centred support needs). Participants are identifiable through their self-declared source of income in the Common Assessment Tool or Employment Ontario intake forms in a Matched Community.

30. **Social assistance (SA) Self-referred** – SA participants that only had Module 2 of the Common Assessment Tool (CAT) completed by their Employment Ontario (EO) caseworker when seeking EO services in Employment Services Transformation (EST) catchments.

31. **Specialized Services** – Services above and beyond core employment services for inclusion groups designated by the Province. These services may require additional and / or specific competencies and capacity with respect to serving Clients with high, unique or complex employment service needs, including specialized knowledge of cultural appropriateness. It may require additional service capacity for assistance with core services such as job search and job matching support and interdisciplinary / multi-sectoral interventions or expertise. These include Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, Francophones, newcomers to Canada, and Youth with Higher Support Needs.

32. **Stream A** – Rapid employment (low risk of long-term unemployment).
33. **Stream B** – Employability and employment (medium risk of long-term unemployment).
34. **Stream C** – Employability focused (high risk of long-term unemployment).
35. **Youth with Higher Support Needs** – In order to be defined as youth with higher support needs, a client must: (a) be between the ages of 15 and 29; (b) have been segmented into Stream C by the Common Assessment tool; and (c), meet the requirements for Client Served.

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

### Overview of Project

In February 2019, the Government of Ontario announced its plan to transform the province's employment services. As part of the transformation, a new service delivery model was designed to integrate social assistance (SA) employment services, as well as other government employment services, into Employment Ontario (EO). A key component of this transformation was the transition of oversight of EO services from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLTISD) to Service System Managers (SSMs). This new service delivery model, known as Integrated Employment Services (IES), is intended to be more responsive to the needs of jobseekers, businesses and local communities. To begin the transformation of employment services, a prototype phase was introduced to test, gather key learnings, and assess the new model to inform ongoing province-wide implementation. In February 2020, the government announced that the competitive process to select three service system managers in the prototype regions was complete. At this time, the three catchment areas and their respective SSMs were confirmed to be Hamilton-Niagara (consortium led by Fedcap), Muskoka-Kawarthas (Fleming College), and Peel (WCG, part of the APM Group for Peel). The MLTISD is working with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to implement the new system. To assess how the new system is being implemented and whether the transformation of services is achieving its intended outcomes, MLTISD in close collaboration with MCCSS, launched an evaluation of the prototype phase of EST.

### Methodology

The evaluation of the EST prototype was launched in June 2021 to examine the period of January 2021 to May 2022. The evaluation plan includes multiple lines of evidence and data collection activities inclusive of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The **Process Evaluation** includes the following qualitative methodologies: literature and program document review, labour market analysis, key informant interviews, and focus groups with stakeholder groups. The data collection for the Process Evaluation took place between February 24 and June 3, 2022, with three additional interviews with IES clients conducted on September 20 and 21, 2022. A total of 180 stakeholders were consulted in the Process

Evaluation via focus groups and interviews. Stakeholder groups included MLITSD staff (22), MCCSS staff (11), SSMs (10 respondents in 3 SSMs), municipalities (9), community partners (19), SA and EO caseworkers (20), service providers (55), employers (14), clients (20).

The **Outcome and Impact Evaluations** utilized quantitative data collection methodologies including linking online surveys with administrative data for IES clients, and clients in legacy EO programs in other areas of the province – referred to as Matched Community (MC) clients. Online surveys were also carried out with employers. The surveys were in-field between August 15 and October 15, 2022. A total of 1,254 IES clients (of which 426 are SA referred)<sup>1</sup>, 1,128 Matched Community clients, and 193 employers completed the online surveys.

## **Note about the Implementation and Evaluation of EST**

The implementation and evaluation of the EST Prototype took place during an unprecedented period in which economic conditions were not favourable, and change management processes were more challenging.

The pandemic, lock-downs, and fear associated with health risks led to significant and unprecedented economic shifts in the labour market that impacted the availability of work, staffing shortages, and other unfavourable employment conditions, particularly in the services sectors and other industries where labour market programs tend to draw on employment opportunities. The federal government's primary policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic was to implement the largest income/earning replacement programs in Canadian history (CERB/CRB), which unlike other income support programs, did not include conditionality or obligations to look for work. Within the context of EST, this had two key impacts: 1) it depressed job search behaviors in particular among low-wage workers who are typically the target group for employment programs which lowered the amount of clients entering the Employment Ontario system; and 2) Ontario Works clients moved onto more generous income supports which reduced the amount of clients available to be referred into the prototype system. Additionally, SSMs were required to shift the delivery of services to online platforms at a time where infrastructure might not have been in place. Resultingly, the evaluation of the transformation cannot be understood outside these extraordinary external labour market and policy considerations. These external conditions represent material impacts to the delivery and success of labour market programs.

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<sup>1</sup> As flagged in the administrative data as being referred from SA.

## Implementation of Evaluation

The evaluation data in general, from the Process, and Outcome and Impact Evaluations, was collected during the early days of the program's implementation and is not representative of a fully transitioned system. Indeed, data collection occurred during an immediate post-pandemic period where businesses and workers were only starting to return to their workplaces.

It is also worth noting that the Process Evaluation lines of evidence were qualitative findings, grounded in respondents' perceptions, and experiences. The findings are not meant to be representative of their respective populations of stakeholders and should not be viewed as such. This caveat is especially relevant to the experiences of clients and employers who participated in smaller numbers in the Process Evaluation. Moreover, given that the transformation is continuing to evolve, much of the findings pertaining to the Process Evaluation may not be indicative of current employment practices, standards and experiences. In fact, the Outcome and Impact Evaluations demonstrate some improvements in experiences and outcomes. While greater validity should be attributed to the quantitative findings, given the representativeness of the client and employer samples, it is equally important to acknowledge that the lived experiences of stakeholders provide a compelling justification for the continuous improvement of IES services.

EST's continuous improvement process has already incorporated many lessons learned since the prototype phase. The evaluation findings indicate that the program's outcomes are positive and its impact to clients and employers will continue to be strengthened as transformation matures.

## Caveats about EST and Matched Community Data

The comparisons of outcomes between EST and Matched Community clients is based on available data that is aligned to the design of the programs, which, by nature of their elements of design, make any direct comparisons impractical.

Due to design elements unique to IES that do not exist in legacy programs in the Matched Communities, such as Performance Based Funding (PBF), whereby SSMS are financially incentivized for positive employment outcomes, as well as the obligatory participation in employment services for clients referred from SA, clients in IES are more likely to remain in active pre-employment services (PES) until obtaining employment. Further, outcomes for clients who exit IES pre-employment services early are not recorded. These differences in program design between IES and legacy programs result in uneven comparisons between the two groups.

## Findings

In examining the differences in employment outcomes between IES clients and clients in Matched Communities, it was found that **IES clients overall, and in several client level subgroups (for example SA clients, clients with disability etc.), had a higher probability of being employed at the 3-month checkpoint. However, these findings must be interpreted with caution.**<sup>2</sup>

First, key differences in program service delivery may be inflating the estimated impact of IES on employment outcomes.

- For IES clients, there was also a significantly positive correlation between the number of days to complete services and being employed at exit, where no such correlation was evident among Matched Community clients.<sup>3</sup>
- The implication is that unlike Matched Community clients, IES clients largely remain in services until they obtain employment.
- This critical difference in program service delivery is likely to be putting upward bias on the estimated impact of IES in helping clients obtain employment, especially for any measures of employment outcomes that include the exit checkpoint.

Second, these outcomes are based on data linked to clients who were survey respondents (n=1,254 completed surveys). To the extent that the IES clients who had more favourable experiences and employment outcomes were more motivated to participate in the survey, this would also conceivably lead to more upwardly biased estimates of the impact of services on IES clients.

Overall, given these key differences, it was found that **IES clients** had a higher probability (24.7% higher) of being employed at exit than clients from Matched Communities that had exited from services at these same points in time.<sup>4</sup> This was also the case at 3-months (13%),

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<sup>2</sup> Other employment outcomes were also investigated (e.g., employment at exit, employment any time between exit and 3-months, employment at exit and 3 months). However, unspecified program design elements may be retaining IES clients in services until they exit with employment. As a result, the estimated treatment effect of IES on the employment outcomes of IES clients may be upwardly biased regardless of the outcome measure.

<sup>3</sup> Services completion time of IES clients is significantly positively correlated with employment at exit, but negligible for Matched Community clients.

<sup>4</sup> While Matched Community clients do not receive PES and thereby have not exited from PES per se, the data records clearly indicate that they have exited from a type of employment service.

and when examining the probability of employment at any time between exit from PES and 3-months post services (23%). IES clients also had a higher probability (27.2% higher) of sustained employment, measured as being employed consecutively at both exit and 3-months.<sup>5</sup>

It is noted here that the impact at 3-months is substantially lower at 13%. It is reiterated that estimates based on outcomes that include the exit checkpoint are likely to be biased upward because of differences in program service delivery that likely results in more “employment at exit” scenarios for IES clients.

The difference in employment outcomes was also significant among **SA clients**. Among this subgroup, IES clients have a 24.3% higher probability of being employed at exit compared to Matched Community clients, and a 22.5% higher probability of being employed at 3-months. This changes to a 24% higher probability of being employed at exit or 3-months, while the probability of being employed consecutively at both exit and 3-months is 33.7% higher for IES clients.<sup>6</sup>

**Among clients who self report having at least one disability**, IES clients had a 37.1% higher probability of being employed at exit than Matched Community clients. This probability was 29.1% higher at 3-months, and 37.4% higher for those employed at either exit or 3-months post services. IES clients with a disability also had a 33.8% higher probability of being employed consecutively at both exit and 3-months compared to Matched Community clients with a disability.

**IES clients receiving specialized services** had a 24.6% higher probability of employment at exit, and 21.9%, higher probability of being employed at any time between exit and 3-months post services than Matched Community clients. The probability of being employed consecutively at both exit and 3-months for IES clients was 30.0%. The impact at 3-months was not significantly different between the two client groups.

**Among Newcomers**, no statistically significant differences in employment outcomes were identified between IES clients and Matched Community clients. This finding seems to align with some of the qualitative findings. For example, IES clients who were non-SA referred, especially newcomer clients, expressed great difficulty finding appropriate employment opportunities.

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<sup>5</sup> All differences between groups are statistically significant at p<.001.

<sup>6</sup> Differences are statistically significant at p<.001.

Newcomer clients reported they were placed in manual-labour jobs for which they were overqualified.

Other challenges expressed in the qualitative findings were among “returned” SA referred clients, who indicated they were not employment-ready due to either personal or mental health conditions. Despite these feelings, returned SA referred clients reported they would not turn down employment opportunities if they were provided with appropriate supports.

### **Pre-Employment Services**

Analyses of survey respondents based on matched administrative data indicates that **IES clients have a 10.3% lower probability of completing their pre-employment services (PES) than clients from Matched Communities.**<sup>7</sup> More specifically, it was found that IES clients remain on services an average of about 1.2 times longer than Matched Community clients. IES clients receive PES for 179.19 days on average, while Matched Community clients remain on services for 152.13 days on average.<sup>8</sup> There may be several reasons for this. Since IES clients typically remain in services approximately 1.2 times longer than Matched Community clients, IES clients may be undertaking more intense services than clients from Matched Communities, thereby finding these most difficult to complete. Also, the number of Matched Community members in the sample who exited services early may be somewhat understated due to differences in the way that information about early exits was recorded for this client group in the administrative data.

Across client origins, **82% of IES clients** completed their PES compared to **96% of clients from Matched Communities.** Among IES clients only, SA-referred clients had a 9% higher probability of completing services than their non-SA-referred counterparts. At the same time, SA recipients in IES had about a 15% lower probability of completing services than SA recipients from Matched Communities.

Additionally, those that completed PES were employed in some form after exiting their completed services across all streams, and all client origins, although non-SA referred clients had higher employment rates. For example:

- For Stream A clients, 96% of non-SA referred clients were employed after completing PES compared to 83% of SA referred clients;

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<sup>7</sup> Differences are statistically significant at p<.001.

<sup>8</sup> Single weighted averages were computed that were based on the averages of each of the 3 catchment sites, for the IES and MC groups.

- For Stream B clients these same rates are 94% and 91%, for non-SA referred and SA referred clients, respectively; and
- For Stream C, they were found to be 90% and 86%, for non-SA referred and SA referred clients, respectively.

## **Sustainability of Employment Outcomes**

The survey data indicates that while only one-half (56.4%) of IES clients reported their goal was to achieve long-term employment, the percentage of these respondents with a permanent job at each of the four checkpoints ranged between 78% at exit, and 81% by 12-months; far exceeding the goals set by clients. The majority of IES clients (87%) were employed 20 or more hours per week at some point throughout the 12-month period, although the percentage working 20 or more hours per week declined over time, starting at 86% upon exit, and reaching 62% by the 12-month point. Evidence from the Process Evaluation indicates that SA referred clients with barriers to employment found it most difficult to work greater than 20 hours per week. Moreover, it was suggested by service providers that incremental increases in the number of hours worked would be most beneficial for these clients, starting at 20 hours, and building up to full-time status, on average, IES clients worked about 33 hours a week throughout the four follow-up time points.<sup>9</sup>

The average hourly wage ranged from a low of \$18.68 at exit from PES, to a high of \$19.69 by the 12-month checkpoint. The administrative data confirms that 62% of IES clients met or exceeded their hourly wage goals at any point in time post PES exit; and that 56% met or exceeded their weekly hours goals.

## **Employer Experiences**

About one-quarter (26%) of employers reported their ability to find workers with the right skills improved after receiving Employer Supports. Additionally, only a very small proportion (20%) noted that their ability to retain workers increased after their participation in the program.

## **Reach**

Program reach evaluates the extent to which EST has been delivering services and supports to the intended population. This includes clients with specialized needs as well as employers seeking to hire workers.

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<sup>9</sup> Four points in time refers to: at PES exit, post 3-months, post 6-months, and post 12-months.

In examining the differences in demographic characteristics between IES clients and clients in Matched Communities, it was found that overall, **IES clients are relatively comparable to clients from the Matched Communities.** For example, Matched Community client demographics by age and gender were found to be 38% in the 16-29 age group, and 51% are female. In the IES client group, the same demographics are 34% in 16-29 age category, and 50% female.

The evaluation findings, from the administrative data, indicate that in general, EST is reaching both SA referred and non-SA referred clients, with relatively equal proportions across the prototype sites, although somewhat higher proportions are from Peel (36%). The highest proportion of clients served are Stream C clients (44%), and these are most predominantly served in Hamilton-Niagara (49%) and Muskoka-Kawarthas (45%), in comparison to Peel (33%). Small proportions of clients identify as newcomers (18%), youth with higher needs (29%), Francophone (4%), or Indigenous (3%). About one-half of clients identify as racialized (48%), and most of these clients receive services from Peel (84%). The demographics of IES clients in the three prototype sites, in comparison to the regional population demographics in Peel,<sup>10</sup> indicates that IES Survey Clients are over-represented in the program in comparison to the general population. For example, the newcomer proportion for **IES clients in Peel is 36%**. In comparison, Peel's "recent immigrant" population, defined as those that arrived in Canada between January 1, 2016 and May 11, 2021, is 14%. Likewise, Peel's racialized population for **IES clients is 84%**, which is also much higher than the population demographic for Peel's visible minority<sup>11</sup> population at 69%.<sup>12</sup>

Access to services from clients that have barriers to employment was examined through the qualitative research. The process evaluation, conducted in early 2022, found that the EST model is not adequately meeting the needs of youth and rural clients, many of whom lack transportation, technology and access to the internet. There was also a perception, stated by service providers and SA caseworkers, that life stabilization supports (LSS) are not adequately providing and/or addressing the needs of clients that are distant from the labour market, including those with disabilities, or those requiring mental health supports. SA clients explained

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<sup>10</sup> The comparison is made with Peel as it is the only region that is represented on its own. Both Hamilton/Niagara and Muskoka/Kawarthas comprise two different regions with differing population demographics.

<sup>11</sup> Originally termed as visible minority, in 2021 Census analytical and communications products.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Peel&DGUIDlist=2021A00033521&GE>.

that their return to employment process could be greatly facilitated if they were offered additional supports.

## Relevance

Program relevance explores the extent to which EST is meeting the needs of clients and employers.

The evaluation evidence from the IES survey data (n=1,254) indicates that two-thirds (67%, n=840) of clients are satisfied with employment services and supports received, with those in Muskoka-Kawarthas being most satisfied, while those in Peel being least satisfied (75%, n=315 and 57%, n=253 respectively). Employer satisfaction levels (n=193), on the other hand, are slightly less positive, with 62% reporting that services and supports received made their organization more capable of accommodating jobseekers with disabilities; and 67% reporting that Employment Services (ES) provides sufficient supports to accommodate employment services to jobseekers with disabilities.<sup>13</sup>

It was found that many IES clients reported they did not use supports and services that are typical in employment services. For example, 45% reported they did not use employability training; 40% reported they did not use job matching; 49% indicated they did not use job coaching; 51% reported they did not use financial supports; 44% said they did not use career planning services; and 79% did not use supports with starting their own business. Only job search supports and services was reported as being used at higher frequencies, with 19% indicating they did not use this service. It should be noted that these findings are self-reported. Given that the survey does not explore IES clients' understanding of the terminology used, or lack thereof, it may be possible that responses were incorrectly reported.

For those IES clients who responded that they did use services, most found these services to be helpful.<sup>14</sup> The survey data indicates that:

- Most (90%) clients found employability skills to be helpful;
- Of those clients who accessed job supports and services (job searching supports), 87% found that they were helpful;

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<sup>13</sup> Survey findings have been re-based to remove those that responded don't know and does not apply.

<sup>14</sup> Those that did not use the service/support, or responded don't know or refuse to answer were removed from the denominators for the findings listed in the bullet points.

- About three-quarters of clients that used job matching (77%), job trials (75%), and job placements (78%) found these helpful. Nearly nine-in-ten (86%), of those that accessed job coaching found it helpful;
- Nearly nine-in-ten (89%) clients reported that they found financial supports to be helpful;
- Nearly nine-in-ten (85%) reported career planning services as helpful; and
- More than three-in-four (79%) clients reported that services related to starting their own business were helpful.

The Process Evaluation findings from early 2022 provide evidence that IES may be challenging to clients that are distant from the labour market. Moreover, it was found that while the Client Segmentation process (streaming and ES) does work well with clients ready for employment, those that are distant from the labour market require additional employment supports to assist with employment-readiness. In comparison, the **survey data** indicates that streaming is working quite well with most clients streamed according to need. More specifically, it was found that:

- There are higher proportions of SA-referred clients in Stream C. More specifically, of clients in Stream C, 74% were found to be SA referred clients.
- While all IES clients in all three streams (Streams A, B, and C) have plan subgoals related to employment assistance supports, Stream C clients, who require more intense services, had the highest incidence of service and support goals per client (average of 2.0) in comparison to Stream A clients (average of 1.5).
- Both Stream B and C clients were more likely to have subgoals related to financial supports (25% and 26%, respectively), than Stream A clients (13%), also confirming that the streaming and the setting of subgoals are generally aligned to the needs of IES clients.

Qualitative findings also found that employers are generally not aware of EST and often confuse services with other employment services offered by employment agencies and job boards. Conversely, later survey data found that 76% of employers are aware of the supports and services available to hire jobseekers with disabilities. It was also found that 72% indicated that their organization has the necessary supports to hire jobseekers with disabilities.<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding, lower proportions were found to be satisfied with services and supports, with 62% reporting that services and supports received made their organization more capable of

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<sup>15</sup> Survey findings have been re-based to remove those that responded don't know and does not apply.

accommodating jobseekers with disabilities; and 67% reporting that Employment Services (ES) provides sufficient supports to accommodate employment services to jobseekers with disabilities.

## Delivery

Program delivery evaluates the extent to which EST has been implemented in accordance to the design and delivered as intended. This includes assessing the degree to which EO and SA services are integrated, evaluating the implementation of the new commissioning service delivery model, system stewardship, the common assessment process, and other innovative approaches.

In evaluating the PES outcomes of IES clients with clients from Matched Communities (through the IES and Matched Community Surveys), it was found that **IES clients, have a 10% lower probability than clients in Matched Communities of completing their PES**. However, IES clients, including SA referred clients, also have comparatively higher employment rates than clients from Matched Communities, after completing their PES. Specifically, for clients who completed PES, not including those who remain in service or exited early, **employment rates for SA recipients were 59% at 3-months**; in comparison to the Matched Community group, where all clients were included in the analysis, employment rates were **48% at 3-months**.<sup>16</sup>

The process evaluation findings provide evidence that there is congruence between design and implementation of EST features. The commissioning approach is perceived as moving in a positive direction with respect to the management of service providers, although at the time of the qualitative data collection (early 2022), some stakeholders (e.g., service providers) felt that the model was rolled out too hastily and prior to being fully evaluated. The stewardship model was also perceived favourably, with most suggesting it would result in positive outcomes for Ontarians. Most report that the technology is working well and that the Common Assessment Tool (CAT) is useful because it assesses employment skills and abilities.

There was a perception, at the time of the qualitative data collection, that the questions in the CAT may be very sensitive and anxiety-provoking, that it takes too long to administer, and that it may not always stream clients appropriately. While the IES Client Survey does not address issues around CAT sensitivity and ease of administration, it does demonstrate that clients are

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<sup>16</sup> SA recipients for IES are inclusive of those that were SA-referred as well as those that were not.

being adequately streamed and aligned to subgoals that are more intuitively relevant to clients within those streams (see discussion above in Relevance section).

The process evaluation also indicates that the Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) is well accepted by SSMs, although there were initial concerns about SSMs/service providers not meeting performance targets for clients that are not employment-ready.

Generally speaking, the most recent quantitative data confirms that initial concerns about the Common Assessment Tool, the Segmentation Model, and the PMF and the manner in which the PMF meets performance targets, especially targets around employment, are no longer of serious concern. The survey data has validated that these processes are effective at aligning to clients' and employer needs, as well as to positive employment outcomes.

## Insights about the Evaluation

While the objectives of the evaluation are to provide causal inferences on the extent to which participating in the EST prototype achieved its intended outcomes, several limitations in data design and estimation made the findings inconclusive. Alternatively, this section highlights several insights about the implementation of EST, as well as observations about the evaluation.

The implementation and evaluation of the EST Prototype took place during an unprecedented period of economic uncertainty and unparallel conditions and deeper understandings could be gained through a more fulsome evaluation in future.

While the pandemic necessitated expansion of federal benefits for example, initiatives like Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) which provided financial support to employed and self-employed Canadians who were directly affected by COVID-19, these policy responses were not only unanticipated shocks to the labour market as a whole, but likely depressed participation in IES. Thus, the pandemic backdrop made it challenging to disentangle the impact of EST.

Moreover, the evaluation data in general, from the Process, and Outcome and Impact Evaluations, was collected during the early days of the program's implementation and is not representative of a fully transitioned system. A more mature EST will not only allow for richer and more robust program administrative datasets but also allow to estimate long-term outcomes and impact of interest.

Additionally, there are differences found in the design of EST and Matched Community programs that may influence the outcome data for clients, including time to end of services,

and employment sustainability metrics. For example, it was found that key differences in program service delivery may be inflating the estimated impact of IES on employment outcomes. It was noted that program service delivery is likely to be putting upward bias on the estimated impact of IES in helping clients obtain employment, especially for any measures of employment outcomes that include the exit checkpoint.

Future evaluation could explore the possibility of having a better comparison group when analyzing outcomes and impact measures. The comparability of the comparison group should hold in terms of design of the program, but also bear representativeness of the full spectrum of clients so that self selection biases are minimized. This is especially true in the context of social assistance clients whose self-selection into Employment Ontario's employment service are not representative of the profile of average social assistance clients.

Likewise, future research should be designed to ensure that all metrics carefully consider these nuances and construct databases that compare programs within their extant indicators. The evidence gathered from the evaluation of EST prototype reveal, that overall, IES demonstrates some success compared to Matched Communities in assisting clients to secure employment. However, there is a need to unpack the pathway of success and understand the elements of IES that have been contributing to the observed impact. This in turn, requires further investigations to garner deeper insights on the contribution of key design elements of IES on its success, its catalyzing role of various operational and incentive frameworks, and its process mechanics and their interplay.

In light of the ministry's commitment towards continuous improvement, consideration and prioritization of these lines of inquiry based on emerging business needs will be beneficial. Findings may provide deeper and actionable takeaways on best practices within EST, as it transitions through its phases of implementation to further enhance service delivery, cater to the needs of clients and their local communities, continue to incentivize workforce development innovations, and adopt innovations for a thriving and inclusive workforce.

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Context

In February 2019, the government announced its plan to transform the province's employment services (ES) via an initiative called Employment Services Transformation (EST). As part of the transformation, a new service delivery model was designed to integrate Social Assistance (SA) employment services, as well as Employment Ontario (EO) specific programs into Integrated Employment Services (IES). The new system is intended to be more responsive to the needs of jobseekers, businesses, and local communities.

To begin the transformation of employment services, a prototype period was introduced to test, gather key learnings, and assess the transformation to inform province-wide implementation. In July 2019, the government announced three catchment areas – Hamilton-Niagara, Muskoka-Kawarthas and the Region of Peel – as prototype areas for EST. Through a competitive process, the government selected Service System Managers (SSM) to oversee the planning, design, and delivery of IES in each catchment area. Several steps were undertaken in rolling out the transformation in the prototype regions, as follows:

- Planning Period (January 2020 – March 2020): This planning period was intended to allow SSMs to establish themselves within the prototype region and familiarize themselves with the existing employment services provider network.
- Transition Period (April 2020 – December 2020): This transition period was intended to transfer responsibility for managing in-scope EO and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) employment services from service providers to the SSMs. However, SSMs were not allowed to make changes to service delivery or to the service provider network during this period. While the transition period was initially meant to end on September 30, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was extended by three months, i.e., until December 31, 2020.
- IES Delivery Period (January 2021 onwards): This IES delivery period was intended to complete the transition and transfer responsibility for employment services of OW recipients to SSMs. Starting with this period, SSMs were also permitted to make changes to the service provider network and to be fully responsible for the planning, design, and delivery of in-scope employment services within their prototype region.

Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) is working with Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to implement the new system. To

assess how the new system is being implemented and whether the transformation of services is achieving its intended outcomes, MLITSD in close collaboration with MCCSS launched an evaluation of the EST prototype.

In June 2021, the government announced the phased provincial roll-out of EST in the remaining 12 catchments areas. The roll-out began with nine catchment areas in 2022, and the remaining catchments with higher levels of complexity – Toronto and Northern Ontario – in 2023. The focus of this evaluation is the prototype areas – Hamilton-Niagara, Muskoka-Kawarthas and the Region of Peel – alone; all remaining catchment areas in the later phases of provincial roll-out are out-of-scope for this evaluation.

### **1.1.1 Note about the Implementation and Evaluation of EST**

The implementation and evaluation of the EST Prototype took place during an unprecedented period in which economic conditions were not favourable, and change management processes were more challenging.

The pandemic, lock-downs, and fear associated with health risks led to significant and unprecedented economic shifts in the labour market that impacted the availability of work, staffing shortages, and other unfavourable employment conditions, particularly in the services sectors and other industries where labour market programs tend to draw on employment opportunities. The federal government's primary policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic was to implement the largest income/earning replacement programs in Canadian history (CERB/CRB), which unlike other income support programs, did not include conditionality or obligations to look for work. Within the context of EST, this had two key impacts: 1) it depressed job search behaviors in particular among low-wage workers who are typically the target group for employment programs which lowered the amount of clients entering the Employment Ontario system and 2) Ontario Works clients moved onto more generous income supports which reduced the amount of clients available to be referred into the prototype system. Additionally, SSMs were required to shift the delivery of services to online platforms at a time where infrastructure might not have been in place. Resultingly, the evaluation of the transformation cannot be understood outside these extraordinary external labour market and policy considerations. These external conditions represent material impacts to the delivery and success of labour market programs.

### **Implementation of Evaluation**

Moreover, the evaluation data in general, from the Process, and Outcome and Impact Evaluations, was collected during the early days of the program's implementation and is not

representative of a fully transitioned system. Indeed, data collection occurred during an immediate post-pandemic period where businesses and workers were only starting to return to their workplaces.

It is also worth noting that the Process Evaluation lines of evidence were qualitative findings, grounded in respondents' perceptions, and experiences. The findings are not meant to be representative of their respective populations of stakeholders and should not be viewed as such. This caveat is especially relevant to the experiences of clients and employers who participated in smaller numbers in the Process Evaluation. Moreover, given that the transformation is continuing to evolve, much of the findings pertaining to the Process Evaluation may not be indicative of current employment practices, standards and experiences. In fact, the Outcome and Impact Evaluations demonstrate some improvements in experiences and outcomes. While greater validity should be attributed to the quantitative findings, given the representativeness of the client and employer samples, it is equally important to acknowledge that the lived experiences of stakeholders provide a compelling justification for the continuous improvement of IES services.

EST's continuous improvement process has already incorporated many lessons learned since the prototype. The evaluation findings indicate that the program's outcomes are positive and its impact to clients and employers will continue to be strengthened as transformation matures.

### **1.1.2 Caveats about EST and Matched Community Data**

The comparison of outcomes between EST and Matched Community clients is based on available data that is aligned to the design of the programs, which by nature of their elements of design, make any direct comparisons impractical.

Due to design elements unique to IES that do not exist in legacy programs in the Matched Communities, such as Performance Based Funding (PBF), whereby SSMs are financially incentivized for positive employment outcomes, as well as the obligatory participation in employment services for clients referred from SA, clients in IES are more likely to remain in active pre-employment services (PES) until obtaining employment. Further, outcomes for clients who exit IES pre-employment services early are not recorded. These differences in program design between IES and legacy programs result in uneven comparisons between the two groups.

## 1.2 Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The evaluation of the EST prototype was launched in June 2021. The evaluation plan includes multiple lines of evidence and data collection activities. See Appendix A for the Evaluation Matrix.

The evaluation is meant to contribute to an evidence base for informed decision-making with respect to the transformation and integration of employment services in Ontario. The objectives of this third-party evaluation include assessing the following:

- The implementation of the integrated model in the prototype period.
- The service delivery of the integrated model.
- The extent to which the integrated system is attaining its intended outcomes.

The evaluation is carried out through a two-phase approach, utilizing process and outcome/impact evaluation methodologies. This report outlines the findings of the **Process, and Outcome and Impact Evaluations**.

### 1.2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The **Process Evaluation** explored the implementation and delivery of IES in the prototype period, and it evaluated the reach, relevance, and perceptions of outcomes of the integration model in Ontario. The goal of this evaluation was to examine whether the implementation had gone according to plan and to identify any challenges in the way of optimal delivery.

Evidence was collected from clients, employers, Ministry staff (MLITSD and MCCSS), SA and EO caseworkers, EO service providers, SSMs, community partners and municipalities. The Process Evaluation findings serve to inform continuous improvement of the initiative.

The **Outcome Evaluation** collected information to measure the extent to which the EST prototype is achieving its intended outcomes (such as employment outcomes, hours worked, etc.). It responds to the effectiveness of the initiative. The key success of this evaluation is contingent on a large enough pool of jobseekers and employers who participated in the initiative to ensure that the results are representative of all participants.

The **Impact Evaluation** assessed the extent to which participating in an initiative yielded a different outcome than not participating. More specifically, it measured whether the changes yielded are indeed due to the initiative intervention and not to other factors. Impact evaluations require the establishment of a comparison group or a counterfactual/baseline. The

risk of not implementing an impact evaluation is that the outcomes of the initiative cannot be directly linked to the intervention.

## 1.2.2 Objectives of the Evaluation

The **Process Evaluation** responded to the following key evaluation questions:

- To what extent is EST relevant to the employment needs of clients? To what extent is EST relevant to the workforce needs of employers?
- To what extent does EST align with local labour market needs and broader economic shifts? To what extent was EST implemented in ways consistent with its design? What are the key factors supporting or hindering the implementation of EST? To what extent do policy and business processes support implementation of integrated case management and transition of service delivery?
- To what extent is EST achieving its intended system-level outcomes?

The **Outcome and Impact Evaluations** responded to the following key evaluation questions:

- To what extent is EST relevant to the employment needs of clients? To what extent is EST relevant to the workforce needs of employers?
- To what extent is Employment Services Transformation delivering services to participants who have different or specialized service needs and pathways to employment?
- To what extent is the initiative achieving or demonstrating progress towards its intended system-level outcomes?
- To what extent is Employment Services Transformation achieving its intended client-level outcomes?
- To what extent is Employment Services Transformation achieving its intended employer-level outcomes?

## 1.2.3 Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation methods to carry out the **Process Evaluation** included the following:

- **Document Review** – The document review was undertaken to provide a broader contextual foundation for understanding the EST prototype and to guide the current research design and evaluation goals. The document review explored MLITSD-provided documents including, but not limited to, policy, design, funding, and reporting. Information explored through the document review provide background and context for the evaluation findings.

- **Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups** – The intent of the interviews and focus groups was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation and delivery of EST, including challenges and best practices, and to learn about how service delivery decisions are made along a client’s journey. Key informant interviews and focus groups were undertaken with IES clients including those that were Social Assistance (SA) referred, and non-SA referred, employers, Ministry representatives from both MLITSD and MCCSS, SSMs, SA and EO caseworkers, EO service providers, community partners and municipalities in the three prototype catchment areas.
- **Literature Review** – The literature review was undertaken to provide context to the evaluation findings. The literature review included published reports and academic research, and examines employment trends within the province.
- **Labour Market Information (LMI) Data Review** – In close alignment with the literature review, a review of LMI data by catchment area, served to provide contextual information and was utilized to demonstrate labour market needs and the way EST is responsive to these needs.

The evaluation methods to carry out the Outcome and Impact Evaluations included the following:

- Survey of Employment Services (ES) Clients in the three IES Prototype Catchments (IES Client Survey);
- Survey of ES clients in three Comparison Catchments (Survey of Clients from Matched Communities);
- **Survey of Participating IES Employers** across the three prototype catchments (the Employer Survey); and
- Analysis of Administrative Data Maintained by MLITSD.

## 1.3 Report Structure

The evaluation findings addressed issues of reach, effectiveness, relevance, and delivery. Accordingly, key evaluation issues and questions that guided the data collection and analysis were developed and provided to the Ministry in the Workplan Methodology Report.

## 2.0 Methodology

The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach which is inclusive of both quantitative and qualitative methods, including a literature and program document review, and labour market analysis, key informant interviews, focus groups with stakeholder groups, and survey findings from IES clients and clients in other areas that were not part of the prototype catchments, as well as employers.

### 2.1 Data Collection Methods and Stakeholder Sample Sizes

#### 2.1.1 Process Evaluation Methods and Stakeholder Sample Sizes

The following information represents a summary of our data collection methods and stakeholder sample sizes.

The data collection methods included:

- Literature review (including a program document review) and labour market scan; and
- Focus groups and interviews with Ministry representatives (MLITSD and MCCSS), SSMs, municipalities, Community Partners, SA and EO caseworkers, EO service providers, employers, and clients.

Table 1 provides an overview of the number of respondents and sample size for the stakeholder consultations (focus groups and interviews). Notably, the number of respondents invited were 1,129 in total, with those engaged being sufficiently fulsome to ensure a good representation of stakeholders and generalizability of the findings.

Table 1: Overview of Participation for Focus Groups and Interviews

Stakeholder Groups	Numbers Invited	Number of Focus Groups and Interviews	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents from the three catchment areas
Ministry Staff (MLITSD)	28	6	22	
Ministry Staff (MCCSS)	17	4	11	
SSM Staff in the Three Prototype Catchment Areas	11	3	10	Region of Peel (4), Hamilton-Niagara (4), Muskoka-Kawarthas region (2)
Municipalities	11	1	9	Region of Peel (1), Hamilton-Niagara (5), Muskoka-Kawarthas (3)
Community Partners	117	3	19	Region of Peel (14), Hamilton-Niagara (3), Muskoka-Kawarthas region (2)
SA and EO Caseworkers	26	7	20	Region of Peel (5), Hamilton-Niagara (7), Muskoka-Kawarthas region (7)
Service Providers	80	10	55	Region of Peel (19), Hamilton-Niagara (23), Muskoka-Kawarthas region (13)
Employers	312	5	14	Region of Peel (10), Hamilton-Niagara (3), Muskoka-Kawarthas region (1)
Clients (returned)	45	1	3	Muskoka-Kawarthas (1), Hamilton-Niagara (1), Peel (1)
Clients (self-directed) <sup>17</sup>	28	1	4	Peel (4)
Clients (IES not SA referred) <sup>18</sup>	130	1	7	Peel (7)
Clients (SA referred) <sup>19</sup>	324	2	6	Peel (4), Hamilton/Niagara (2)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,129</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>180</b>	

<sup>17</sup> Clients were invited from the three prototype catchment areas, but only those from the Region of Peel agreed to participate.

## 2.1.2 Outcomes/Impact Evaluation Methods and Stakeholder Sample Sizes

The three surveys that are part of the 2022 EST prototype evaluation were created by Goss Gilroy Inc, and CCI Research in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, Immigration and Skills Development (MLITISD) the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). The surveys were designed to provide results that would contribute to answering key evaluation questions related to the relevance, reach, delivery, and effectiveness of EST in prototype catchments; and outcomes of IES clients compared to similar clients in Matched Communities of York, Kitchener/ Waterloo/Barrie, Stratford/Bruce. Each survey was launched first in an online format using available contact information provided by the ministries to send email invitations.

Due to the relatively small population (N=729) of distinct employers in IES during the reference period, the Employer Survey was conducted as a census to maximize responses. For the IES Survey and the Survey of Matched Communities, random samples were drawn.

Information about the administration of the surveys to the three groups is shown in Table 2. As per Table 2, the three surveys launched on August 15, 2022. Based on the results from a two-week pilot survey conducted in July 2022, the number of survey invitations administered for the IES Client Survey, and the Survey of Clients in Matched Communities was based on estimated completion rates of 23-25% and 25-30% respectively.<sup>20</sup> Survey fielding for all three groups continued until the scheduled end date of 11:59 p.m. October 15, 2022.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Three focus groups were planned with SA referred clients, of which two were carried out. The third group (SA clients in Muskoka/Kawarthas) had 5 confirmed to attend, and 0 showed up – hence group was not held.

<sup>20</sup> Actual response rates for the IES and Matched Community Client Surveys were consistent with the pilot-derived estimates at 26% and 28% respectively and have Margins of Error below  $\pm 5\%$  (see Table 2). However, analyses from the survey results should still be interpreted with caution in light of recommendations in peer reviewed academic research that survey response rates should be at least 50% or more in order to consider the results representative of the target population.

Table 2: Survey Administration Information

Survey by Type and Catchment	Full Population		Sample Available to Contact		Sample Drawn for Survey		Survey Completes*		Margin of Error**
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
<b>IES Clients</b>	<b>22,031</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12,389</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>4,867</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1,254 (378)</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2.7</b>
Hamilton-Niagara	11,852	54	6,757	57	1,682	25	381 (373)	22	4.9
Muskoka-Kawarthas	2,914	13	1,586	54	1,578	54	420 (340)	27	4.4
Peel	7,265	33	4,046	56	1,605	22	453 (365)	28	4.6
<b>Matched Communities</b>	<b>21,075</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12,826</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>4,076</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1,128 (378)</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2.8</b>
Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie	9,341	44	5,699	61	1,358	24	400 (370)	28	4.8
Stratford-Bruce	3,153	15	1,929	61	1,329	69	338 (343)	25	5.04
York	8,581	41	5,198	61	1,389	27	390 (368)	28	4.8
<b>Employers</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>100</b>	--	--	<b>193</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6.1</b>
Hamilton-Niagara	307	42	307	100	--	--	82	27	9.3
Muskoka-Kawarthas	282	39	282	100	--	--	80	28	9.3
Peel	140	19	140	100	--	--	31	22	15.6

\*The minimum number of completes to achieve an MoE of  $\pm 5\%$  relative to population size is shown in brackets below the obtained completes.

\*\*The reported Margin of Error (MoE) is based on a 95% confidence level. Since the target population sizes were known in advance and the number of completes was 5% or more of each population, the Finite Population Correction factor was applied to avoid overstating the MoE.

## 2.2 Representativeness of Survey Sample

The evaluation evidence indicates that the demographic breakdowns in the collected samples from each catchment are relatively consistent with the demographics of the client population from which they came.

All reasonable efforts were taken to ensure that the samples from each survey would be representative of their respective target populations. The original sampling frames, provided to carry out the sampling, were prepared by the MLITSD's Data Analytics Unit to ensure that they contained a representative cross-section of the client populations along a broad set of key variables. The samples drawn from these frames were carried out using systematic random sampling, and completes were obtained in numbers to achieve Margins of Error (MoE's) within the  $\pm 5\%$  standard. The collected data were also weighted to adjust for the survey design (design weights), and survey non-response (non-response weights). Lastly, the completes were also

weighted so that the samples are equal to the populations of their respective catchments according to age-group, and gender.

It is reiterated however, that despite the above efforts to ensure sample representativeness, the results of the analyses from these samples should be interpreted with caution. The response rates for the IES, Matched Community, and Employer Survey, were 26%, 28%, and 26%, respectively. While these response rates are acceptable with survey research, particularly in hard-to-reach respondent groups such as IES clients and employers, the academic literature suggests they should be at least 50%, and in many cases much higher in order to consider a sample “representative” in peer reviewed published research.

## **2.2.1 Outcome Evaluation**

The Outcome Evaluation, which applies to the IES Client Survey and the Employer Survey, essentially focuses on the question of the effectiveness of the employment services and supports received.

### **IES Clients**

For IES Clients, the effectiveness of the employment services and supports received was assessed through both objective and subjective indicators of clients’ labour market outcomes. In the former case, objective indicators, such as outcome wages, hours worked, or employment status, came from the available administrative data that was anonymously matched to IES Client Survey respondents. This was also complemented by selected items in the IES Client Survey asking about individual client’s labour market outcomes in relation to their perceptions and goals. Where possible, descriptive statistics of these outcomes are provided for comparison across each of the three IES prototype catchments.

### **Employers**

As there was no data provision for linking employer data from the Ministry’s administrative records, the metrics for assessing the effectiveness of employer-level outcomes came exclusively from self-reported responses on the relevant survey items, and relevant data included in the original survey sampling frame. For example, key questions, such as the extent to which employers have increased access to talent, that their skill needs were met, and their satisfaction with financial incentives and other resources, are informed by responses to survey items. Where possible, descriptive statistics of these outcomes are provided for comparison across each of the three IES prototype catchments.

## 2.2.2 Impact Evaluation

### Clients from Matched Communities

When assessing the potential effect of new policy interventions in a “real world” environment, research must often take a quasi-experimental design where one group (the experimental or treatment group) is exposed to the new intervention (e.g., a policy, procedure, or service model), while a separate group (the control group) is exposed to the status quo. Aside from the presence of the treatment variable, the researcher typically attempts (if feasible) to match the two groups as closely as possible along other characteristics to minimize the potential for any differences in their outcomes instead being an artefact of differences in their characteristics. If the outcome of interest is substantially different, on average, among the treatment group, the typical assumption is that the difference in outcomes is in some degree a consequence of the treatment (intervention).

The problem with this type of research design however, is that the treatment effect may also be influenced by treatment group characteristics that differ from the control group; thereby making it difficult to attribute the outcome to the treatment itself. Further, it is often the case that external factors beyond the researcher’s control can obscure the “true” effect of the treatment (intervention) on the outcome of interest.

## 2.3 Strengths and Limitations

### 2.3.1 Strengths and Limitations Process Evaluation

Overall, this **Process Evaluation** presents a strong methodology. The use of multiple lines of evidence enhances confidence in the findings and compensates, to an extent, for any non-response bias. The stakeholder sample sizes are also quite large for a qualitative approach. As noted above, this was exceeded for many of the stakeholder groups included in this evaluation. In addition, by consulting with several stakeholder groups involved in the EST prototype, the evaluation provides an opportunity to obtain information from primary sources that can be triangulated based on the perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

While every effort was made to minimize limitations, one challenge associated with carrying out in-person consultations during a global pandemic meant that it was not possible to conduct site visits within the three catchment areas. In its place, Goss Gilroy Inc. pivoted to conducting virtual focus groups with key stakeholder groups, and reviewing online program documents.

Likewise, observations were limited to the feedback we received about processes, rather than having the ability to observe the processes first-hand.

## **Strengths and Limitations Outcomes/Impact Evaluation**

Survey research provides many advantages as a form of data collection, including allowing for outreach to large samples and populations to achieve good representation of those populations, flexibility in administration (e.g., both online and telephone contact), allowing for collection of a large amount of quantitative and qualitative data, and supporting a broad analysis of the survey results. However, the current project is also subject to several limitations, each of which were addressed by several mitigating strategies:

### **Survey Participation Among Certain Respondent Groups**

Regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic, groups such as employers, and employment services or social assistance clients can be difficult-to-reach populations.

This challenge was addressed by making multiple attempts at outreach via telephone contact (in the case of employers and clients) and SMS messaging (clients only). It was also addressed via offering clients a small incentive for completing the survey via their choice of one of 3 brands of e-gift card.

Despite these efforts, overall response rates were low relative to standards set in peer reviewed published research (a minimum of 50% and often higher).<sup>21</sup> Therefore results based on survey findings should be interpreted with caution.

### **Limited Ability to Compare Across Certain Demographic Characteristics**

The hard-to-reach nature of the survey respondents, combined with the response rates among certain demographic subgroups, may have resulted in some small groupings which limit the ability to make comparisons across some demographic characteristics.

During the data collection period, demographic information about the sample was not available that would have enabled ongoing monitoring of data collection to ensure that the sample would reflect the target population along key demographic characteristics. Where relevant,

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<sup>21</sup> While these response rates are acceptable with survey research, particularly in hard-to-reach respondent groups such as IES clients and employers, the academic literature suggests they should be at least 50%, and in many cases much higher in order to consider a sample “representative” in peer reviewed published research.

these limitations are reiterated accordingly by noting that the results for a particular subgroup should be interpreted with caution due to potentially low response rates from that subgroup.

For a breakdown of the samples obtained from the IES and Matched Community Client Surveys and how they compare against key demographic characteristics in the target populations.

## **Limitations of the Data and Statistical Analytical Techniques Employed**

To reiterate, the results of the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) analyses come with several caveats, and any results based on this technique must be interpreted with these limitations in mind:

- PSM does not account for the potential confounding effect of unobserved variables on the treatment effect, and on the outcome being measured. To mitigate the unforeseen limitation with the research design, a statistical analytic technique known as Propensity Score Matching (PSM) was employed (where the data permitted such an analysis) to understand whether IES clients had significantly different outcomes relative to clients from the Matched Communities.
- PSM is a class of methods that can be used in studies that are intended to examine the outcome of some type of treatment effect, but do not meet the standards of a study with randomly assigned control groups. When employing a PSM technique, one is essentially simulating some of the characteristics of a randomly assigned control group study by holding constant systematic observed differences in characteristics between the control and treatment groups. By doing so, this improves the ability to distinguish the effects of the treatment variable from other observed confounding variables.
- One important limitation of this technique, however, is PSM's assumption that all variables that are relevant to both the treatment and outcome are measurable and included in the model.
- Other estimators were attempted but did not give results with covariate balance. A robustness check on the single estimator was not conducted. Therefore, PSM does not account for the potential confounding effect of unobserved variables on the treatment effect, and on the outcome being measured. The reported treatment effects must be interpreted within the limitation that other factors not specified in the PSM model may be accounting for some (or all) of these effects.
- It should also be noted, that not all outcomes of interest could be assessed using PSM. There are several reasons for this. First, some outcome variables which were identified as of interest in the study were not available within the provided dataset. Second, as the

matched administrative data from the IES clients and from clients in Matched Communities are from separate databases, some variables were conceptually similar between the two datasets but were different in the categories being used within them (e.g., variables measuring work experience). Therefore, PSM is employed only with variables that are consistent between the groups being compared. Third, if model diagnostics from a PSM analysis suggested that the groups being compared in the model had observed characteristics that were not similar enough to make the groups comparable in other respects (an important criterion), then a PSM analysis is omitted from the results.

- Due to a lack of adequate measures, the results of these PSM analyses do not control for the extent that pre-treatment effects may be contributing to the outcome measure. For example, “proximity to labour market” factors before entering services may reasonably be expected to influence a client’s employment outcomes, and the efficacy of treatment for obtaining employment. The outcomes estimated by the PSM analyses may therefore be partly explained by clients having different baseline characteristics with respect to their employability.
- The comparison of outcomes between EST and Matched Community clients is based on available data that is influenced by the design of the programs, which, by nature of the scope and elements of design, make any direct comparisons challenging.
- There are differences in program service delivery and data collection processes which may be inflating the estimated impact of IES on employment outcomes. First, outcomes are based on data linked to clients who were survey respondents in the EST catchments ( $n = 1,254$ ) and Matched Communities ( $n = 1,128$ ). Second, pre-employment services (PES) delivery processes differ between EST and Matched Communities due to EST’s performance-based funding framework. In IES, Performance Based Funding (PBF) motivates SSMs through financial incentives for positive employment outcomes. Incentives focus more on client satisfaction and employment goals instead of the legacy program’s emphasis on volume of clients being serviced. Length of service is another factor, whereby clients in IES are more likely to remain in active PES until obtaining employment. Lastly, employment follow up surveys are implemented differently between EST and Matched Communities which made comparison of employment outcomes difficult.

## **Measurement Error**

Measurement error in surveys is a common concern because it impacts the reliability and validity of the results. Measurement error in surveying can happen in two interrelated ways: 1) through including questions that do not adequately reflect the concepts/constructs that are intended to answer the main evaluation questions (or omitting questions that do); and/or 2)

through poor instrumentation, that is, through faulty operationalization of valid concepts into questions that contain invalid, unreliable, or ambiguously interpreted indicators. However, all research results that are based on self-reported information, will contain some degree of measurement error, which is addressed through rigorous application of best practices (e.g., reliability and validity testing of surveys).

### **Survey Respondent Recall Error/Bias**

Recall error occurs when respondents inaccurately remember past events. For example, remembering recent/later events more accurately, or forgetting events altogether. Recall error is a common concern in situations where respondents are asked to self-report about information retrospectively.

- Given the substantial length of time between the fielding period of the surveys (August 15 to October 15, 2022), and the reference period under observation (January 1, 2020 to May 20, 2021), recall error in the survey results was a valid concern.

## **2.4 Analyses**

### **2.4.1 Process Evaluation Coding and Analysis**

The qualitative interview and focus group data was analyzed using a structured qualitative analysis approach. The themes were then reviewed again in an iterative fashion to develop summary findings that aligned to the evaluation questions. In summarizing the findings, qualifiers have been used to represent the strength or frequency of responses which have been defined:

<b>None</b> (0 or no)	<b>A few</b> (<20%)	<b>Some</b> (20-40%)	<b>Many</b> (40-60%)	<b>Most</b> (60-80%)	<b>All</b> (100%)
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### **2.4.2 Outcomes/Impact Evaluation Coding and Analysis**

The analysis includes several analytical techniques. First, there are descriptive statistics of item responses from the samples collected from the surveyed populations. Where appropriate, these descriptive statistics are contextualized by Margins of Error (MoE) to estimate their generalizability to their respective target populations. Second, where there were sufficient cases, tests for statistically significant differences in outcomes within and between key units under analysis (e.g., by Survey Group) were applied using chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) and z-tests for difference in proportions. Third, to understand whether clients in the EST prototype catchments had significantly different outcomes relative to the employment services received

by clients in Matched Communities, outside of the three EST prototype catchments, and where the data were compatible, outcomes from the Survey of Clients in Matched Communities were compared using PSM.

## 3.0 Findings

### 3.1 Reach

#### Summary

Program reach evaluates the extent to which EST has been delivering services and supports to the intended population. This includes clients with specialized needs, as well as employers seeking to hire workers.

The evaluation findings are highlighted below.

- EST is reaching clients with different service needs, including both SA referred and non-SA referred clients, with relatively equal proportions across the prototype sites, although there are higher proportions from Peel.
- The highest proportion of IES clients served are Stream C, and these are most predominantly served in Hamilton Niagara and Muskoka Kawarthas, in comparison to Peel.
- Small proportions of IES clients identify as newcomers, youth with higher needs, Francophone or Indigenous. About half identify as racialized, and most of these clients are from Peel.
- The demographics of IES clients, in comparison to the general population in Peel,<sup>22</sup> found that IES clients are over-represented in the program with respect to newcomer status and self-identification in a racialized group.<sup>23</sup>
- A demographic breakdown of the three Matched Communities of Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie, Stratford-Bruce, and York suggests that the sample of respondents from these catchments are reasonably comparable to the corresponding IES catchments (Hamilton-Niagara, Muskoka-Kawarthas, and Peel) in both size and demographic composition.
- Employers accessing IES were found to be predominantly from the Peel catchment site. The most frequent way employers came to know about the employment services or

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<sup>22</sup> The comparison is made with Peel as it is the only region that is represented on its own. Both Hamilton/Niagara and Muskoka/Kawarthas comprise two different regions with differing population demographics.

<sup>23</sup> Statistics Canada identifies this demographic as visible minority, as per 2021 Census analytical and communication products.

supports was through being approached by an Employment Ontario service provider. Moreover, about two-third are also aware of supports/services available to hire jobseekers with disabilities.

- The qualitative findings from the Process Evaluation found that SA referred clients that were “returned” to social assistance indicated this was due to not being employment-ready, mainly as a result of either personal or mental health challenges. All agreed that they would not turn down employment opportunities if they were provided with appropriate supports, for e.g., employment supports, or life stabilization supports (LSS).

### **3.1.1 Extent to Which EST is Reaching Clients with Different Service Needs**

This section examines the extent to which EST is reaching clients with different service needs, including evaluating the types of clients accessing EST. In doing so, an analysis is undertaken of the reasons why IES clients access employment services; demographic profile of IES clients; and a CAT analysis of pathways into various programs and services. Additionally, a review of Matched Communities, and the degree to which they are suitable comparators, is undertaken.

#### **Reasons for Seeking Employment Services or Supports**

The most prevalent reason overall (36%) and for each catchment (32% to 38%) for why IES clients accessed employment services was that COVID-19 changed respondents’ work or life situation (see Table 3). Other common reasons included respondents were looking to acquire more job skills (33%), followed by job loss (29%), and looking to change jobs (28%).

Among those providing other reasons for accessing services or supports, there were three common themes. The most common theme was that many respondents were new to Canada, followed by respondents reporting that they were returning to the workforce, and a self-reported need for disability/mental health support.

Table 3: IES Client Survey: Reasons for Seeking Employment Services or Supports

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	n=381	n=420	n=453	n=1,254
<b>Q1: What were the main reasons for seeking employment services or supports?</b>				
You lost your job	30%	26%	28%	29%
Your job ended (for example, a seasonal or contract job with a set end date)	13%	12%	15%	13%
You just finished school	13%	6%	13%	12%
You were looking to change your job	30%	28%	26%	28%
You were looking to get more job skills	36%	28%	29%	33%
COVID-19 changed your work or life situation	38%	33%	32%	36%
Other (please explain)	27%	31%	31%	29%
Don't know	1%	0%	1%	1%
Prefer not to answer	2%	2%	3%	2%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

## Demographics of IES Clients

The population-weighted percentage breakdowns of IES Survey respondents for each catchment by key characteristics and demographics are presented in Table 4.

The survey findings indicate that EST is reaching both SA referred and non-SA referred clients, with relatively equal proportions across the prototype sites, although somewhat higher proportions are from Peel (36%). The highest proportion of clients served are Stream C clients (44%), and these are most predominantly served in Hamilton-Niagara (49%) and Muskoka-Kawarthas (45%), in comparison to Peel (33%). Small proportions of clients identify as newcomers (18%), youth with higher needs (29%), Francophone (4%), or Indigenous (3%). About one-half of clients identify as racialized (48%), and most of these clients receive services from Peel (84%).

The demographics of IES clients in the three prototype sites, in comparison to the regional population demographics in Peel,<sup>24</sup> indicates that IES survey clients are over-represented in the program in comparison to the general population. For example, the newcomer proportion for **IES clients in Peel is 36%**. In comparison, Peel's "recent immigrant" population, defined as

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<sup>24</sup> The comparison is made with Peel as it is the only region that is represented on its own. Both Hamilton/Niagara and Muskoka/Kawarthas comprise two different regions with differing population demographics.

those that arrived in Canada between January 1, 2016 and May 11, 2021, is 14%. Likewise, Peel's racialized population for **IES clients is 84%**, which is also much higher than the population demographic for Peel's visible minority<sup>25</sup> population at 69%.<sup>26</sup>

The specific demographic details of IES clients<sup>27</sup> are outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4: IES Client Survey: Respondent Characteristics

	Hamilton-Niagara*		Muskoka-Kawarthas*		Peel*		Total*	
Characteristics	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	<b>381</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>EAP Completion Status</b>								
Completed EAP	308	81%	373	89%	350	77%	1,031	81%
Early Exit	73	19%	47	11%	103	23%	223	19%
<b>Referral Type</b>								
Not SA-Referred	217	57%	278	66%	333	74%	828	64%
SA-Referred	164	43%	142	34%	120	26%	426	36%
<b>SA Recipient (by SOI)</b>								
No	191	49%	254	59%	318	71%	763	58%
Yes	190	51%	166	41%	135	29%	491	42%
<b>Stream</b>								
Stream A	70	20%	86	23%	143	32%	299	24%
Stream B	115	31%	135	32%	159	35%	409	32%
Stream C	196	49%	199	45%	151	33%	546	44%
<b>Gender</b>								
Woman	233	48%	237	45%	269	56%	739	50%
Man	142	50%	175	53%	179	43%	496	48%
All other							19	1%
<b>Disability</b>								
No	186	48%	218	52%	305	67%	709	55%
Yes	195	52%	202	48%	147	32%	544	45%
Undisclosed								<1%
<b>Age Group</b>								
16-29	119	35%	139	37%	136	31%	394	34%
30-44	136	35%	119	32%	208	43%	463	37%

<sup>25</sup> Originally termed as visible minority, in 2021 Census analytical and communications products.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Peel&DGUIDlist=2021A00033521&GE>.

<sup>27</sup> The demographics are from IES Client Survey respondents.

	Hamilton-Niagara*		Muskoka-Kawarthas*		Peel*		Total*	
Characteristics	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	<b>381</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>100%</b>
45-64	119	29%	151	30%	105	25%	375	28%
65 and older			11	1%			22	<1%
<b>Indigenous</b>								
No	355	93%	382	92%	441	98%	1,178	94%
Yes			29	7%			49	3%
Undisclosed	11	3%					27	2%
<b>Francophone</b>								
No	358	94%	402	96%	438	97%	1,198	95%
Yes	22	6%					41	4%
Undisclosed							10	<1%
<b>Racialized</b>								
No	247	65%	358	85%	71	16%	676	52%
Yes	134	35%	61	15%	381	84%	576	48%
Undisclosed								<1%
<b>SA Program Office</b>								
None	219	58%	270	64%	333	74%	822	64%
Ontario Works	151	39%	131	32%	94	20%	376	32%
Ontario Disability Support					22	5%	45	3%
Undisclosed							11	<1%
<b>Main Income Source</b>								
ODSP or OW	190	51%	166	41%	135	29%	491	42%
Other	108	27%	166	37%	148	34%	422	31%
No Income	83	22%	87	22%	169	37%	339	27%
Undisclosed								<1%
<b>Education</b>								
Less than Gr 12 or equivalent	52	14%	65	17%	27	6%	144	12%
Gr 12 or equivalent, OAC, Gr 13	119	33%	121	30%	73	17%	313	27%
Some post-secondary: apprenticeship/college/university	57	15%	71	16%	40	9%	168	13%
Cert./diploma, apprentice cert./journeyperson	94	23%	114	26%	81	18%	289	22%
Bachelor's degree/post-graduate	59	16%	48	11%	231	51%	338	27%
Undisclosed								<1%
<b>Newcomer</b>								
No	340	89%	412	98%	289	64%	1,041	82%
Yes			11%				213	18%

	Hamilton-Niagara*		Muskoka-Kawarthas*		Peel*		Total*	
Characteristics	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	<b>381</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Youth with Higher Support Needs</b>								
No	78	67%	81	60%	112	83%	271	71%
Yes	41	33%	58	40%	24	17%	123	29%

\*Cell percentages are based on responses weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data. Cell counts are based on unweighted survey responses.

### Matched Communities as a Suitable Comparator

A demographic breakdown of the three Matched Communities of Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie, Stratford-Bruce, and York suggests that the sample of respondents from these catchments are reasonably comparable to the corresponding IES catchments (Hamilton-Niagara, Muskoka-Kawarthas, and Peel) in both size and demographic composition. In fact, the three Matched Communities were selected because of their comparability to the IES catchments along several key dimensions, as determined by the MLITSD's Analytics Unit. What follows is a general overview of how these three Matched Communities serve as a suitable comparator group for the IES catchments, based on the detailed documentation of the matching process and rationale.

An important part of the study design was that key characteristics of the comparator catchments were as similar as possible to the prototype catchments. In short, the MLITSD's Analytics Unit identified eight variables to describe and match each IES prototype catchment to a corresponding comparator community. The eight variables were chosen both for their relevance, as well as to the social and labour market profile of each respective community, while being sufficiently different enough from each other to describe a discrete component of that community. These 8 variables include:

- Total EO clients
- Total SA clients
- Working age population
- Indigenous population

- NEET<sup>28</sup> youth population
- Rural population
- Employment level
- Job Vacancy rate

Clustering algorithms were then employed on the basis of these 8 variables to identify a community that was comparable to each IES catchment. The result was the comparable communities of York, Stratford-Bruce, and Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie.

### **CAT Analysis of Pathways into Various Programs and Services**

The analysis of pathways, including the process by which EST is reaching IES clients on the basis of Employment Services Stream (A, B, or C), and according to each of the eight plan subgoals covered in the stream, is outlined in this section.

It was only feasible and meaningful to provide a breakdown of client reach on the basis of plan subgoals and/or catchments due to several limiting factors. These include the way the data were structured, the number of unique plan items included in the data, and the number of survey completes. These limitations are discussed below.

A total of 6,304 records, pertaining to pathways by client stream, were provided by the Ministry in connection to the 1,254 completes from the IES Client Survey. These pathway records are structured so that each case represents a record of a client's pathway through that program or service.

While there is at least one pathway per client, there are more records of client pathways than there are IES survey completes because many of these 1,254 respondents participated in multiple subgoals and plan items during the reference period, either simultaneously, or consecutively. For example, not including stream or catchment as part of the combination, the 6,304 records based on 1,254 respondents contained:

- An average of 1.8 out of 8 distinct subgoals per client (min=1, max=6).
- An average of 3.8 out of 81 distinct plan item names per client (min=1, max=18).

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<sup>28</sup> NEET is defined as youth who are not in education, employment or training.

- An average of 3.9 distinct combinations of subgoal and plan item names per client (min=1, max=18) out of a possible 78 unique combinations in the data.<sup>29</sup>

These numbers would be higher if they included the records in which the same client accessed the same subgoal and plan item combination more than once during the reference period.

According to the duplicate subgoal-plan item combinations identified on a per client basis in the provided records, there were 1,454 instances where the same client received the same subgoal-plan item combination more than once in the reference period.

Therefore, with 1,454 distinct combinations of subgoals and plan items (excluding the additional combination count that would be added if stream and catchment were also included), and many clients having multiple combinations of subgoals and plan items, it is not feasible to present a meaningful summary at the client-level for each stream, catchment, subgoal, and plan item name. What follows in Table 5 is an unweighted breakdown of the 1,254 IES Client Survey respondents by IES Stream, based on their distinct access to any of the eight subgoals.<sup>30</sup> However, to provide more detail about reach, a selected summary of the unweighted data is reported, which examines client reach by stream in terms of the most common pathways within the most popular subgoal.

As outlined in Table 5, Stream C clients had the highest incidence of service and support subgoals. Of the 546 survey respondents who were in Stream C, there were a total of 1,109 records of any of these 8 subgoals. On average, Stream C clients had the highest incidence of subgoals per client (2.0), while Stream A clients had the lowest (1.5).

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<sup>29</sup> The statistics for subgoal-plan item combination per client are like the statistics for distinct plan items per client because most plan item names appear under a single subgoal name. For example, there were 4,850 distinct valid records of subgoal plan item combinations for the 1,254 respondents, and 4,796 distinct valid records of plan item names for these same clients.

<sup>30</sup> For example, because tabulations are based on the number of distinct subgoals, if a client was recorded as accessing the following 3 combinations of supports: Employment Assistance Services - Job Search, Employment Assistance Services - Client Counselling, Retention - Ongoing Job Coaching, they would have been counted as accessing 2 subgoals because 2 of the 3 plan items fall under the same subgoal.

Table 5: Breakdown of IES Client Access to Services and Supports by Stream and Plan Subgoal\*

Subgoal (n=8)	Stream A	Stream B	Stream C	Total
	Clients n=299	Clients n=409	Clients n=546	Clients n=1,254
	Records n=451	Records n=719	Records n=1,109	Records n=2,279
Employer Financial Supports	3%	5%	9%	6%
Employment Assistance Services	99%	100%	98%	99%
Jobseeker Financial Supports	13%	25%	38%	28%
Life Stabilization	6%	7%	16%	11%
Retention	14%	18%	20%	18%
Skills Development – Ministry Delivered Programs	6%	9%	4%	6%
Skills Development – Other	4%	7%	6%	6%
Specialized Services	6%	5%	12%	8%
<b>Average Subgoals per Client**</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>

\*Percentages are calculated by dividing the number of records for the subgoal in the stream, by the total unweighted number of clients in that stream. Because many clients had more than one subgoal, column percentages do not total to 100%.

\*\*Calculated by dividing the total number of subgoal records in that stream by the total number of clients in that stream.

According to MLITSD, there are a total of 81 distinct plan item names (80 pre-formatted plan item fields, plus one field for entering custom plan item information referred to as “Custom Basic Plan Item”. The analysis of the pathways of responding clients, from the most common subgoal being Employment Assistance Service, shows that there were 14 distinct plan item names connected to the Employment Assistance Services subgoal, and a total of 4,257 records of any of these plan item names within this single subgoal. However, the majority of all records within the Employment Assistance Services subgoal (87%) were concentrated among 8 of the 14 named plan item names, with 12% concentrated in Custom Basic Plan Items, and the remaining 1% of total records spread among the 5 remaining plan items.

Overall, clients had an average of 3.4 plan items, ranging from 3.2 to 3.5 across each stream. The plan item with the highest enrollment overall, as a percentage of clients who responded, was the Job Search item (96%). Stream C had the lowest percentage enrolled in this plan item (92%), while Stream B had the highest (over 101% due to many incidences of the same client being enrolled in this same plan item on multiple occasions). The second most common plan item was Client Counselling, with 68% of responding clients having this plan item within their Employment Services subgoal. This was followed by Career Exploration, Planning, and

Management (38%), with the percentage enrolled in this plan item ranging from 35% to 40% across all streams. The largest difference in plan item enrollment across streams was the Employability Skills Training item, with 8% from Stream A having this plan item compared to 16% in Stream B, and 21% in Stream C. (See Table 6.)

Table 6: Breakdown of IES Client Access to Services and Supports for Employment Assistance Subgoal by Stream and Plan Item Name\*, \*\*

Plan Item Name (n=14)	Stream A	Stream B	Stream C	Total
	Clients n=299	Clients n=409	Clients n=546	Clients n=1,254
	Records n=959	Records n=1,406	Records n=1,892	Records n=4,257
Job Search	97%	101%	92%	96%
Client Counselling	64%	69%	69%	68%
Career Exploration, Planning and Management	38%	35%	40%	38%
Resource and Information Services - General	26%	31%	19%	25%
Resource and Information Services - Digital Services	21%	16%	21%	19%
Job Matching and Development	19%	22%	23%	22%
Job Coaching	12%	12%	12%	12%
Employability Skills Training	8%	16%	21%	16%
Remaining Plan Items (n=5)	3%	3%	4%	3%
Custom Basic Plan Item	33%	40%	45%	40%
<b>Average Plan Items per Client***</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.4</b>

\*Percentages are calculated by dividing the number of records of the plan item in the stream, by the total number of clients in that stream. Because many clients had more than one plan item, column percentages do not total to 100%. Further, because the same client may have accessed the same plan item at multiple points in the reference period, the plan item records may exceed 100% of the total number of individual clients in that stream.

\*\*Cell percentages were only published for cell counts of at least 10.

\*\*\*Calculated by dividing the total number of plan item records in that stream by the total number of respondents in that stream.

### 3.1.2 Extent to Which EST is Delivering Services to Employers with Workforce Development Needs

This section evaluates the extent to which EST is delivering services to employers with workforce development needs, including examining the characteristics of employers accessing IES, ease of employer access to information about IES supports and services; and the degree to which EST reaches employers on matters pertaining to hiring jobseekers with specialized needs.

## Employers Accessing IES

The characteristics of employers accessing IES, and comparisons by each catchment for both the population and the sample of survey respondents, are delineated in this section (and Table 7). Information on employers' participation in job placements and trials is also provided.<sup>31</sup>

We further analyze how employers came to know about IES supports and services, thus providing relevant information about how this key demographic is being reached.

In general, it was found that responses to the employer survey were lowest in the Peel catchment area. Part of this is likely due to Peel having a disproportionately smaller population of participating employers (N=140) compared to the other two catchments areas (N=282 and 307). The small population of employers from Peel is surprising given that Peel is one of the most populated of the three catchment areas both in terms of population size and density. However, as the statistics on the number of job placements per employer suggests, Peel has the highest average and median number of placements at 2.1 and 2.0 placements, respectively. One important inference is that though Peel employers comprise the smallest number of participants among the three catchment areas, on average, they also host more job placements relative to employers in the other catchment areas. It may also be the case that although there are fewer Peel employers participating, Peel employers are relatively larger than employers in the other two catchment areas, and therefore have the capacity to host more job placements.

An analysis of the employer population list provided by the Ministry revealed that all 729 distinct employers in the population had, at some point during the reference period, participated in 1 or more job placement services, with about 85% of this participating population having between 1 and 3 job placements.

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<sup>31</sup> As the matching of employer data from the Ministry's administrative files to the employer survey responses was not in the data provision agreement, no further employer characteristics, based on the administrative data, can be provided at this time. Additionally, due to space and time constraints in the administration of the questionnaire, no provision was made for asking questions about the employer's characteristics such as size or industry.

Table 7: Survey Participant Characteristics for the Target Population, and Survey Respondents: Employers

Characteristics	Full Population		Survey Completes (unweighted)		Survey Completes* (weighted)	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
<b>All three Catchment Areas</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Placements Per Distinct Employer</b>						
Average	1.8		1.9		1.9	
Median	1		1		1	
Minimum	1		1		1	
Maximum	21		11		11	
<b>Hamilton-Niagara</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Placements Per Distinct Employer</b>						
Average	1.8		1.9		1.9	
Median	1		1		1	
Minimum	1		1		1	
Maximum	11		11		11	
<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Placements Per Distinct Employer</b>						
Average	1.7		1.8		1.8	
Median	1		1		1	
Minimum	1		1		1	
Maximum	11		11		11	
<b>Peel</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Placements Per Distinct Employer</b>						
Average	2.1		2.0		2.0	
Median	2		2		2	
Minimum	1		1		1	
Maximum	21		8		8	

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

### Ease of Employer Access to Information about IES Supports and Services

It was found that across all catchment areas, the most common way employers came to know about the employment services or supports that were accessed was through being approached by an Employment Ontario service provider (50%). For Peel employers, internet searches and other employers were substantially more common ways of learning about supports or services

compared to the other two catchment areas (26% each in Peel vs. 5% to 17% in the other catchment areas).

A substantial percentage of employers (31%) also indicated that they heard about the supports and services that were accessed through “other” sources. In order of prevalence, these can be grouped into three main sources of information: word of mouth from sources other than another employer, such as an individual from another organization; information from another organization itself, such as a college, or YMCA; and/or employers knew about these services and supports from having previously used them.

Overall, about two thirds of employers (67%) found it easy or very easy to obtain information about the types of services and supports available to them; and about three quarters (76%) found it easy or very easy to understand the information available about hiring employees. While these perceptions varied somewhat across each catchment area, only small proportions of employers found obtaining or understanding this information difficult or very difficult.

Table 8: Item Responses Relevant to Reach: Employer Survey

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	n=82	n=80	n=31	n=193
<b>Q1: How did your organization hear about the employment services or supports that were accessed?</b>				
Internet search	13%	17%	26%	17%
Media advertisement (for example, through radio, television, internet, or physical ad)	11%	15%	6%	12%
Approached by an Employment Ontario service provider	48%	52%	51%	50%
Another employer	17%	5%	26%	14%
Other source (please specify)	31%	38%	19%	31%
<b>Q2: How easy or difficult was it for your organization to obtain information about the types of employment services or supports that are available to employers in your area?</b>				
Very difficult	0%	4%	4%	2%
Difficult	11%	5%	13%	9%
Neither difficult nor easy	23%	15%	26%	21%
Easy	46%	49%	33%	44%
Very easy	20%	27%	24%	23%
<b>Q3: How easy or difficult was it for your organization to understand the information available about hiring employees?</b>				
Very difficult	0%	0%	4%	1%
Difficult	6%	5%	4%	5%
Neither difficult nor easy	20%	14%	23%	18%
Easy	51%	45%	48%	48%

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	n=82	n=80	n=31	n=193
Very easy	23%	36%	23%	28%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

## Reaching Employers on Matters Pertaining to Hiring Jobseekers with Specialized Needs

The employer survey also explored employers' level of awareness of available employment services and supports with respect to hiring jobseekers with disabilities, and/or those who participate in specialized services (such as Indigenous persons, Francophones, newcomers to Canada, or NEET youth). A summary of employers' responses to these questions are found in Tables 9 and 10.

Overall, about three quarters of employers (76%) indicate that they **are aware** of the supports and services available to hire jobseekers with disabilities. This level of awareness is relatively consistent across each catchment. Similarly, 71% of employers indicated that their organization **has the necessary supports** to hire jobseekers with disabilities (Table 9).

In comparison, 64% of employers indicate that they **are aware** of the supports and services available to hire jobseekers who participate in specialized services, while 75% report that their organization **has the supports** available to hire jobseekers who participate in specialized services (Table 10).

Table 9: Employer Awareness and Access to Services and Supports for Hiring Employment Services Jobseekers with a Disability

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	n=82	n=80	n=31	n=193
<b>Q10.1: Overall, my organization is aware of the supports that are available to hire employment services jobseekers with disabilities in Ontario</b>				
Yes	77%	77%	71%	76%
No	23%	23%	29%	24%
<b>Q10.2: Overall, my organization has the necessary supports to hire employment services jobseekers with disabilities in Ontario</b>				
Yes	69%	77%	66%	71%
No	31%	23%	34%	29%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

**Table 10: Employer Awareness and Access to Services and Supports for Hiring Employment Services Jobseekers Who Participate in Specialized Services**

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	n=82	n=80	n=31	n=193
<b>Q12.1: Overall, my organization is aware of the specialized services, including resources and financial supports that are available to hire employment services jobseekers who require these services</b>				
Yes	63%	66%	63%	64%
No	37%	34%	37%	36%
<b>Q12.2: Overall, my organization has the necessary resources and supports to hire employment services jobseekers who participate in specialized services</b>				
Yes	75%	82%	63%	75%
No	25%	18%	37%	25%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

## 3.2 Relevance

### Summary

Program relevance explores the extent to which the Employment Services Transformation model is addressing service need and demand, is flexible and responsive to the needs of participants, and is appropriate to the priorities and needs of key stakeholders.

It is noted that the qualitative findings arising from the Process Evaluation are based on stakeholders' perceptions, opinions, and beliefs as reported in both the early stages of implementation and evaluation of EST.

The evaluation findings are highlighted below.

- The perceptions of most of the stakeholders interviewed (for e.g., caseworkers, clients, community partners, MCCSS, MLITSD, and SSMs) indicate that EST is more relevant, to clients that are closer to the labour market than those with barriers to employment. Clients that are more distant from the labour market may require LSS prior to referral to IES. Most stakeholders, including case workers, service providers, community partners, SSMs, MLITSD and MCCSS, felt that the threshold of at least an average of 20-hour/work-week is not working well. These stakeholders explained that highly barriered clients may benefit from working less than 20 hours.

- Employers were generally not aware of EST, but rather, referred to their experiences with employment services and supports provided by employment service providers.
- Most employers reported that employment services have helped to provide both funding for co-ops and training, as well as to address high turn-over rates. In addition, some employers highlighted that employment services have opened pathways to hire people with disabilities and, closely linked to this, that employers are offered incentives or resources to onboard employees with the highest barriers (e.g., in form of training that is provided to employers).
- About two-thirds of clients are satisfied with the employment services and supports they received, with those in Muskoka-Kawarthas being most satisfied, and those in Peel being least satisfied. That said, fewer clients report that various supports and services are helpful, with less than one-half citing financial supports as helpful.

### **3.2.1 How EST Aims to Address the Employment Needs of Clients**

This section highlights how EST aims to address the employment needs of clients and whether their needs are being met.

#### **Key Stakeholders' Perceptions on Integration and Relevance of Services to Clients' Needs**

Stakeholders' perceptions regarding the relevance of EST for the employment needs of clients varied. Most respondents across almost all stakeholder groups including caseworkers, clients, community partners, MCCSS, MLITSD, and SSMs agreed that EST is most relevant to clients who are closer to the labour market. Many stakeholders described these clients as "*easier to support*," meaning that they have fewer barriers to employment. Examples mentioned included clients living at home with family in a stable environment and newcomers to Canada. For these clients, tools such as the CAT are helpful to gain better insights about their own needs, and help them to prioritize supports needed to obtain stable employment.

According to the EST Funding Model Guidelines, LSS are intended to provide supports for individuals who are coping with personal, systemic and/or environmental barriers, that may precede or preclude employment and training activities (for example, addictions, chronic disease, homelessness). "Life Stabilization focuses on enabling individuals to gain self-sufficiency, addressing preparatory and/or urgent needs through referrals to health, legal, crisis response, social supports, family support and other human services. These services and

supports could be provided concurrently with employment training activities, depending on an individual's circumstances and capacities".<sup>32</sup>

Some respondents from MCCSS reported that SSMs do not fully understand the LSS needs of SA clients, are not inspiring confidence in SA clients, and are not connected to the resources that SA clients need to access in the community. The guidelines outline that both EO and SA caseworkers should be working in collaboration to ensure there is no duplication of financial supports provided to clients. Some service providers reported that ODSP employment support had worked well for these clients, and that their needs were not being met to the same extent under EST. These clients are often further from the labour market, and face multiple barriers to employment, such as physical disabilities, mental health issues, lack of childcare, and the context of COVID-19. There are also many contextual factors that are creating additional barriers for these clients, including a worsening housing crisis, and, as reported by stakeholders, long waitlists to access community services.

According to ODSP caseworkers, it is believed that if clients "open up" to share information related to their specific needs, in their responses to the CAT, they will not receive necessary community-level supports (e.g., mental health, substance use, housing), which may result in a loss of trust. There is a perception among some respondents from municipalities that some clients are refusing to work with EO due to lack of trust.

Thus, while most stakeholders including caseworkers, community partners, MCCSS, and MLITSD believe that EST's goal is to improve services for those with different or specialized service needs and pathways to employment, the perception is that this is not the case. These respondents specifically highlight that they felt that the EST incentive structure puts greater emphasis on those who are most employable. At the same time, performance-based funding dictates that SSMs are only paid if clients obtain jobs with at least an average of 20-hours/week. Participants noted that if this is perceived to be unlikely for clients (even in stream C where incentives are higher), there may be a natural disincentive to work with them. This resulted in the widely held perception, that people with the fewest barriers are getting the most support, rather than those who might face multiple barriers to employment.

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<sup>32</sup> EST Funding Guidelines, July 12, 2020 Final.

Most stakeholders, including case workers, service providers, community partners, SSMs, MLITSD and MCCSS reported that the threshold of a 20-hour work-week is not working well. Service providers explained that SSMs should be incentivized to help clients obtain jobs that are the best fit, rather than being focused on “checking boxes”. Participants explained that highly barriered clients may benefit from working less than 20 hours. In fact, many stakeholders agree that there is a need to build more capacity to support SA clients, and more thought needs to be put into the life stabilization aspect. Stakeholders emphasize that it is difficult for clients to fully engage in employment when they are dealing with barriers such as poverty and mental health. Moreover, SSMs explained that most service providers are not experienced with dealing with highly barriered clients and providing pre-employment supports. SSMs also noted that there is work to be done to ensure that service providers within their catchment areas have the necessary expertise to serve people with disabilities.

It is also felt, by some stakeholders, that the new system pushes employment, and is more punitive for clients who are not ready to work. For example, the questions that clients are asked in the CAT may inadvertently put pressure on clients to self-report that they are interested in employment, even if they are not ready. One participant from MLITSD, for example, remarked that ODSP is not necessarily a temporary measure, and the decision to become employed should continue to be entirely voluntary, meaning that ODSP clients should have the possibility to decide for themselves if they feel they are ready and want to work, or whether employment is not a feasible solution for them. Moreover, caseworkers, MCCSS, MLITSD and municipalities reported that, it’s their perception that fewer financial supports are available for SA clients under EO in comparison to the previous system. Some stakeholders, including respondents from municipalities, believe that the funding and subsidies that were previously available to support SA clients have been cut and have consequently resulted in gaps in services for these clients. Some also report that under the new system, clients are being excluded from receiving IES financial supports because they do not meet the requirements, and that the new system has not actually changed the most significant barriers to employment that some clients are facing (e.g., housing, mental health, food security etc.).

Specifically, some respondents from MLITSD, and the majority of respondents from MCCSS, expressed their opinion that EO and SSMs are more hesitant to provide IES financial supports to SA clients due to lack of trust and the stigma associated with SA clients. As a result, most respondents from MCCSS opined that SSMs are not using funding to benefit SA clients to the extent that they were used to under the previous model. Some MLITSD respondents noted that some SSMs were acting from a misunderstanding that the subtext of the transformation was primarily to save money. Moreover, these respondents are concerned about the way in which

SSMs/service providers are providing IES financial supports, e.g., personal shopper method where a client is being met at a store by a caseworker who will pay for the work clothing. As an example, it was noted that some service providers were initially asking clients to sign attestations indicating that they would not use funds for drugs or alcohol. While the problem has been resolved since, MCCSS representatives found these methods highly problematic and “demoralizing” for the clients.

Other concerns were reported by some respondents from MLITSD who felt that the Ministry no longer has a direct view of the services and financial supports provided to clients, or client outcomes. Many respondents across stakeholder groups also indicated that there is a lack of transparency about the IES financial supports available to clients more generally. Many stakeholder groups including MCCSS, MLITSD, municipalities and EO service providers were unclear about what funds are available to clients, and who is responsible for payment. For example, MLITSD respondents explained that some clients are under the impression that they will be provided with \$500 for employment related expenses (e.g., haircuts, clothing) when they are referred to EO, and when this expectation is not met, clients often disengage. At the same time some SSMs questioned whether IES financial supports help to move clients towards employment. According to one participant, *“Social Assistance wanted to just give \$500, but we are asking ourselves on the EO side, how does that lead to employment?”* (SSM)

Finally, some stakeholders from MLITSD, caseworkers and municipalities also noted that the EST model is not adequately meeting the needs of youth and rural clients, many of whom are lacking transportation, technology and access and skills to use technology and the internet. Especially, clients and employers mentioned that lack of transportation is a significant barrier for clients living in rural areas. Most suggested that there is a need to assess the overall value of the integration from the client’s perspective.

## **Extent to which Clients Needs were Met Through Services and Supports Accessed**

A key goal of IES services and supports is to provide services that are relevant to meeting clients’ needs. This section analyses this dimension via indicators related to client satisfaction, and whether the services were helpful to clients.

### ***Clients’ Overall Satisfaction with Employment Services and Supports Received***

Overall, two-thirds of clients (67%) reported being satisfied (satisfied or very satisfied) with the employment services and supports they received, with the highest percentage reported in Muskoka-Kawartha’s (75%), and the lowest percentage in Peel (56%)

Among those who were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the employment services and supports received (13% of clients), the top three comments provided include:

- Needing more support to help find a job after finishing employment services (52%);
- Needing more training or learning chances so the client could get better at their work (37%); and
- Needing more support for changes in the client's work situation (34%), or more meetings between the client and the employer to help them with their future in the company (34%).

**Table 11: IES Clients' Overall Satisfaction with Employment Services and Supports Received**

<b>Question Item</b>	<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
	<b>381</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>1254</b>
<b>Q20: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the employment services and supports you received?</b>				
Very dissatisfied	4%	6%	7%	5%
Dissatisfied	7%	5%	12%	8%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13%	10%	22%	16%
Satisfied	41%	37%	36%	39%
Very satisfied	30%	38%	20%	28%
Don't know	2%	1%	1%	2%
Prefer not to answer	2%	3%	2%	2%
<b>Q21: Why were you NOT satisfied with the employment services and supports you received?</b>				
<b>Those answering "Very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied" to the above question:</b>				
Need more meetings between you and the employer to help you with your future in the company	31%	26%	38%	34%
Need more help for your disability needs in the workplace	33%	18%	15%	24%
Need more job coaching to help you get better at your work	25%	22%	33%	28%
Need more training or learning chances so you could get better at your work	43%	25%	33%	37%
Need someone who was better at showing you how to do things in the workplace	36%	17%	31%	32%
Need more support for changes in your work situation. Like changes in job tasks, a work schedule, or a boss	42%	25%	28%	34%

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawartha*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
Need more support to help you find another job after finishing your employment services	51%	37%	56%	52%
Other (please explain)	23%	40%	36%	31%
Don't know	8%	10%	2%	6%
Prefer not to answer	14%	6%	5%	9%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

### ***IES Clients' Satisfaction with Employment Services and Supports***

In addition to the satisfaction ratings, clients were asked to rate the degree to which various services and supports are helpful in meeting their goals. These were assessed in a number of areas, including employability skills training, job search assistance, job matching / job trials / job placements<sup>33</sup>, job coaching, job seeker financial supports, career planning services, and help with starting a business.

#### **Employability Skills**

It was found that less than one-half (46%) found employability skills training to be helpful. Among the 5% who did not find this service helpful, 33% of these respondents reported that there needs to be more training on communication skills in the workplace, while 31% reported that they didn't think the training would help them in the "real world."

**Table 12: IEC Clients' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Employment Services and Supports Towards Reaching Job Goals**

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawartha*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
<b>Q4.1: Employability skills training</b>				
Helpful	46%	46%	45%	46%
Not helpful	4%	4%	8%	5%

<sup>33</sup> Because job matching, job trials, and job placements were each listed as a separate support and service in the IES Client Survey, the inquiry included nine main supports and services. However, to minimize redundancy, the array of response options in the follow up question about why clients may not have found a job trial, job matching, or job placement helpful were condensed into one question item.

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
Did not use	46%	47%	42%	45%
Don't know	1%	2%	3%	2%
Prefer not to answer	3%	2%	3%	3%
<b>Q5: Why was the employability skills training NOT helpful</b>				
<b>Those answering "Not helpful" to Q4.1</b>				
You didn't think it would help you in the real world	43%	22%	24%	31%
There needs to be more training on communication skills in the workplace	21%	26%	45%	33%
There needs to be more training on confidence in the workplace	16%	26%	29%	24%
There needs to be more training on how to manage your time in the workplace	16%	35%	33%	26%
There needs to be more training on teamwork in the workplace	15%	32%	36%	28%
Other reasons (please explain)	51%	33%	45%	46%
Don't know	0%	5%	3%	2%
Prefer not to answer	11%	9%	6%	8%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

Among the respondents who accessed job supports and services, two-thirds (67%) reported that these were helpful towards reaching their job goals. Among the 10% who reported that these services were not helpful, 62% reported that they did not get enough help from the service provider to keep them on track with their job search, while 39% reported that there needs to be more help with learning job skills, and 35% reported that there needs to be more help with how to use job search tools.

Table 13: IES Clients' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Employment Services and Supports Towards Reaching Job Goals

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
<b>Q4.2: Job search supports and services</b>				
Helpful	69%	73%	62%	67%

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
Not helpful	8%	7%	17%	10%
Did not use	20%	18%	17%	19%
Don't know	2%	1%	2%	2%
Prefer not to answer	1%	1%	2%	2%
<b>Q6: Why were the job search services or supports NOT helpful?</b>				
<b>Those answering "Not helpful" to Q4.2</b>				
The information on community supports to help with your job search didn't interest you	27%	23%	15%	20%
There needs to be more help with how to use job search tools	22%	28%	47%	35%
There needs to be more help with learning job search skills	28%	37%	48%	39%
You didn't get enough help to keep you on track with your job search	65%	48%	61%	62%
Other reasons (please explain)	40%	51%	35%	38%
Don't know	5%	3%	1%	3%
Prefer not to answer	8%	5%	4%	6%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

### Job Matching, Job Trials, Job Placements

The degree to which employment supports are helpful to clients is summarized in Table 14.

**Table 14: IES Clients' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Employment Services and Supports Towards Reaching Job Goals**

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
<b>Q4.3: Job matching</b>				
Helpful	74%	79%	60%	70%
Not helpful	17%	15%	30%	21%
Don't know	4%	3%	5%	4%
Prefer not to answer	5%	2%	4%	4%
<b>Total Use Job Matching</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>784</b>

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
<b>Percentage Use Job Matching</b>	56%	67%	65%	60%
<b>Total Did Not Use Job Matching</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>470</b>
<b>Percentage Did Not Use Job Matching</b>	44%	33%	35%	40%
<b>Q4.4: Job trial</b>				
Helpful	69%	70%	48%	61%
Not helpful	11%	21%	31%	20%
Don't know	11%	5%	14%	11%
Prefer not to answer	9%	5%	7%	8%
<b>Total Use Job Trial</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>Percentage Use Job Trial</b>	27%	32%	35%	30%
<b>Total Did Not Use Job Trial</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>867</b>
<b>Percentage Did Not Use Job Trial</b>	73%	68%	65%	70%
<b>Q4.5: Job placement</b>				
Helpful	71%	75%	53%	64%
Not helpful	10%	14%	29%	18%
Don't know	12%	5%	13%	11%
Prefer not to answer	7%	5%	6%	6%
<b>Total Use Job Placement</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>490</b>
<b>Percentage Use Job Placement</b>	34%	39%	45%	38%
<b>Total Did Not Use Job Placement</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>764</b>
<b>Percentage Did Not use Job Placement</b>	66%	61%	55%	62%
<b>Q7: Why was the job matching, job trial, or job placement NOT helpful?</b>				
Those answering "Not helpful" to Q4.3, Q4.4 or Q4.5	61	94	195	350
	(14%)	(17%)	(30%)	(20%)
It was too short for you to get good at the job	12%	7%	13%	12%
The job didn't fit well with the skills and training you had	20%	18%	40%	29%
The job fit the skills and training you had, but it wasn't very interesting	10%	11%	10%	10%
The Employment Ontario service provider worker had a hard time finding you a good job match, job trial, or job placement	41%	39%	58%	49%
There should have been more support from the Employment Ontario service provider worker during your job match, job trial, or job placement	33%	31%	43%	38%

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
The workplace you were in wasn't very good at telling you what you were supposed to do	8%	9%	13%	10%
The job match, job trial, or job placement didn't pay enough	11%	23%	16%	15%
The job match, job trial, or job placement didn't have enough work hours	5%	19%	7%	7%
Other reasons (please explain)	14%	41%	17%	18%
Don't know	6%	3%	1%	3%
Prefer not to answer	4%	4%	4%	4%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

### Job Coaching

More than one-half of clients (59%) reported they accessed job coaching. Of these clients, 39% reported that that this coaching was helpful towards reaching their job goals. Those who didn't find it helpful (6%) stated that the job coaching did not make sense for the workplace they were in (32%)

Table 15: IES Clients' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Employment Services and Supports Towards Reaching Job Goals

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
<b>Q4.6: Job coaching</b>				
Helpful	37%	40%	43%	39%
Not helpful	3%	5%	12%	6%
Did not use	54%	52%	41%	49%
Don't know	3%	2%	3%	3%
Prefer not to answer	2%	1%	2%	2%
<b>Q8: Why was the job coaching NOT helpful?</b>				
<b>Those answering "Not helpful" to Q4.6</b>				
It would have helped to have the job coaching for a longer time	20%	25%	20%	21%
It would have helped to have the job coaching more often	26%	15%	26%	25%

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	<b>381</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>1254</b>
The job coaching didn't make much sense for the workplace you were in	46%	21%	28%	32%
Other reasons (please explain)	42%	62%	36%	40%
Don't know	0%	0%	15%	9%
Prefer not to answer	11%	9%	9%	9%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

### Job Seeker Financial Supports

Nearly one-half (47%) of clients accessed jobseeker financial supports, of which 38% reported that that it was helpful towards reaching their job goals. Those few (5%) who did not find this service helpful reported that jobseeker supports for people with disabilities should cover more things (33%), and the amount of money for general jobseeker supports, like money for work clothes or bus trips, was not enough (31%)

Table 16: IES Clients' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Employment Services and Supports Towards Reaching Job Goals

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	<b>381</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>1254</b>
<b>Q4.7: Job seeker financial supports</b>				
Helpful	41%	49%	30%	38%
Not helpful	3%	4%	8%	5%
Did not use	50%	45%	54%	51%
Don't know	3%	1%	7%	4%
Prefer not to answer	2%	1%	1%	2%
<b>Q9: Why were the job seeker financial supports NOT helpful?</b>				
<b>Those answering "Not helpful" to Q4.7</b>				
The general jobseeker supports, like work clothes or safety gear, should cover more things	21%	27%	20%	21%
The amount of money for general jobseeker supports, like money for work clothes or bus trips, was not enough	57%	23%	14%	31%
The jobseeker supports for people with disabilities should cover more things	59%	5%	20%	33%

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
The amount of money for jobseeker supports for people with disabilities was not enough	21%	5%	7%	12%
The skills training classes were not taught very well	21%	14%	11%	15%
The skills training classes didn't make sense for the real-world	11%	14%	15%	13%
You didn't learn anything new in the skills training classes	22%	14%	27%	24%
Other reasons (please explain)	21%	40%	31%	28%
Don't know	0%	9%	24%	14%
Prefer not to answer	0%	17%	2%	3%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

### Career Planning Services

More than one-half (54%) of clients used career planning services, of which 43% reported that it was helpful. Those who did not find it helpful (7%) indicated that they did not learn anything new from these services (44%), and that the EO service provider worker did not spend enough time with them (37%).

Table 17: IES Clients' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Employment Services and Supports Towards Reaching Job Goals

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
<b>Q4.8: Career planning services</b>				
Helpful	44%	44%	40%	43%
Not helpful	5%	5%	12%	7%
Did not use	44%	47%	41%	44%
Don't know	4%	3%	5%	4%
Prefer not to answer	2%	1%	2%	2%
<b>Q10: Why were the career planning services NOT helpful?</b>				
<b>Those answering "Not helpful" to Q4.8</b>				
Sometimes it was hard to understand the information about the services and labour market information. For example, occupations or types of jobs available.	8%	16%	21%	16%
There was too much information for you to learn	4%	18%	17%	12%
You didn't learn anything new from these services	60%	33%	35%	44%
The Employment Ontario service provider workers didn't explain things very well	8%	28%	28%	21%
The Employment Ontario service provider workers didn't spend enough time with you	46%	38%	30%	37%
There wasn't enough information on the jobs you were interested in	24%	37%	39%	34%
The information about training or job openings didn't interest you	20%	37%	19%	21%
You didn't get enough help to keep you on track with your skills training	26%	41%	29%	29%
Other reasons (please explain)	7%	22%	13%	12%
Don't know	5%	7%	8%	7%
Prefer not to answer	4%	7%	4%	4%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

### Help with Starting Your Own Business

Lastly, less than one-in-five (19%) clients used the services related to starting their own business. Of those that used this service, only 12% reported that it was helpful. Among those who did not find this service helpful (3%), the main reasons were because the community resources clients were referred to about starting a business were not much help (36%); the advice clients received about starting their own business was hard to put into action (19%); and the skills training the client got for starting their own business was not detailed enough (16%).

Table 18: IES Clients' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Employment Services and Supports Towards Reaching Job Goals

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara*	Muskoka-Kawarthas*	Peel*	Total*
	381	420	453	1254
<b>Q4.9: Help with starting your own business</b>				
Helpful	11%	10%	13%	12%
Not helpful	2%	3%	5%	3%
Did not use	80%	84%	74%	79%
Don't know	3%	1%	6%	4%
Prefer not to answer	3%	2%	1%	2%
<b>Q11: Why was the help with starting your own business NOT helpful?</b>				
<b>Those answering "Not helpful" to Q4.9</b>				
For example, how to make a business plan, or how to get money to start the business	9%	30%	18%	16%
The advice you got about starting your own business was hard to put into action	9%	43%	19%	19%
The workshops you were told to take did not teach you how to put your ideas into action. For example, how to develop, advertise, or sell your products or services	10%	17%	15%	13%
The community resources you were told to see were not much help	41%	36%	32%	36%
Other reasons (please explain)	0%	44%	10%	11%
Don't know	21%	6%	19%	18%
Prefer not to answer	28%	11%	12%	18%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

### **3.2.2 Extent to Which EST is Relevant to Workforce Needs of Employers**

#### **EST and the Importance of Addressing Employers' Needs**

Recent reports and grey literature on overcoming barriers to work and tackling long-term unemployment have highlighted the importance of considering the needs of employers and jointly developing programs and strategies.<sup>34</sup>

#### **Stakeholders' Perceptions on the Relevance of Services to their Workforce Needs**

Generally speaking, employers were not aware of the EST model, but rather, referred to their experiences with employment services and supports provided by employment service providers. Only a small number of employers, mainly in the Peel catchment area, referred to their experiences with the “jobseeker pool” when elaborating on their experiences with EST. Based on the accounts provided by employers, it seems as if employment services have positively contributed to ensuring they have the resources and supports to train new and/or existing staff, as well as, to employ individuals with complex needs. Specifically, most employers reported that employment services have helped provide both funding for co-ops and training, as well as address high turn-over rates. In addition to that, some employers highlighted that employment services have opened pathways to hire people with disabilities and, closely linked to this, that employers are offered incentives or resources to onboard employees with the highest barriers (e.g., in form of training that is provided to employers). That said, hiring practices vary amongst employers, with some reporting they have hired multiple employees after using IES services, while others reporting they have not hired any employees.<sup>35</sup>

There was also some agreement among employers that steps were taken by service providers to assess and identify the local labour market needs in their communities. SSM and service provider respondents likewise highlighted that they were undertaking such efforts, and moreover, that they were specifically trying to meet the needs of those employers that were hit the hardest by the pandemic.

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<sup>34</sup> See for example: [https://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ACS\\_BARRIERS\\_TO\\_WORK\\_Promising\\_Practice\\_2022.pdf](https://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ACS_BARRIERS_TO_WORK_Promising_Practice_2022.pdf); **Tackling Long-Term Unemployment Amongst Vulnerable Groups - OECD (2013)**.

<sup>35</sup> Employers' perspectives are more fully explored through the employer surveys.

Despite this generally positive outlook regarding employment services, employers also identified several challenges. For example, it was reported that the amount of administration, including follow-up communication and paperwork, were burdensome. Employers also emphasized that training for employees they hired often takes longer than the training period that is funded. This is most notable in cases where jobseekers do not match the qualifications of a job, and as a result, require additional training.

Employers also highlighted challenges regarding accessing supports and incentives to hire and retain jobseekers who face greater barriers to employment. Respondents from municipalities and community partners concurred that employers should be provided with additional supports and incentives to hire and retain jobseekers with complex needs.

Employers also reported a general lack of support for hiring youth and seasonal workers. According to employers, people on work permits are excluded from accessing supports.

### **3.2.3 Extent to Which EST Aligns with Local Labour Market Needs and Broader Economic Shifts**

#### **Perceptions on the Extent to which Service Delivery System Meets Local Needs and is Responsive to Broader Economic Shifts**

SSM respondents generally underlined that they are leveraging the strengths and skills of service providers within their catchment areas to provide specialized services that align to labour market needs. Additionally, SSMs have been increasingly consulting with stakeholders in their regions, including workforce planning boards, chambers of commerce, local employers, and service providers to understand local needs and adapt services. This includes working with service providers within their catchment areas to build capacity in delivering new approaches to SA clients, including wrap-around services. SSM respondents also reported having specialized staff with expertise in different areas related to specific barriers to employment. Moreover, one representative from MLITSD stated that in their catchment area, the SSM is working with community partners to meet the specific needs in their communities, for example, by providing transportation to drive clients to appointments.

In relation to local labour market trends, one community partner noted that that there are many factors affecting the availability of jobs in the community that are beyond the control of SSMs, including the pandemic and other labour market drivers:

*"We see the data through their [local] board for workforce providers and we don't see an improvement but it's unsure if that's fair to lay that on the SSM model. We don't know what's pandemic, what's the local economy, and what's from the things happening overseas. One thing I hear from clients is yes, there are jobs. It falls to both sides where some of it is on the employer's shoulders because they look for so much of their workers and then complain that no one will work for them. It's a unique problem with a lot of unique issues with local employers. It is a fundamental challenge that the SSM is up against." (Community Partner)*

Other stakeholders indicated that the system has some shortcomings in meeting the local market needs and aligning with broader economic shifts. Specifically, respondents from MCCSS, MLITSD, and service providers highlighted that there has not been much innovation in their catchment areas. They agreed that the system needs to be more innovative at the local level to meet the needs of diverse populations and, moreover, that there is a need for more transformation at the service provider level. Clients and employers also indicated that the system does not provide adequate support for people who are already employed but looking to upgrade to a high skilled job. One client explained:

*"I am a newcomer to Canada. I am not working and looking for a job. I have a Master's degree in engineering. When I came from Afghanistan, my degree wasn't accepted. Yeah, they helped me to make my resume and find some general labour but not in my field. I am looking in my field." (EO Client).*

Despite these views, some stakeholders also highlighted several positive points about innovation in the integration of services. For example, some SSMs agreed that, theoretically, EST allows for the potential for greater innovation at the local level without government involvement that existed under the previous model. They also indicated that they were successful in developing a culture of collaboration amongst service providers, and that they have a better understanding of the unique nature of the job market within their catchment areas. They also reported they are working towards optimizing the unique strengths of their service provider organizations.

### 3.2.4 Extent to Which EST is Responsive to Broader Economic Shifts

#### Local Labour Market Dynamics

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted Ontario's labour market. However, this impact was felt differently depending on factors such as geographical location, age, occupation, and industry.

Regarding the geographical location, the Greater Toronto Area experienced higher unemployment rates, and a slower recovery, as a result of COVID-19 in comparison to the rest of the province. Additionally, the unemployment rate remained higher throughout 2021 to 22. Overall, reflecting on the three prototype catchment areas, the unemployment rates for Hamilton-Niagara and Muskoka-Kawartha followed the trends seen in the rest of Ontario, while the Peel Region's trends more closely followed those for the Toronto CMA/Toronto Region.<sup>36</sup>

Regarding demographic characteristics, youth (ages 15-24 years old) were the demographic category most affected by COVID-19 in Ontario. Their unemployment rate reached 30.3% in June 2020, compared to the highest rate for adults (25 years and older) being 10.8% in May 2020.<sup>37</sup> While the unemployment rates have come down, there are lingering impacts on youth who lost out on their first job experiences, co-op placements, and internships during the lockdown periods. Additionally, at the outset of COVID-19, the unemployment rate was higher among females than males, although this gap significantly narrowed within about six months.<sup>38</sup>

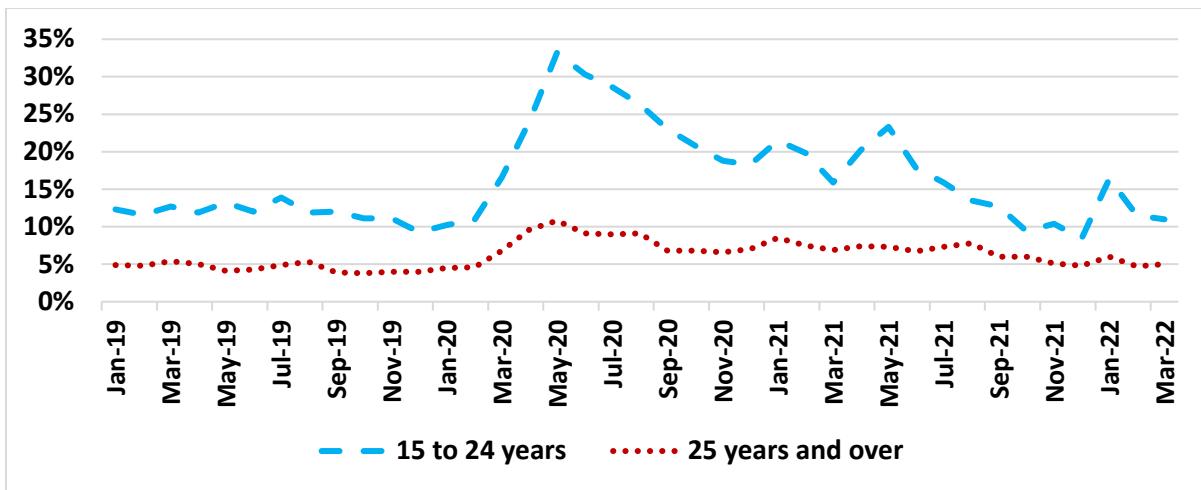
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<sup>36</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0017-01 and Table 14-10-0383-01.

<sup>37</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0017-01: Unemployment rates for youth (15-24) and adults (25 years and older) (seasonally unadjusted), Ontario, January 2019 – March 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0017-01.

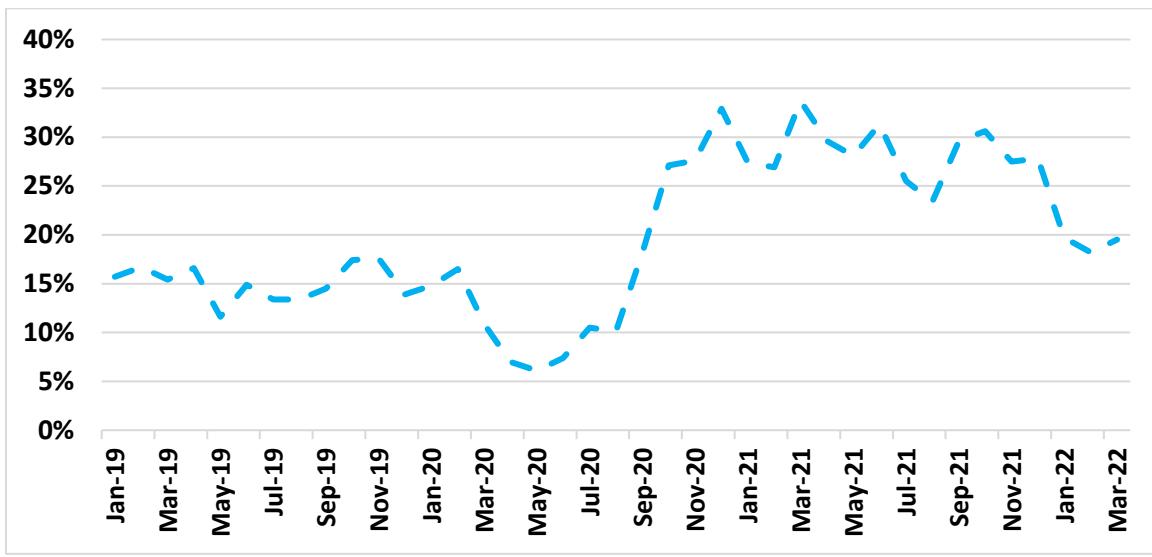
Figure 1: Unemployment Rates for Youth and Adults



Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0017-01: Unemployment rates for youth (15-24) and adults (25 years and older) (seasonally unadjusted), Ontario, January 2019 – March 2022.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic also resulted in a significant increase in **long-term unemployment** (the share of the unemployed who have been unemployed for six months or more). More recently, the long-term unemployment rate declined to 20.5% in March 2022, but was still five percentage points higher than what it had been before the pandemic.<sup>39</sup>

Figure 2: Long-Term Unemployed as a Percentage of All Unemployed



<sup>39</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0342-01: Long-term unemployed (six months or more) as a percentage of all unemployed (seasonally unadjusted), Ontario, January 2019 – March 2022.

Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0342-01: Long-term unemployed (six months or more) as a percentage of all unemployed (seasonally unadjusted), Ontario, January 2019 – March 2022.

The impact of COVID-19 also resulted in a significant decline of case-managed clients who were OW recipients, as well as the share of youth among case-managed clients in 2020-21.<sup>40</sup> Specifically for youth who generally have a lower share of the case-managed client totals (usually 20%), compared to the share of all unemployed clients (usually 30%), the share declined even further during that time; although their share among the unemployed increased somewhat.

### 3.3 Delivery

#### Summary

Program Delivery is defined as the extent to which EST has been implemented in accordance to the design and delivered as intended. This includes assessing the degree to which EO and SA services are integrated, evaluating the implementation of the new commissioning service delivery model, system stewardship, the common assessment process, and other innovative approaches.

**It is noted that the qualitative findings arising from the Process Evaluation are based on stakeholders' perceptions, opinions, and beliefs as reported in both the early stages of implementation and evaluation of EST.**

The evaluation findings are highlighted below.

- The process evaluation findings provide evidence that there is congruence between design and implementation of EST features.
- The commissioning approach is perceived as moving in the right direction with respect to management of service providers, although at time of data collection (early 2022), some service providers reported the model was rolled out too swiftly.
- The stewardship model is also perceived favourably, with most suggesting it would result in positive outcomes for Ontarians.

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<sup>40</sup>Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ontario Social Assistance case characteristics by census metropolitan area, Ontario Open Data, accessed June 20, 2022.

- With respect to the Common Assessment Tool and process, many stakeholders indicated that it has helped to create greater consistency in client intake, while others felt that some of the questions are too intrusive. There is also a perception of mis-streaming of clients with lack of information about how client characteristics determine placement.
- The Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) is also perceived to be well accepted by SSMs, although there were early concerns about SSMs/service providers not meeting their targets.
- More current quantitative data allays many of the early concerns around the CAT, PMF and segmentation model. The processes are deemed effective, as per more recent quantitative data.

### 3.3.1 Extent to Which EST is Implemented According to Design

#### Congruence Between Design and Implementation of EST Features

##### *Design of EST*

As per program documents,<sup>41</sup> on February 12, 2019, as part of its mandate to make Ontario open for business, the government announced its overall approach to transforming employment services. The transformation integrates employment programs from OW and the ODSP into a transformed EO to create one employment supports system. By modernizing the way Ontario delivers employment services, including for those on SA, the goal is to create one efficient, cost-effective system that is easy to access and navigate, and is focused on helping all Ontarians, businesses and communities.

This section outlines the key design features of EST, as well as stakeholders' perceptions of each of these features. This includes an elaboration of EST's commissioning approach, and MLITSD's role as system steward; and experiences associated with the CAT and segmentation model. This section also summarizes stakeholders' perceptions of congruence between design and implementation. The PMF and the performance-based funding, as part of the broader funding model, are key design features of EST and are explored further below under the [PMF and funding section](#).

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<sup>41</sup> EST Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, Evaluation Unit, Information Management and Strategy Branch (IMSB), Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, October 2020.

### ***Commissioning Approach***

MLITSD has adopted a commissioning approach and assumed the role of system steward. Under this model, MLITSD has contracted with SSMs to manage local service providers within identified catchment areas to deliver in-scope employment programs.<sup>42</sup> SSMs were selected through a competitive process on the basis of merit and performance. The competitive process to select SSMs in the prototype regions is complete, and the organizations identified are best positioned to deliver the best quality services with positive outcomes and value-for-money.<sup>43</sup> In turn, the SSMs are expected to work with local stakeholders to enable locally responsive employment systems, as part of the broader commissioning approach.<sup>44</sup> The rationale for commissioning is that the government will continue to devolve responsibility through a competitive structure, rather than working with many transfer payment organizations. At the same time, it is thought that SSMs are better positioned to manage service providers that may be under-performing.

Respondents from MLITSD explained that a commissioning model is distinct from a contract manager model. Under the previous system, the government managed hundreds of contracts with service providers, which has now been reduced to only a few contracts with SSMs.

Respondents from MLITSD reported that the competitive process associated with selecting SSMs worked well. Many respondents across stakeholder groups were encouraged that the government has successfully reduced the number of transfer payments. Some agreed that it is beneficial for the government to manage fewer contracts.

Many representatives from MLITSD were unsure if the commissioning approach would allow for greater market power to manage SSMs. Many respondents also noted that SSMs have made minimal changes to their service provider networks. Another concern raised was whether the government was rolling out the process of commissioning too rapidly, before they were ready to assume the role of SSMs.

There was broad agreement across stakeholder groups around a set of challenges related to the commissioning approach. Participants from MLITSD, municipalities, caseworkers and community partners widely acknowledged that the roll-out had been rushed, without enough

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<sup>42</sup> Performance Measurement Framework Guidelines.

<sup>43</sup> Announcement of Service System Managers, General Questions and Answers. Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development, February 14, 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Employment Services Transformation (EST) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework, Ministry of Evaluation Unit, Information Management and Strategy Branch (IMSB), Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, October 2020.

communication and training. One participant from MLITSD explained that some Indigenous partners have expressed concern with the commissioning model, and the centrality of “competitiveness.” Most respondents across stakeholder groups, including both Ministries and service providers, were unsure if the commissioning model was resulting in innovations at the local level. Some MLITSD representatives expressed concern that MLITSD can no longer deal with service providers directly. At the same time, MLITSD no longer has a clear view of the services offered to clients, or their associated outcomes.

### ***System Stewardship***

The government’s role in overseeing and influencing the work of SSMs is referred to as stewardship. Unlike a contractual arrangement, a system stewardship relationship involves levers that government can adjust over time to achieve desired outcomes. This model is also intended to encourage more creativity at the local level to meet the needs of clients and employers.

A few MLITSD representatives felt that MLITSD was well aligned with their role as a system steward. In the words of one participant:

*“I think that we’ve done a good job of implementing SSM selection. We selected SSMs based on bids and gates they had to jump through. I think we did a good job with that. It was free of political influence. From that standpoint I think we did well.”*

That said, there remain growing pains with respect to fully aligning to the role as system steward given that some have not fully embraced or completely understand this role. As described by a MLITSD representative:

*“I think with regards to systems steward, we haven’t embraced it. If you asked about system stewardships across the Ministry, I don’t think many people could speak to that. I think that people need to see their own role. People are using the language of market steward. It still needs to be encultured more into the Ministry, and how the downstream effects will play out. Overall, its about the Ministry’s accountability for the logic model outcomes. We were always gunning towards these. We need to use market stewardship to keep moving in this direction. Stewardship will take us to a place where we can continue to create workers that employers also find meet their needs.” (MLITSD)*

A few respondents from MLITSD indicated that there are aspects of the stewardship model that may result in positive outcomes for Ontarians. These respondents felt that the funding model and the PMF together have increased MLITSD's ability to set targets and expectations for SSMs and to hold them accountable. For example, one participant from MLITSD explained that they have recently added a "Racialized Inclusion Group" key performance indicator in order to set more informed targets for serving racialized groups with the objective of driving SSMs to better meet the needs of these clients.

Some respondents from MLITSD challenged the view that SSMs will change behaviours based on the incentive structures alone, stating there are many other factors that need to be considered. Many respondents including both MCCSS, municipalities and service providers were unsure of whether the stewardship model would result in improved client services at the SSM or service provider level. Representatives from MLITSD explained that the government is not always taking on the role of stewards. For example, according to respondents, some municipalities are still engaging directly with government rather than SSMs. Some MLITSD respondents explained that they do not understand or buy into the model. According to one MLITSD participant:

*"I think we are using... that terminology to justify rolling something out at a quick pace". (MLITSD) Another participant added, "... we are rolling out the model without the data, evidence and engagement necessary to actually support the adjustments that need to be made". (MLITSD)*

Some respondents representing both Ministries, noted that the government did not design the system collaboratively. These participants believe that Indigenous partners, clients and service providers should have been involved at the outset of the transformation. One participant emphasized that caseworkers have frontline knowledge that should be informing higher level processes to benefit clients.

Some respondents from MLITSD explained that there have been no changes in the types of jobs, or job descriptions within government even though the transformation has been a major change in the way of doing business. The skills and training required amongst MLITSD staff to undertake this work, should be considered. According to several MLITSD respondents, the concept of commissioning, and the government's role as market steward, needs to be encultured more within MLITSD.

### **Common Assessment Tool**

The CAT is a digital tool that is used by employment services and SA systems, and administered to all IES case-managed clients as part of the client intake process by SSMs. In the prototype catchment areas, the full CAT can be administered by SSMs and IES service providers. For SA clients (not EO clients), SA caseworkers administer and complete Module 1 of the CAT, and use the tool to directly refer clients to an IES provider, if a client is ready for employment services. When the CAT is fully completed and submitted, the tool segments clients into stream A, B, or C for employment services according to relative risk of long-term unemployment. SSMs may choose to use additional assessment tools and systems for client management.

The full CAT is administered to the following client groups: OW clients who are referred to employment services, or who enter EO without referral; ODSP clients, spouses and dependent adults who are referred to employment services or enter without a referral; and clients who enter the system through EO.

Before administering the tool, the IES service provider must determine whether a non-SA referred client requires case-management or can be deemed self-directed. The full CAT will only be administered for those clients who need case-management. The administrator is expected to create a private and judgement-free space for the client, and to conduct the assessment in a professional and sensitive manner. The tool collects information on client demographics, education, employment history, and other factors related to labour market attachment, as well as administrative and personal data.

Most respondents across stakeholder groups agree that the CAT technology is working well. According to one participant from MCCSS, *“clients are able to move from one system to another in a virtual world, quite seamlessly”* (MCCSS). Respondents from both Ministries, as well as several caseworkers, agreed that the tool provides consistency and informs service delivery. For example, many report that the CAT facilitates the development of an action plan for the client. Respondents from MLITSD, MCCSS, SSMs and caseworkers indicate that the CAT Module 1 assesses needs for life skills, stabilization and community resources, and the CAT Module 2 is useful because it assesses employment skills and abilities. These respondents also explained that the tool facilitates a consistent conversation with clients that covers a wide range of relevant topics. One caseworker reported that clients are often receptive to the questions because no one has shown an interest about these factors before.

Many respondents across internal stakeholder groups indicated that the “digital first” platform was well-timed with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A few respondents across

stakeholder groups, especially caseworkers and SSMs, reported that the CAT has facilitated easier referrals, helping caseworkers to get a well-rounded understanding of clients, and helping clients to understand their own barriers to employment. Further, some respondents from MLITSD and MCCSS indicated that the tool helps to determine which service area will meet client needs. Participants from SSMs, MLITSD and MCCSS noted that the CAT also helps to understand clients' needs for life skills, stabilization, training, and needs for community resources.

Most respondents across stakeholder groups also agree that the CAT has several challenges. SSMs and caseworker participants reported that the questions at the beginning of the CAT are very sensitive which can cause anxiety for some clients (e.g., questions about LGBTQ+, race, gender, substance use). According to caseworkers, some clients are unwilling to answer these questions. These questions also make some caseworkers uncomfortable, because they are not trained as social workers. Caseworkers explained that some clients fear that they will be made to work, even if they are not ready, if they do not answer the questions appropriately.

Some respondents across stakeholder groups including MLITSD, service providers and SSMs reported that the CAT takes too long to administer. Respondents from MCCSS expressed concern that there is a risk of asking clients to over-share unnecessarily, and that the language is not culturally appropriate for some clients. One caseworker opined that the tool is not conducive to helping clients because it is a “*dead-end*” referral. For example, one caseworker felt uncomfortable asking intrusive questions, since the relevant supports were not available in the community.

MCCSS respondents noted that while the CAT was initially developed collaboratively across the two Ministries, the CAT is owned and managed by MLITSD. MCCSS participants report that there are opportunities to improve ownership and collaboration of the CAT between the Ministries. Participants from MCCSS explained that this is challenging because MCCSS client data is housed in the MLITSD database. EO service providers report that the CAT was developed from the top-down, without involving clients, although service providers were involved pre-EST.

### ***Segmentation Model***

Segmentation is used by SSMs in alignment with the PMF and funding model (i.e., performance-based funding), although, it is well understood that clients should receive the services they need when they need them.

Information collected through the CAT is used to segment case-managed clients into Streams A, B, or C through the segmentation model. The segmentation model evaluates each client's relative risk of long-term unemployment based on each client's unique characteristics.

Clients assessed to have a lower risk of long-term unemployment are directed to Stream A, with the expectation that they may be able to achieve employment quicker than clients in Stream B and C. Clients assessed to have a relatively moderate risk of long-term unemployment are directed to Stream B, and those with a higher risk are directed to Stream C. The model was designed to predict a client's risk of unemployment three months following employment service intervention. Over time, the government plans to evolve the segmentation model to predict unemployment 6 months (27 weeks) following intervention. Clients belonging to inclusion groups (e.g., newcomers, people with disabilities, youth with higher support needs, Francophones, and Indigenous people) may be segmented into any of the three streams.

Once the CAT has been submitted, and the client stream has been determined, this cannot be changed. However, if a client's circumstances have changed, SSMs may adjust the client's case status or employment action plan accordingly to meet their needs. If the CAT has been administrated with a client more than once, the segmentation model will use the last completed CAT record prior to the development of an EAP to determine the client stream. If the CAT is re-administered to a client once an EAP has been created, the stream assignment for that active EAP will not change. This is because the stream assignment determines a portion of funding the SSMs receive as part of the performance-based funding model.

There is a perception among many stakeholders (service providers, caseworkers) that clients are often mis-streamed, and that it is unclear what characteristics determine the stream in which they are placed. Most respondents across stakeholder groups, for example, agreed that SA clients are not being streamed properly, and therefore do not receive the level of support that they require. For instance, respondents noted that people with disabilities, requiring long term support and access to services, are often streamed into the wrong category, and require more supports to achieve employment. MLITSD representatives explained that clients with housing and/or addictions issues are often being streamed into A or B; however, employment is very difficult in this context. Some respondents reported that youth, newcomers, and clients with disabilities are also frequently mis-streamed as A or B, when the perception is that they should be C, given their higher needs.

Stakeholders raised several factors that may contribute to mis-streaming. Some respondents explained that clients do not always answer questions on the CAT accurately due to

embarrassment or do not share important information initially, and only after they have gained more trust in their caseworker:

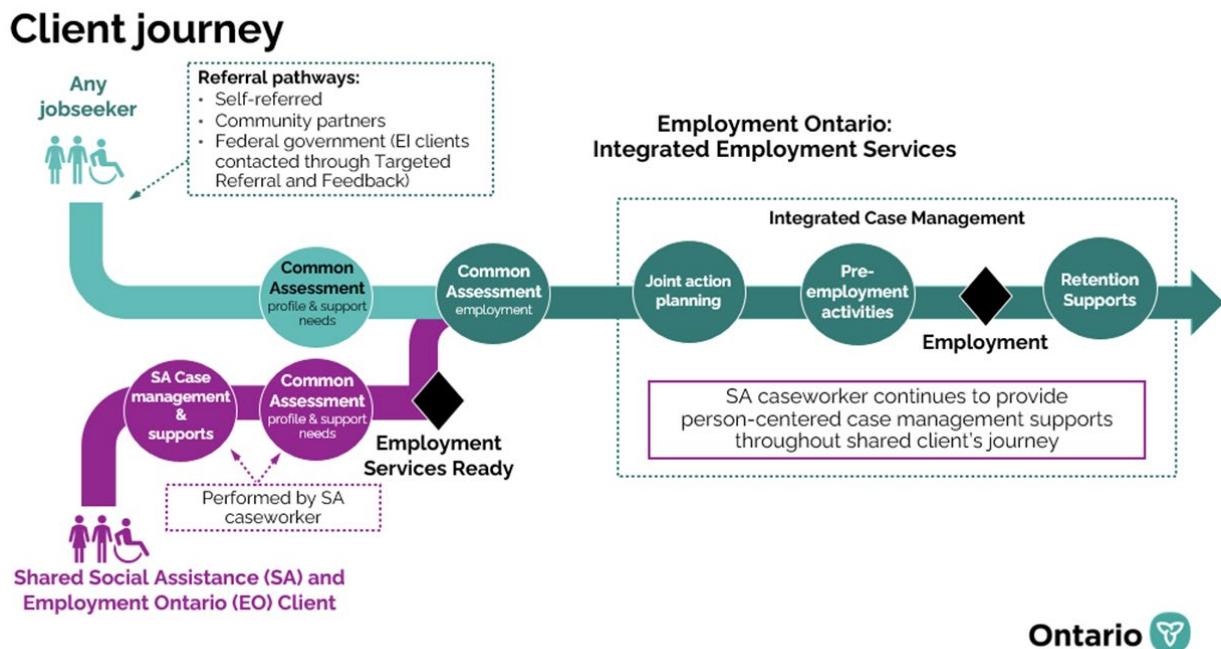
“It’s sounding to me that the qualitative comments on the CAT might be streaming some people that are a C categorized as a B. The other thing, there’s some concern that at the time of the common assessment, answers are what they were, but as you continue to work with client, they disclose things that are not in the CAT so they might have been streamed incorrectly at the beginning. Down the road as they reveal more, they might have been better streamed as a B or C. The

Others felt that the issue is that the system is not predictable. One participant from MLITSD explained that the same inputs with two clients may generate different results. Some service providers also reported their belief that the system is unpredictable, and that they were unaware of what factors affect streaming results.

### **Client Journey and Referrals**

Referrals between SA and EO is an integral and key activity undertaken in the EST. Figure 3 below highlights the referral process from SA to EO, from the perspective of when a CA is undertaken. The figure highlights where referrals start (at completion of the Module 1 section of the CAT), the process for opening and assigning a record to a caseworker, when service level determination takes place (at completion of the Module 2 section of the CAT) and potentially, when clients are returned, or when they are determined to be case managed or self-directed, and finally, when the referral is completed (at point in time when CA record is submitted). SSMs reported that they have set up a service centre to support referrals between OW and service providers.

Figure 3: Client Journey, Referral and Common Assessment Process<sup>45</sup>



Many stakeholders have noted that upon launch of EST in January 2021, referrals were initially quite high, but have since declined significantly. This finding is substantiated by the program data on referral trends, as summarized in Figure 4 below.

<sup>45</sup> Social Assistance Referrals Overview, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), 2021.

Figure 4: Referral Trends (January 2021 to End of March 2022)<sup>46</sup>

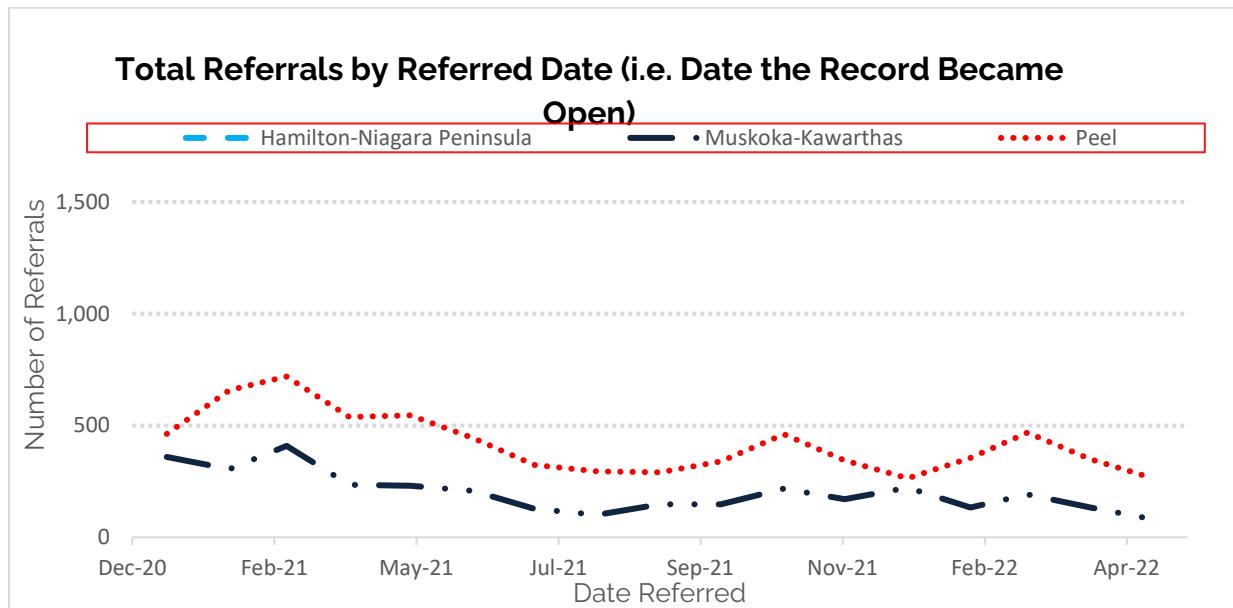


Figure 4 indicates that, particularly in the Hamilton-Niagara catchment area, referrals started quite high in January 2021, and have since reached a steady state in December 2021 when they started to slowly increase again. For both the Muskoka-Kawarthas and Peel catchments, referrals were quite a bit lower at launch of EST and have trended up and down, but have remained relatively stable throughout this period.

Many reasons are provided by stakeholder groups, including municipalities, caseworkers, and service providers about the inconsistent nature of referrals. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, created many contextual issues including the lower than anticipated client referrals to EO.

Moreover, representatives from municipalities report that the referral process is still quite “bumpy” and many clients are either not referred because they are not employment-ready, or are returned to SA for the same reasons. Other reasons for lower-than-expected referral rates were provided by service providers who suggested that there are fewer ODSP clients referred than expected, and higher numbers of SA-referred clients returned to SA because they are not

<sup>46</sup> Social Assistance Referrals Overview, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), 2021.

reachable by EO caseworkers. Figure 5 below summarizes the reasons for returning clients to SA for records that remained returned as of February 2022.

Figure 5: Reasons for Returned Referrals (January 2021 to February 2022)<sup>47</sup>

Return Reason	Number	Percent
Unable to connect with client	2,310	50.6%
Other	1,317	28.8%
Client is not eligible for EO services	329	7.2%
Client declined service	259	5.7%
Client is already registered for EO services	190	4.2%
Client cannot meaningfully participate due to health or mental health/addictions crisis	131	2.9%
Client cannot meaningfully participate due to housing/homelessness crisis	28	0.6%
Client was referred in error	5	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,569</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

According to SSM respondents, municipalities were hesitant to refer SA clients because they were concerned that their needs would not be met. Some respondents from municipalities indicated that EO was not prepared to work with SA clients. For example, while SA might refer clients to receive services to “get ready for employment”, they feared that EO would push them into employment too quickly. Municipalities also felt that EO was overwhelmed and did not have processes in place to support their clients. Many respondents across stakeholder groups believed that the relationship between municipalities and SSMs is a hindering factor.

SSM interviewees also agreed that the volume of referrals is much lower than expected which directly impacts performance indicators that were built into their contracts and performance funding agreements. Caseworkers indicated that efforts to develop relationships with SSM staff have been helpful to support referrals. These relationships have facilitated the ability to support referrals with emails and calls to ensure that important contextual details are not lost in the referral process.

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<sup>47</sup> Social Assistance Referrals Overview, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), 2021.

## Business Processes

A few instrumental policy and business processes that are essential in supporting the integration of SA employment services into EO are the introduction of the commissioning approach, the system stewardship, as well as the CAT and the client segmentation model. All of these policy and business processes have been described in more detail previously and are therefore not described here to avoid duplication. In addition to these, the PMF guidelines and the funding model including performance-based funding support the implementation of the integrated system and service delivery.

### ***Incentive and Consequence Framework, PMF and Performance-Based Funding Model***

The main premise of the ICF,<sup>48</sup> is to “inform the measures the province may use when assessing an SSM’s performance, including the criteria and protocol to address service level, quality, and/or compliance issues. The ICF is also intended to promote high performance by SSMs and contribute to accountability and contestability, while seeking to uphold service quality standards to support positive client outcomes. SSMs who exceed performance commitments and targets and comply with all other terms and conditions of the agreement may be eligible for specific incentives. SSMs that do not meet performance commitments, targets and/or do not comply with other terms and conditions of the agreement, as per the province’s monitoring activities, may be subject to certain consequences and correction action measures based on the nature of the underperformance or non-compliance.”

The Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) is aligned to the funding model which includes operational funding<sup>49</sup>, and funding for employment related financial supports for jobseekers and employers. Operational funding supports financial stability for SSMs, covering direct delivery and/or subcontracted delivery of the components of the project including supporting administration, utilities and other operational costs for service delivery. Funding for employment related financial supports for jobseekers and employers are financial supports provided directly to clients and employers to support the removal of barriers to participation in employment and/or training. Performance based funding is provided to encourage SSMs to achieve goals and invest in client employment outcomes across the spectrum of service intensity needs. Funding is provided directly to SSMs, based on the achievement of individual

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<sup>48</sup> Employment Services Transformation, Incentive and Consequence Framework, Version 2.0, Government of Ontario, 2022, sourced from <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/est-incentive-and-consequence-framework-en.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> MLITSD. Employment Services: Integrated Services Delivery Period. Funding Model Guidelines for Service System Managers.

client employment outcomes. The PMF intends to create clear and consistent performance goals for SSMs and service providers to define overall system success in achieving desired outcomes.<sup>50</sup> It is based on six guiding principles, i.e.; mutual accountability; transparency; trust; fairness; proportionality; and innovation. These six principles guide the six core elements of which the PMF consists:

- Accountability levels and flow of reliable data: There are two accountability levels for the PMF: the SSM-level and the SP-level. Both are required to collect, monitor, and share data and information.
- Public reporting: It is intended that data collected through the SSM and SP performance measurement framework will be openly published to ensure transparency.
- Priorities for business planning: The SSMs and MLITSD will set priorities, and participate in establishing funding, and identifying targets to support the achievement of outcomes in the employment services systems on an annual basis.
- Measuring performance outcomes: SSMs will be measured against a set of outcomes and key performance indicators each fiscal year for which targets are developed as part of the annual business planning.
- Performance-based funding: While all SSMs receive a set amount of operational funding and funding for IES financial supports for jobseekers and employers a part of their funding is based on performance, i.e., in form of outcomes payments that vary by client stream and sustainment of employment outcomes.
- System-level outcome Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): MLITSD developed a performance measurement strategy – the EST M&E Framework<sup>51</sup> – to inform the lines of evidence regarding employment and training improvements at the system level.

As highlighted performance-based funding forms an important part of the IES funding model and is intended to encourage SSMs to achieve goals and to invest in client employment outcomes across the spectrum of service intensity needs. This funding is provided directly to SSMs based on the achievement of individual client employment outcomes. The amount of funding to be received by SSMs is variable because payments to SSMs depend on clients' achievement of funded employment outcomes. There is an annual maximum amount of

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<sup>50</sup> Employment Services Transformation (EST) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework, Ministry of Evaluation Unit, Information Management and Strategy Branch (IMSB), Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, October 2020.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

performance-based funding available in each catchment; however, SSM performance in achieving employment outcomes will be an important factor in determining any potential financial amendments to transfer payment agreements.

Performance-based funding payments vary by client stream (as determined through Client Segmentation) and by the checkpoint of the employment outcome achieved, as per the monitoring process.

There are two Funded Outcomes, depending on the client's employment circumstances when they enter Employment Services:

- For a client who is unemployed or underemployed (i.e., who is working under an average of 20 hours per week), the funded outcome is achieved when the client is in paid employment where they are working at least an average of 20 hours per week.
- For a client who enters IES with employment of 20 hours or more on average per week, as indicated in the Common Assessment, the funded outcome is when the client is in paid employment where they are working at least an average of 20 hours per week with a new employer.

The SSM is required to collect and maintain documentary proof of job start and outcomes. The SSM is also responsible for monitoring and reporting client outcomes. Monitoring must begin at either the end of the clients' pre-employment service, or when the client starts a job that meets their Funded Outcome, whichever comes first. 'Pre-Employment Services' for the purposes of funding and administration, are the suite of activities available to a client as part of their EAP that would precede or occur concurrently with obtaining employment. It encapsulates all employment services, including services leading to a potential job placement, but excluding services that may only be provided once a client is employed, such as retention service.

Monitoring takes the form of a survey, developed by MLITSD, which must be delivered at four checkpoint intervals: one, three, six and twelve months after job start. Overall, payments for performance-based funding are based on client stream (as determined by the segmentation model) and on the outcome monitoring checkpoint.

The evaluation evidence indicates that the PMF is well accepted by SSMs. For example, a few stakeholders from the SSMs reported that the indicators used in the PMF made sense and that the PMF overall was clear and helpful. Similarly, some MLITSD representatives indicated that SSMs are incentivized to ensure that clients retain their job for at least a year, which may influence them to secure higher quality jobs for their clients.

Moreover, representatives from MLITSD believe that the PMF works well as evidenced by the amount of “push-back” received from SSMs, because the relationship is in line with the spirit of a commissioning approach; and the healthy tension that is being intentionally created between government and SSMs. Moreover, several interviewees suggested that “the funding model ensures that what gets paid for, is what gets done”, and the “Performance Measurement Framework ensures that what gets measured, is what gets done”. (MLITSD). A few MLITSD interviewees concur that the ICF is working well in their regions, although some believe that there is too much focus on achieving measured results rather than meeting client needs.

In close alignment with this finding, it was reported by several SSMs that MLITSD has been very supportive and understanding about not meeting some performance targets due to COVID-19. One SSM suggested that their service providers transitioned to virtual meetings and although their numbers remain low, they are confident that with their network of providers, they will catch up to meeting their performance targets.

However, some stakeholder groups, for example SSMs and service providers, perceive the ICF and PMF to be problematic because they prioritize the delivery of services to those that are able to attain employment for the purpose of meeting performance targets, which leaves the more vulnerable clients behind. Likewise, OW caseworkers believe that EO is being very transactional, by putting more effort into clients that can be “flipped quickly,” due to the funding incentives associated with achieving and maintaining an average of 20-hours/week employment. As a result, these participants believe that the most employable people will be the focus within this system. At the same time, clients who are requiring more support, are unlikely to get it, if it is assumed that they are unlikely to find a job and retain it. Stakeholders from municipalities explained that it would be helpful if the PMF contained outcomes related to achievement of goals that clients set for themselves. It is the perception of stakeholders from municipalities that the performance metrics should measure completion of training, part-time employment, and other supports related to resume writing, interview skills, job search etc.

### **Perceptions of the Extent to Which Business Processes Support or Hinder Implementation of Integrated Case Management and Transformation of Service Delivery**

Across all stakeholder groups, only a few respondents highlighted factors which they felt supported the implementation of the integrated case management system and the transformation of service delivery.

Some respondents from municipalities underlined that the relationships with partners worked well, and some community partners highlighted that identifying opportunities for job sharing

and meetings to share services and tools (e.g., collaborating on network events and job fairs) worked well. With respect to innovative approaches, some SSMs described how the infusion of a culture of collaboration among service providers has resulted in measurable improvements in meeting performance targets:

*“Our service providers that we work with have an incredible depth and breadth of service offerings and tons of experience, tons of relationships with different employers and the more we get that shared amongst service providers, the greater*

Likewise, a few ODSP caseworkers stated that one of the advantages with the integrated case management system is that all stakeholders involved are focused on working to improve the quality of life of clients which demonstrates the potential of the integrated case management system and its transformation of services.

However, apart from these few positive comments, most stakeholders across all groups highlighted factors that hindered or limited the implementation of the integrated case management system and the transformation of service delivery. This sentiment is captured particularly well by the comment from one SSM respondent who stated that:

*“The integrated case management system is a concept not a reality. We are not there yet.” (SSM)*

Specifically, most stakeholders identified communication, or rather the lack thereof, as well as a lack of information dissemination between different stakeholders involved in the system as two of the major factors hindering the implementation of the integrated case management system and the transformation of service delivery. Specifically, some ODSP caseworkers highlighted that most communication was taking place between senior management which resulted in the exclusion of caseworkers. In addition, some respondents from SSMs stated that the integrated system requires caseworkers and service providers to collaborate intensively and communicate by phone and email for which caseworkers often do not have time. Furthermore, some respondents from municipalities indicated that there was not enough support, guidelines or communication and instructions on the different aspects of the client service planning and coordination within the integrated system, particularly around aspects of payment, funding and SA benefits.

This lack of information dissemination and communication is believed to be due to different stakeholders using different systems; as well as issues associated with making changes and

updates to the CAT system. For additional information on these aspects of IES, refer to the sections on Common Assessment Tool and Perceptions around Duplication.

Most stakeholders including both Ministries, caseworkers and community partners also mentioned that there was at least some confusion around the specific roles and responsibilities within the integrated case management system which hindered its implementation.

Finally, the administrative burden of the new system, as well as the impact of performance-based funding were identified as potentially hindering the implementation of the integrated case management system. These sentiments were reported by some ODSP caseworkers, respondents from municipalities, community partners, and SSMs, who all highlighted that the high administrative burden (e.g., having to follow-up and remain in contact with clients to measure their employment outcomes) takes away resources and time from service delivery. At the same time, caseworkers indicated that lack of staff and staff turnover exacerbated the lack of resources required to manage caseloads. Likewise, SSMs also reported experiencing delays in receiving Performance-Based Funding, which limits their capacity to fund programming.

### **Perceptions of Implementation and Roll-out of EST**

Some stakeholders reported that the implementation has differed from design in several key ways. Respondents across stakeholder groups emphasized that EST was rolled out too quickly, which was in contrast to program documents<sup>52</sup> which indicated that EST would be rolled out incrementally. Stakeholders were initially informed that the purpose of the prototype was to provide an opportunity to test, gather key learnings and assess the transformation to inform future province-wide implementation.<sup>53</sup> Many respondents across stakeholder groups had understood the prototype would not be rolled out across the province until it had been evaluated and adapted based on these learnings.

Moreover, the following key activities were planned in accordance with the roll-out of EST:

- MLITSD, in close collaboration with MCCSS, established a comprehensive M&E framework, of which evaluation is one component to measure the success of the prototype areas.
- As part of this framework, MLITSD established an extensive monitoring and reporting system to track client progress, outcomes, and overall results of the prototype areas.

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/est.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

- MLITSD is closely monitoring prototype results to determine how the new service delivery model is meeting EST objectives, including outcomes for clients.
- As the new service delivery model only came into effect on January 1, 2021, MLITSD is continuously monitoring employment outcomes data to assess the model's effectiveness.
- The evaluation findings will serve as one line of evidence to inform the continuous improvement of the model throughout the provincial roll-out.

Instead, the implementation of EST was impacted by several key external factors, including:

- The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift to virtual communication amongst staff and service delivery for clients.
- The number of clients referred to SSMs was substantially lower than what had been expected.
- The profound impact of COVID-19 on employment levels, as the onset of the pandemic resulted in a province-wide lockdown which closed many businesses and restricted access to others, resulting in a significant decline in the number of jobs.
- The significant drop in the number of clients due to limited employment opportunities available during the lockdowns.

Table 19 shows the decline in case-managed client numbers, comparing the 2020-21 numbers to the average numbers in the previous three years. The table also includes the figures for the three prototype areas (the prototypes only started operating in January 2021).

Table 19: Percentage Change in Case Managed Client Numbers<sup>54</sup>

Rest of Ontario	Central Region	Hamilton-Niagara	Muskoka-Kawarthas	Peel Region
-40.6%	-34.1%	-42.6%	-51.9%	-33.3%

Even as the case managed client numbers shrank, the proportion of case managed clients who were OW recipients also shrank. Table 20 compares the share of case managed clients who were in receipt of OW in 2020-21 compared to the average for the previous three years. In

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<sup>54</sup> Comparison of 2020-21 to the three-year average of 2017-18 to 2019-2020 (Data provided to workforce planning boards by MLITSD).

every instance, the share of OW case managed clients fell, in some cases by only a small amount, but in Hamilton-Niagara the proportion fell by almost one-quarter.<sup>55</sup>

Table 20: Percentage of Case Managed Clients in Receipt of Ontario Works<sup>56</sup>

	Rest of Ontario	Central Region	Hamilton-Niagara	Muskoka-Kawarthas	Peel Region
Average of 2017-18 to 2019-20	17.9%	13.1%	20.0%	15.0%	9.4%
2020-21	14.7%	12.2%	15.3%	12.9%	9.0%

Respondents purported that the reasons for the reduction in client numbers was due to the availability of CERB benefits which provided alternative avenues of support for clients. It was felt that many clients may have been reluctant or unable to work because of concerns associated with getting sick, making others sick, increased child care demands associated with closures and lockdowns, and other ripple effects of the pandemic on the daily lives of clients. It was widely perceived that another significant factor was the reluctance of municipal staff to transfer SA clients to EO due to concerns that they would not receive the services and supports they needed.

Lastly, stakeholders noted that the socio-economic determinants of health worsened for many clients, creating an exacerbated context of service delivery for clients. For example, the housing crisis worsened substantially at the same time as the waitlists for health care and other services increased. A report by Generation Squeeze found that housing affordability in Ontario eroded during the COVID-19 pandemic at an unprecedented rate, with average home prices skyrocketing by over 44%.<sup>57</sup> Skyrocketing prices for homes priced many out of home ownership, as well as put rental costs beyond what is affordable to many Ontarians. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic also created worsening gaps in care, especially for the most vulnerable Ontarians in need of services for mental health and substance use services.<sup>58</sup> The pandemic put

<sup>55</sup> Statistics Canada, Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours, Table 14-10-0201-01.

<sup>56</sup> Comparison between 2020-21 and the three-year average of 2017-18 to 2019-20.

<sup>57</sup> <https://assets.nationbuilder.com/gensqueeze/pages/6844/attachments/original/1668497164/Erosion%20of%20Housing%20Affordability%20in%20Ontario%20May%202022.pdf?1668497164>.

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.oha.com/discovery/reflections-from-wave-1-vulnerable-populations-and-covid-19/in-this-issue/ontario%20initial-pandemic-response-created-gaps-in-mental-health-and-addictions-care-%20we-must-close-them-now>.

additional strains on Ontario's existing mental health and addictions services, with many patients falling through the cracks.<sup>59</sup>

### **Instances of Duplication of Service Delivery**

EST was designed to avoid duplication of services among key service delivery agents, such as caseworkers and employment supports agents within MCCSS and municipalities. To streamline the process, EST developed policies and guidelines for the redefining the roles of the ministries and service delivery partners.

Client action planning is guided by the following key principles:

- Clients receive the supports they need in a highly coordinated and integrated manner.
- Clients should feel that there is only one system, no wrong door access (i.e., number of steps/touch points should be minimized).
- Clients should have access to the services they need when they need them.
- SSMs/service providers are best placed to determine appropriate employment services for clients based on local conditions and needs.
- SSMs/service providers should not be discouraged from providing services to all clients, especially those with potentially longer service pathways or more intensive service needs.
- Clear intersections exist with other health, education and human service systems.

### **Perceptions around Duplication of Services or Benefits**

Caseworkers and EO service providers indicate that the integration between SAMS and the CaMS does not always work, which results in asking clients the same questions more than once.

Other practices perceived as being duplicative include activities around referrals and the "entrance door" for clients. Some respondents from MLITSD and municipalities indicated that SA clients were being asked multiple times for the same information (at the municipality and again at the SSM). For example, service providers indicated that clients that were not referred by SA may have previously, or are currently, receiving SA benefits or services from OW. They were also required to complete a CAT, which may have already been completed by OW, which is again perceived as a duplication of effort. According to caseworkers, some clients may end up

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.oha.com/discovery/reflections-from-wave-1-vulnerable-populations-and-covid-19/in-this-issue/ontario%20%99s-initial-pandemic-response-created-gaps-in-mental-health-and-addictions-care-%20%93-we-must-close-them-now.>

telling their story “3 times in the first 72 hours” at intake, Common Assessment and at the EO agency.

## 3.4 Effectiveness

### Summary

Program effectiveness explores the extent to which EST is achieving or demonstrating progress towards the intended outcomes.

**Overall, while the evaluation of EST’s performance is strong, several limitations, such as those found in the data and the estimation methodology, as well as differences in design between the IES and MC groups suggests that caution should be taken in interpreting the findings as conclusive or causal.**

The evaluation findings are highlighted below.

- IES clients had a higher probability of being employed at exit than clients from Matched Communities that exited from services at these same points in time.
- IES clients also had a higher probability of sustained employment than clients from Matched Communities, measured as being employed consecutively at both exit and 3-months, than Matched Community clients.
- Among SA clients, IES clients had higher a probability of being employed at exit or 3-months than clients from Matched Communities, in addition to having a higher probability of being employed consecutively at both exit and months, in comparison to clients in Matched Communities.
- IES Clients who self-report having at least one disability had a higher probability of being employed at exit than Matched Community clients.
- IES clients receiving specialized services had a higher probability of employment at exit, as well as being employed at any time between exit and 3-months than the same subgroup of clients in the Matched Communities.
- There were no statistically significant differences found among newcomers in employment outcomes between IES and Matched Community clients.
- With respect to Pre-Employment Services (PES), it was found that IES clients have a lower probability of completing their PES than clients from Matched Communities. In fact, IES

clients remain on services an average of 1.2 times longer than Matched Community clients.

- Among IES clients only, SA-referred clients had a higher probability of completing services than their non-SA counterparts.
- SA recipients in IES had a lower probability of completing services than SA recipients from Matched Communities.
- With respect to sustainability of employment outcomes, it was found that IES clients exceeded their employment goals at each of the four checkpoints from exit to 12-months.
- The majority of IES clients were employed 20 hours or more per week at some point throughout the 12-month period.
- The average hourly wage goal was also met or exceeded by about two-thirds of IES clients, at any point in time post PES-exit. About one-half of IES clients met or exceeded their weekly hourly goals.
- Only one-quarter of employers reported their ability to find workers with the right skills improved after receiving Employer Supports, and less than one-quarter noted that their ability to retain workers increased after participation in the program.

### **3.4.1 Extent to Which EST Achieves Intended Client Outcomes<sup>60</sup>**

This section evaluates the extent to which EST achieves its intended client outcomes. An analysis is undertaken of clients' progress towards employment compared to Matched Community clients; Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) client outcomes; hours and wages in relation to client goals; labour market outcomes for key demographics; the ability of clients to sustain quality employment; and the extent to which employment and training services help clients meet their employment goals, in comparison to Matched Community clients.

Baseline data for the key performance indicators by the three prototype catchment areas are outlined in Table 21 below. As per the PMF Guidelines, the baselines for the PMF inform thresholds which will be used to assess SSM performance in the first year of IES Delivery.

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<sup>60</sup> Note tables in this subsection accompanied with statistical tests do not have cell counts rounded.

Baselines for PMF measurements have been established by analyzing EO data for client service plans closed during the 2018-19 fiscal year in the respective Catchment Areas.

**Table 21: Key Performance Indicators by EST Prototype Catchment Areas**

Key Performance Indicator	Hamilton-Niagara	Muskoka-Kawarthas	Peel
ODSP Clients Served	4.2%	6.6%	0.9%
General Population Clients with Disabilities Served	7.2%	15.1%	3.7%
Indigenous Clients Served	3.2%	3.2%	0.3%
Francophone Clients Served	1.3%	0.5%	0.7%
Youth with Higher Support Needs Served	13.6%	16.5%	15.9%
Newcomer Clients Served	3.9%	1.1%	21.4%
Completion of Training/Education	5.5%	3.5%	7.3%
Client Satisfaction	80.4%	68.3%	83.8%

## **Clients' Progress Towards Employment**

### **Clients Progress Towards Employment (including completion of training and education)**

While IES does allow for financial supports, the perception from both employers and clients was that MLITSD should provide additional training or funding to employers to increase the employability of clients. Newcomers also suggested the need for language training, while clients applying for general labourer positions would like to be offered WHMIS and other technical training. It is noted here that these perceptions may be partly due to a lack of communication between SSMs and service providers about what is allowable under the IES funding model. Service providers elaborated their concern that EST was rolled out too hastily, with little formal instruction was provided on what is allowable.

Municipality participants mentioned the importance of skills training programming, which has been discontinued and should be reinstated for clients. Moreover, they also suggested that MLITSD adjust performance measures and funding to recognize completion of training for clients. Likewise, SSMs suggest that longer-term on the job training for clients should be integrated into the model, and that clients should remain connected with a caseworker.

In terms of experiences with employment outcomes, EO-only clients reported that they had a great deal of difficulty finding appropriate employment opportunities. This was especially challenging for newcomers who indicated being placed in manual-labour jobs for which they were overqualified. In contrast, returned SA clients indicated they were not employment-ready

due to either personal or mental health conditions, although they felt they would not turn down an employment opportunity if they were provided with appropriate supports.

Similar to clients, employers were very eager and willing to recruit from the available pool of workers, although some felt that workers were underqualified and required training for which expected IES financial supports were not available. Likewise, other employers felt that supports such as accommodation or transportation would facilitate hiring of workers in more remote areas such as in the Muskoka-Kawarthas catchment area. Moreover, a Peel employer felt that EST supports were very beneficial to his organization and reported using it extensively and successfully to hire newcomers for his medium-sized business.

Other stakeholders' perceptions on employment, including retention of employment, were mixed. SSMs and service providers emphasized that they are having trouble obtaining proof of employment from clients to prove achievement of employment outcomes, and as a result outcomes may be under-reported.

*"Proof of employment has turned us into experts in reading and assessing pay cheques. If someone took time off in the milestone (20-hour work week) they are not approved, even if their pay cheques before and after shows that they are working the correct hours. Our word used to count for something and the proof of employment and hours has become cumbersome. Targets for employment outcome is unreasonable. The capacity isn't there to capture that information. If we focus on that then we cannot provide good client services." (Service Provider)*

Another service provider group noted that they have transformed an entire department to a "retention department" that strictly captures proof of employment, in order to accurately reflect this data for SSMs. This, in combination with other additional administrative duties, has increasingly detracted their group from providing quality services to their clients.

Representatives from MCCSS indicated that they were not aware of employment outcomes for SA clients as this data is not shared with them. That said, they indicated having heard that employment outcomes for SA clients were not very successful:

*“[We] want to see the outcomes, we don’t know what they are. This comes around the streaming model and need to do better around the SA clients. We haven’t been able to see outcomes and we are not seeing the streamed clients. We are seeing the returned clients. The pandemic has to be taken into account [with respect to employment outcomes]. We did this for a reason and if we are not seeing clear data on better outcomes for the SA clients, then the system has to be looked at because why are we doing it if it has no benefit to the SA Clients?” (MCCSS)*

In contrast, representatives from MLITSD believed that, based on their discussion with SSMs, employment outcomes are being achieved for most client populations, except for youth. They were, however, not certain whether employment was of high quality and aligned to the needs of clients, which was very much aligned to the experiences reported by EO-only clients.

There was very little discussion on satisfaction outcome measures, although one service provider group noted that due to the increase in the length of time taken to measure satisfaction, some of the results may be inaccurate:

*“With respect to the client satisfaction results, they are currently at 60-75%, but prior to the transformation they were at 99-100%. The reason is the timing of the follow up, as they are now contacting clients a year after their service. This is a problem if we are being measured against this.” (Service Provider)*

### ***Participants who Complete Pre-employment Services (PES)***

#### **Client Segment**

As delineated in Table 22 below, IES clients had high PES completion rates overall (82%). PES completion rates were also high within each stream and among SA-referred and N-SA clients within each stream (ranging from 76.9% to 86.6%).

PES completion status is also presented by client origin and analyzed to assess significant differences in outcomes by Employment Services Stream. Statistical differences in PES completion at the standard threshold of  $p < .05$  was only identified for clients in Stream C. That is, based on the sample of respondents whose PES completion status was confirmed from their administrative data, SA-R clients did not have significantly different completion rates compared to NSA-R clients in Stream A and B.

It should be noted, however, that Table 22 is only able to compare the significant differences in PES completion rates among IES clients who responded to the survey. These results must

therefore be placed in the context of the response rates obtained from the population of SA-R and NSA-R clients surveyed. For example, according to data supplied by MLITSD, SA-R clients comprised 40.2% of the total IES population at the time the sample was pulled. SA-R clients also represented 39.4% of all randomly drawn IES survey invites sent. At the same time, the number of survey completes from this group (426) means survey responses represent 22% of all survey invites sent to SA-R clients, and 4.8% of the total SA-R population.

Table 22: Breakdown of IES Client Pathways by Origin, Stream, and EAP Subgoal

PES Status	Stream A		Stream B		Stream C		Total
	SA-R	NSA-R	SA-R	NSA-R	SA-R	NSA-R	
	n=15	n=284	n=95	n=314	n=316	n=230	n=1,254
<b>Completed PES</b>	80.0%	86.6%	80.0%	81.2%	76.9%*	86.5%*	82.0%
<b>Early Exit</b>	20.0%	13.4%	20.0%	18.8%	23.1%*	13.5%*	18.0%
	χ <sup>2</sup> (1) = .116, p = .733		χ <sup>2</sup> (1) = 0.013, p = .909		χ <sup>2</sup> (1) = 7.38, p = .007		

\*Denotes differences in column proportions that are statistically significant at p <.05.

Since there is no equivalent “Employment Services Stream” measure in the Matched Communities provided by the Ministry, it is not possible to compare PES outcomes along this dimension. However, it is possible to make meaningful comparisons according to several other key variables shared between the IES prototype catchments and the Matched Communities, as outlined below.

### ***PES Outcomes by Client Origin***

A comparison was undertaken of PES completion rates between respondents from the IES Client Survey and the Survey of Clients from Matched Communities.

It was found that a higher percentage of Matched Community clients who were SA recipients completed PES (96%) relative to SA recipients who were IES clients (79%). At the same time, a higher percentage of IES clients who were SA recipients exited PES early (21%) relative to SA recipients from Matched Communities (4.1%). These differences in PES completion rates and early exits rates between the two groups were also statistically significant. Also, while the PES completion and early exit rates remain relatively consistent between SA and Non-SA recipients *within* Matched Communities, there are more substantial difference in these rates between SA and Non-SA recipients *within* the IES client group.

It is worth noting here again that comparisons of outcomes between EST and Matched Community clients is based on available data that is aligned to the design of the programs,

which, by nature of their elements of design, make any direct comparisons impractical. Due to design elements unique to IES that do not exist in legacy programs in the Matched Communities, such as Performance Based Funding (PBF), whereby SSMs are financially incentivized for positive employment outcomes, as well as the obligatory participation in employment services for clients referred from SA, clients in IES are more likely to remain in active pre-employment services (PES) until obtaining employment. Further, outcomes for clients who exit IES pre-employment services early are not recorded. These differences in program design between IES and legacy programs result in uneven comparisons between the two groups.

Table 23: PES Completion by Client Origin by Survey Group

PES Status	Matched Communities		IES Clients		Total
	SA Recip.	Non-SA Recip.	SA Recip.	Non-SA Recip.	
	<b>n=146</b>	<b>n=982</b>	<b>n=491</b>	<b>n=761</b>	<b>n=2,380</b>
<b>Completed PES</b>	95.9%*	96%**	79%*	84.2%**	88.7%
<b>Early Exit</b>	4.1%*	4%**	21%*	15.8%**	11.3%

\*Denotes column proportion for SA Recipients differs significantly at  $p < .05$  between Matched Communities and IES Clients. ( $\chi^2(1) = 21.40$ ,  $p=.00$ )

\*\*Denotes column proportions for Non-SA Recipients differs significantly at  $p < .05$  between Matched Communities and IES Clients. ( $\chi^2(1) = 70.56$ ,  $p=.00$ )

#### ***PES Outcomes by Disability Status***

A comparison was also undertaken of PES completion rates between respondents from the IES Client Survey and the Survey of Clients from Matched Communities based on disability status. The results indicate that a higher percentage of Matched Community clients with a disability completed PES (95.7%) relative to IES clients with a disability (82.9%). At the same time, a higher percentage of IES clients with a disability exited PES early (17.1%) relative to those from Matched Communities (4.3%). These differences in PES completion rates and early exit rates between the two groups were also statistically significant. As noted above, due to design elements unique to IES that do not exist in legacy programs, clients in IES are more likely to remain in active pre-employment services (PES) until obtaining employment.

Table 24: PES Completion by Disability Status by Survey Group

PES Status	Matched Communities		IES Clients		Total
	Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	
	n=208	n=920	n=544	n=709	
<b>Completed PES</b>	95.7%*	96.1%**	82.9%*	81.7%**	88.7%
<b>Early Exit</b>	4.3%*	3.9%**	17.1%*	18.3%**	11.3%

\*Denotes column proportion for those with a disability differs significantly at  $p < .05$  between Matched Communities and IES Clients. ( $\chi^2(1) = 19.85$ ,  $p=.00$ )

\*\*Denotes column proportions for those with no disability differs significantly at  $p < .05$  between Matched Communities and IES Clients. ( $\chi^2(1) = 89.44$ ,  $p=.00$ )

In terms of comparing the PES completion rates of clients classified as eligible for specialized services<sup>61</sup>, <sup>62</sup> and whether they were IES-clients or clients from the Matched Communities, it was found that those that completed their PES were more likely to be from the Matched Communities than from IES (95.0% and 84.2%, respectively). It was also found that Matched Community clients eligible for specialized services had a lower percentage of early exits from PES (5.0%) compared to IES clients (15.8%). These findings are likely due to program design differences between the IES program in EST, and Matched Communities. These differences in PES completion rates and early exits rates between the two groups were also statistically significant. As noted previously, due to design elements unique to IES that do not exist in legacy programs, clients in IES are more likely to remain in active pre-employment services (PES) until obtaining employment.

Table 25: PES Completion by Specialized Services Eligibility Status by Survey Group\*\*

PES Status	Matched Communities		IES Clients		Total
	Specialized Services Eligible	All Other Clients	Specialized Services Eligible	All Other Clients	
	n=340	n=708	n=190	n=1,064	
<b>Completed PES</b>	95.0%*	96.4%**	84.2%*	81.9%**	88.7%
<b>Early Exit</b>	5.0%*	3.6%**	15.8%*	18.1%**	11.3%

\*Denotes column proportion for those who are eligible for specialized services differs significantly at  $p < .05$  between Matched Communities and IES Clients. ( $\chi^2(1) = 16.25$ ,  $p=.00$ )

\*\*Denotes column proportions for all other clients differs significantly at  $p < .05$  between Matched Communities and IES Clients. ( $\chi^2(1) = 90.27$ ,  $p=.00$ )

<sup>61</sup> According to the Ministry, these groups include Indigenous persons, Francophones, newcomers to Canada, and youth who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

<sup>62</sup> Because the sample of respondents in three of the four demographic groups (Indigenous, Francophone, and NEET) was deemed too small to conduct separate statistical analyses on each groups, these groups were combined into a single category called “Eligible for Specialized Services.”

### ***PES Outcomes for Clients who are Eligible for Specialized Services: Newcomers Only***

The PES outcomes of newcomers who are eligible for specialized services were compared between the IES client group, and the clients from the Matched Communities. The results indicate that newcomers in the Matched Community Client Survey group had a higher completion rate than newcomers in the IES client group (96.6% and 95.9%). Newcomers from the IES client group were also more likely to exit PES relative to those from the Matched Communities (20.2% and 3.4%, respectively). These differences in PES completion rates and early exit rates between the two groups were also statistically significant. As noted previously, due to design elements unique to IES that do not exist in legacy programs, clients in IES are more likely to remain in active pre-employment services (PES) until obtaining employment.

**Table 26: PES Completion by Specialized Services Eligibility Status by Survey Group: Newcomers Only**

PES Status	Matched Communities		IES Clients		Total
	Newcomer	All Other Clients	Newcomer	All Other Clients	
	<b>n=145</b>	<b>n=983</b>	<b>n=213</b>	<b>n=1,041</b>	
<b>Completed PES</b>	96.6%*	95.9%**	79.8%*	82.7%**	88.7%
<b>Early Exit</b>	3.4%*	4.1%**	20.2%*	17.3%**	11.3%

\*Denotes column proportion for those who are newcomers differs significantly at  $p < .05$  between Matched Communities and IES Clients. ( $\chi^2(1) = 19.40$ ,  $p=.00$ )

\*\*Denotes column proportions for all other clients differs significantly at  $p < .05$  between Matched Communities and IES Clients. ( $\chi^2(1) = 89.87$ ,  $p=.00$ )

### ***PES Outcomes: The Net Treatment Effect of IES***

A propensity score analysis was conducted to determine whether PES completion was significantly different between the IES and Matched Community Survey groups. As explained earlier in this report, the purpose of such an analysis is to simulate a preferred laboratory condition in which the participants in the control group (Matched Communities), and the treatment group (IES prototype catchments) are as similar as possible along relevant characteristics that could also account for the outcome of interest (e.g., age, education level,

etc.). The logic is that the more similar participants are in the treatment and control group, the more likely that any differences in the outcome variable are due to the treatment effect itself.<sup>63</sup>

The results of the propensity score analysis outlines the average treatment effect (ATE) on PES completion.

According to the model results, ATE = -.104 (p <.001). In other words, IES Client Survey respondents had a significantly lower probability of completing PES compared to respondents from Matched Communities. Expressing this result on a percentage scale, the chance of completing PES is lower by about 10.4 percentage points for IES clients compared to Matched Community clients.

## **Perceptions and Verified Outcomes for Social Assistance Clients**

### **Serving Clients That May Be Experiencing Barriers to Employment**

In terms of meeting the needs of clients who may be experiencing barriers to employment, several stakeholder groups, including ODSP caseworkers and service providers, agree that the focus of EST is to find employment for clients. They believe that there is lack of supports provided to meet the specific needs of clients with barriers, including clients with disabilities. OW caseworkers similarly indicate that clients do not have access to the LSSs they need and are generally put on long waiting lists for LSSs including housing or mental health resources.<sup>64</sup>

Other stakeholders, such as community partners report that several key features of EST may pose additional challenges to clients with barriers. Given that IES was still fairly new (at the time of the qualitative research), many reported there was some confusion about where to send clients who require additional supports, that is, whether these should be provided in SA, or after entry to IES. Additionally, community partners indicate that many of the IES front-line

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<sup>63</sup> The independent variables used throughout the propensity score matching models include (as permitted by the model parameters) include: age (or age group), Canadian work experience, education level, member of a visible minority-racialized group, gender, marital status, SA-referral status and, a variable representing the four demographics eligible for specialized services (Francophones, NEET, Indigenous persons, and newcomers to Canada). While additional relevant variables were tested for inclusion in the propensity score matching algorithm, the above variables achieved optimal matching and sample balance within the available data.

<sup>64</sup> While the perception is that LSSs should be provided to clients with barriers to employment, it is noted here that these services fall outside of EO accountability.

teams are burdened with administrative or process tasks, such as IT requirements, which takes time away from delivering services to clients.

Additional challenges reported by stakeholders, include:

- The 20-hour work week, which may not always be feasible for barriered clients. Many respondents across stakeholder groups perceived the 20-hour work week to be too stringent, as it does not provide an incentive to individuals who would benefit from working less. Some SSMs and service providers indicated that fewer hours of work can still have an enormous impact on individuals by providing them with a purpose, value and social interaction as well as supporting them on their “pathway towards a better life”. MCCSS respondents also agree that the 20-hour work week is not an effective way of measuring employment:

*“[We] have not aligned well especially with the 20-hour week and for ES to recognize and understand the clients we have in our system. The nature of many of our clients will never make 20 hours a week. We have to ask the question, is it needed? It reduces the volume of our clients we are able to refer to ES. The 20-hour work week not working for SA clients. There is a lack of recognition on the people who have not been attached to the labor market for years.” (MCCSS)*

- Streaming in the CAT is not accurate. (Please refer to the section on Segmentation Model for an elaboration of streaming inaccuracy.)
- Service providers that are driven by performance targets state that the needs of barriered clients are not being appropriately addressed under the integrated employment system due to a funding model that rewards employment placement and retention. (Please refer to the section on PMF and Funding for an elaboration of feedback on the funding model.)
- As previously reported in the section on LSSs supports, there are many challenges associated with providing LSSs to barriered clients, including ensuring that their basic needs, such as food, are covered.
- Limitations exist with respect to providing clients supports for other basic needs, such as clothing.

Likewise, employers felt they are not receiving the supports required to hire clients with barriers, especially jobseekers that identify as having a disability, who require ongoing support to remain in their jobs. In contrast, SSMs reported that they have systems, specialized staff and service providers in place with expertise in providing supports to employers and clients with

barriers. They also indicated that they provided resources and incentives to employers to onboard clients with the highest barriers, especially those with disabilities, including referrals to training programs.

The following comparative analyses provide insights on the employment services outcomes<sup>65</sup> of Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients, also referred to as SA clients or SA recipients.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Outcomes for SA Recipients<sup>67</sup>***

The analysis<sup>68</sup> of whether IES helps SA recipients reduce or eliminate their time on income supports reveals that SA recipients in the IES Client Survey group have comparatively higher employment rates than clients from Matched Communities, after completing PES. This may suggest that IES supports and services are having a desired “treatment effect” on this client segment relative to equivalent clients in Matched Communities.

Moreover, the findings indicate that among the sample of IES clients, SA recipients consistently have higher employment rates across all four analysis points (from exit to the 3-month point, as well as when employment at either time point is considered, and also among those who were employed both at exit and 3 months).

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<sup>65</sup> Employment outcome is defined as a client having a full, part-time, or self-employed. The number of hours worked was not considered for this analysis or for net treatment effect (NTE).

<sup>66</sup> The analyses were made possible by piecing together administrative data on income source at time of entry into services, which was matched to the sample of survey respondents. Data provided from the Ministry on survey respondents’ labour market outcomes at four different time points was also used.

<sup>67</sup> SA recipients may be SA referred or Non-SA referred.

<sup>68</sup> These results must be interpreted with caution. First, there was no information in the provided data indicating if or when an SA recipient had completely exited such services. Second, at the time of the study reference period, rules and regulations in Ontario allow OW or ODSP recipients to earn employment income while still collecting SA, with SA benefits reduced proportionate to the income earned. Therefore, subsequent employment among clients who were originally SA recipients does not necessarily indicate a complete exit from SA. For more information, see: [Working and Earning While on Ontario Works](#) and [Working and Earning on the Ontario Disability Support Program](#).

Differences<sup>69</sup> were also found in relation to employment rates. In the IES client group, employment rates for SA recipients ranged from 86.6% at time of exit from PES, to 66.1% at 3 months; in comparison to the Matched Community group where employment rates ranged from 59.3% at time of exit from PES, to 48.0% at 3 months. Additionally, among the sample of IES clients, SA recipients consistently had higher employment rates across the two time periods (from exit to the 3-month point). As reported in Table 27, all of these differences in employment rates between the two groups are statistically significant.

Table 27 presents the employment outcomes of clients who were SA recipients at time of entry into employment services.

**Table 27: Employment Outcomes of SA Recipients by Survey Group**

Labour Market Status	At Exit from PES		3 Months		At Exit or 3 Months		At Exit and 3 Months	
	Matched Comm.	IES Clients						
	n=140	n=388	n=102	n=339	n=140	n=388	n=140	n=388
<b>Employed</b>	59.3%*	86.6%*	48.0%*	66.1%*	61.4%*	87.6%*	32.9%*	56.7%*
<b>Other than Employed</b>	40.7%*	13.4%*	52.0%*	33.9%*	38.6%*	12.4%*	67.1%*	43.3%*
	$\chi^2(1) = 45.19, p < .05$		$\chi^2(1) = 10.01, p < .05$		$\chi^2(1) = 43.64, p < .05$		$\chi^2(1) = 22.45, p < .05$	

\*Denotes column proportions that differ significantly at p < .05.

### ***SA Clients' Perceptions of Reduced Reliance on Social Assistance***

A second analysis was conducted comparing SA recipients' perceptions of reduced dependence on OW or ODSP. Both the Matched Community Client Survey and the IES Client Survey asked SA recipients the following question: "Since finishing your employment services, how do you think this has affected your need for any supports from OW, or from the ODSP?" Answer options were, "increased from before", "decreased from before", or "stayed about the same". None of the responses were different enough to be statistically significant<sup>70</sup> confirming that both survey groups have similar self-perceptions about how employment services have affected their reliance on SA.

More specifically, it was found that 55.6% of IES clients reported their need for supports "decreased from before" compared to 53.8% of Matched Community clients. Likewise, 24.8% of

<sup>69</sup> All of the differences in employment rates between the two survey groups are statistically significant.

<sup>70</sup> ( $\chi^2(4) = 4.36, p = .359$ ), not significant.

IES clients reported their need for supports “stayed about the same” compared to 30.8% of Matched Community clients. And lastly, 3.3% of IES clients reported that their need for supports “increased from before” compared to 6.4% of Matched Community clients.<sup>71</sup>

### ***Outcomes for SA Recipient Clients: The Net Treatment Effect of IES***

As before, a propensity score analysis was conducted on the labour market outcomes of SA recipients.<sup>72</sup> The results of the propensity score analysis outlines the average treatment effect (ATE) as follows.

Overall, IES clients had a higher probability of being employed across a spectrum of employment outcome measures.

The model results suggest that among the sample of SA recipients, those in the IES Client Survey group have a 24% higher probability of employment at exit from services, compared to Matched Community clients (ATE = .243 (p <.001)). IES clients also have a 22.6% higher probability of employment at the 3-month checkpoint (ATE= .225. (p <.001)). When considering the probability of being employed at either exit or 3 months, IES clients also had a higher probability of this scenario (ATE=.241, (p <.001)). Lastly, when considering sustainability of employment measured as consecutive employment at both exit and 3 months, IES clients also had a higher probability of this outcome than Matched Community clients (ATE=.337, p <.001).

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<sup>71</sup> It is important to note that at the time of surveying, the questions about reduced dependence on SA were intended to focus on SA-Referred IES Clients only. These same questions were therefore directed towards SA Recipients only in Matched Communities as there were no clear indicators of SA-Referred clients in Matched Communities. While the subpopulations surveyed across the two survey groups are generally comparable, only responding SA recipients who were SA-Referred would have received these questions in the IES Client Survey, while all responding SA recipients in the Matched Community Survey would have received these questions.

<sup>72</sup> The original aim was to conduct the analyses for each of the four time points on file (exit, 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months). However, outcomes from the 6-month and 12-month checkpoint were not used in any comparative analyses between IES and Matched Community clients because the follow-up protocol among IES clients is different than that of the Matched Communities. In Matched Communities, response rates drop off significantly at the 6- and 12-month checkpoints largely because operational policy does not require continuous follow-ups among ES clients if they record a positive outcome at two consecutive checkpoints. However, follow-ups for new EO programs (including IES), is mandatory at all checkpoints. Therefore, if a Matched Community client is employed at exit and 3-months, no further follow-ups are required, resulting in a biased sample from the systematically reduced response rate at 6 and 12 months.

### ***Outcomes for Non-SA Recipient Clients: The Net Treatment Effect of IES***

Based on the propensity score analysis of non-SA recipients, the average treatment effect (ATE) of the various analysis points are as follows.

Overall, IES clients who were non-SA recipients had a higher probability of being employed across a spectrum of employment outcome measures, relative to Matched Community clients who were non-SA recipients. However, the estimated treatment effects are relatively smaller among this subgroup compared to the treatment effects estimated from the subgroup of SA recipients.

The model results suggest that among the sample of non-SA recipients, those in the IES Client Survey group have a 21.6% higher probability of employment at exit from services, compared to Matched Community clients ( $ATE = .216$ , ( $p < .001$ )). At the 3-month point, the estimated ATE was not statistically significant ( $ATE = .061$ , ( $p < .186$ )), suggesting that IES clients who are non-SA have no greater or lesser probability of employment at 3 months than Matched Community clients.

When considering the probability of being employed at either exit or 3 months, IES clients had a higher probability of this scenario ( $ATE = .186$ , ( $p < .001$ )). Lastly, when considering sustainability of employment, measured as consecutive employment at both exit and 3 months, IES clients also had a higher probability of this outcome than Matched Community clients ( $ATE = .107$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### ***Employment Insurance (EI) Client Outcomes***

The following comparative analyses provides insight into the employment outcomes of Employment Insurance (EI) recipients.<sup>73</sup>, <sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Similar to the analyses of SA recipients, the analysis of EI recipients was based on income source at time of entry into employment services, which was matched to the sample of survey respondents. Matched data provided from the Ministry on survey respondents' labour market outcomes at the four different time post-PES period was also used.

<sup>74</sup> Results must also be interpreted with caution. First, there was no information in the provided data indicating if or when an EI recipient had completely exited such services. Second, at the time of the study reference period, rules and regulations under EI allowed EI recipients to earn an income while still collecting EI benefits, with benefits being reduced proportionate to the income earned. Therefore, subsequent employment among clients who were originally EI recipients does not necessarily indicate a complete exit from EI. For more information, see: [Earning Money while Receiving EI Benefits](#).

### ***Outcomes for EI Clients***

This assessment started with a hypothesis that if EI recipients in the IES Client Survey group have comparatively higher employment rates after completing PES, then this suggests that IES supports and services are having a desired “treatment effect” on EI recipients, compared to equivalent clients in Matched Communities.

In the IES Client Survey group, employment rates for EI recipients ranged from 94.4% at time of exit from PES, to 77.8% at 3 months. In contrast, in the Matched Community Client Survey group, employment rates ranged from 75.4% at time of exit from PES, to 72.1% at 3 months. However, significant differences in employment rates were uncovered between the two survey groups only at exit, suggesting that by 3 months, there is no meaningful difference in the employment rate for EI recipients.

With the exception of the 3-month point, which is not statistically significant, IES clients who are EI recipients consistently have significantly higher employment rates than Matched Community clients across the three remaining analysis points (exit, exit or 3 months, and exit and 3months).

**Table 28: Employment Outcomes of EI Recipients by Survey Group**

	At Exit from PES		3 Months		At Exit or 3 Months		At Exit and 3 Months	
	Matched Comm.	IES Clients						
	<b>n=207</b>	<b>n=178</b>	<b>n=165</b>	<b>n=171</b>	<b>n=207</b>	<b>n=178</b>	<b>n=207</b>	<b>n=178</b>
<b>Employed</b>	75.4%*	94.4%*	72.1%	77.8%	77.3%*	95.5%*	55.6%*	73.6%*
<b>Other than Employed</b>	24.6%*	5.6%*	27.9%	22.2%	22.7%*	4.5%*	44.4%*	26.4%*
	$\chi^2(1) = 24.56, p < .05$		$\chi^2(1) = 1.15, p = .284$		$\chi^2(1) = 24.45, p < .05$		$\chi^2(1) = 12.73, p < .05$	

\*Denotes column proportions that differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

### ***Outcomes for EI Clients: The Net Treatment Effect of IES***

While a propensity score analysis was attempted to estimate the ATE on the labour market outcomes of EI recipients, reliable estimates were not possible due to small sample sizes, and issues related to inadequate covariate balance.

## Labour Market Outcomes for Key Demographics

### *Clients with a Disability*

An assessment of whether IES improved the overall labour market outcomes of clients with a disability was conducted, at exit, and at 3 months, for both the IES and the Matched Community client groups. Employment rates were also examined based on either time point (exit or 3 months), and for consecutive employment at exit and 3 months. It was found that employment rates for those with a disability ranged from 88% at time of exit from PES to 72% at 3 months for the IES client group. In contrast, the Matched Community clients had employment rates ranging from 60.8% at time of exit from PES, to 52.2% at 3 months.

Additionally, among the sample of IES clients, it was found that clients with a disability have consistently higher employment rates across both time points (from exit to the 3-month point), as well as the combination of time points (exit or 3 months, exit and 3 months) (Table 29). All of these differences in employment rates between the two client groups (IES and MC clients) are statistically significant.

Table 29: Employment Outcomes of Clients with a Disability by Survey Group

Labour Market Status	At Exit from PES		3 Months		At Exit or 3 Months		At Exit and 3 Months	
	Matched Comm.	IES Clients						
	n=199	n=451	n=157	n=403	n=199	n=451	n=199	n=451
Employed	60.8%*	88.0%*	52.2%*	72.0%*	62.8%*	89.4%*	39.2%*	63.0%*
Other than Employed	39.2%*	12.0%*	47.8%*	28.0%*	37.2%*	10.6%*	60.8%*	37.0%*
	$\chi^2(1) = 61.56$ , p <.05		$\chi^2(1) = 18.85$ , p <.05		$\chi^2(1) = 62.07$ , p <.05		$\chi^2(1) = 30.67$ , p <.05	

\*Denotes column proportions that differ significantly at p <.05.

### *Outcomes for Clients with a Disability: The Net Treatment Effect of IES*

A propensity score analysis was conducted on the labour market outcomes of clients with a disability. As in all propensity score models, the model only includes the employment outcomes of those who completed PES as there is no information included on the outcomes of clients who exited services early. The results of the propensity score analysis outlines the average treatment effect (ATE) as follows. Overall, IES clients with a disability had a higher probability of being employed across a spectrum of employment outcome measures.

The model results suggest that among the sample of clients with a disability, those in the IES Client Survey group have a 37.1% higher probability of employment at exit from services, compared to Matched Community clients ( $ATE = .371$  ( $p <.001$ )). IES clients also have a 29.1% higher probability of employment at the 3-month checkpoint ( $ATE = .291$  ( $p <.001$ )). When considering the probability of being employed at either exit or 3 months, IES clients also had a higher probability of this scenario ( $ATE = .374$ , ( $p <.001$ )). Lastly, when considering sustainability of employment measured as consecutive employment at both exit and 3 months, IES clients also had a higher probability of this outcome than Matched Community clients ( $ATE = .338$ ,  $p <.001$ ).

### ***Clients who are Eligible for Specialized Services***

A comparison was undertaken of employment rates between respondents from the IES Client Survey and the Survey of Clients from Matched Communities, for demographic groups that are classified as eligible for specialized services. These groups include Indigenous persons, Francophones, newcomers to Canada, and high needs youth.<sup>75</sup> Due to smaller sample sizes among three of the demographics eligible for specialized services (Francophones, Indigenous persons, and high needs youth), these subgroups were combined into one category for further analyses. The subgroup of newcomers was large enough to be analyzed separately, and is presented in the next section.

IES clients who are eligible for specialized services had an employment rate of 87.5% at exit, and 67.4% by 3 months. IES clients who are eligible for specialized services had a significantly higher employment rate at exit from services compared to Matched Community clients (87.5% compared to 70.3%). At 3 months, IES clients had slightly lower employment rates compared to Matched Community clients, but this difference was not statistically different. While the employment rate of those who were employed at exit or 3 months was significantly higher compared to Matched Community clients (88.8% and 75.9%), there were no significant differences between the two groups in their rates of consecutive employment at both exit and 3 months.

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<sup>75</sup> Among the Matched Community group, high needs youth are defined as youth who are not in education or employment (NEET). Among the IES client group, these youth are identified by their placement in employment services Stream C. Because the sample of respondents in three of the four demographic groups (Indigenous, Francophone, and NEET) was deemed too small to conduct separate statistical analyses on each group, these four demographic groups were combined into a single category called “Eligible for Specialized Services.” The sample of newcomers to Canada was large enough to conduct a separate analysis.

Table 30: Employment Outcomes of Clients who are Eligible for Specialized Services by Survey Group

Labour Market Status	At Exit from PES		3 Months		At Exit or 3 Months		At Exit and 3 Months	
	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients
	<b>n=323</b>	<b>n=160</b>	<b>n=252</b>	<b>n=135</b>	<b>n=323</b>	<b>n=160</b>	<b>n=323</b>	<b>n=160</b>
<b>Employed</b>	70.3%*	87.5%*	70.6%	67.4%	75.9%*	88.8%*	49.5%	55.6%
<b>Other than Employed</b>	29.7%*	12.5%*	29.4%	32.6%	24.1%*	11.3%*	50.5%	44.4%
	$\chi^2(1) = 16.46$ , p <.05		$\chi^2(1) = 0.293$ , p = .588		$\chi^2(1) = 10.38$ , p <.05		$\chi^2(1) = 1.35$ , p = .245	

\*Denotes column proportions that differ significantly at p <.05.

### ***Outcomes for Clients who are Eligible for Specialized Services: The Net Treatment Effect of IES***

A propensity score analysis was conducted on the labour market outcomes of clients who come from demographic groups that are eligible for specialized services. The results of the propensity score analysis outlines the average treatment effect (ATE) as follows. Overall, IES clients who were eligible for specialized services had a higher probability of being employed across a spectrum of employment outcome measures.

The model results suggest that among the sample of clients who are eligible for specialized services (excluding newcomers), those in the IES Client Survey group have a 24.6% higher probability of employment at exit from services, compared to Matched Community clients (ATE = .246 (p <.001)). IES clients also have a 38.6% higher probability of employment at the 3-month checkpoint (ATE= .386 (p <.001)). When considering the probability of being employed at either exit or 3 months, IES clients also had a higher probability of this scenario (ATE= .219, (p <.001)). Lastly, when considering sustainability of employment measured as consecutive employment at both exit and 3 months, IES clients also had a higher probability of this outcome than Matched Community clients (ATE=.300, p <.001).

### ***Clients who are Eligible for Specialized Services: Newcomers Only***

A comparison of the employment rates between respondents from the IES Client Survey and the Survey of Clients from Matched Communities for newcomers to Canada indicates that employment rates for IES clients ranged from 95.9% at time of exit from PES, to 84.7% at 3 months. In comparison, Matched Community clients had employment rates ranging from 77.9% at time of exit from PES, to 83% at 3 months.

Generally-speaking, among the sample of IES clients, newcomers consistently have higher employment rates across both time points (from exit to the 3-month point). However, the difference at the 3-month point is not statistically significant between the two groups. At the same time, IES clients who are newcomers have a higher employment rate when considering their employment at either time point (exit or 3 months), and when considering the rate among those who are consecutively employed across the two time points (exit and 3 months).

Table 31: Employment Outcomes of Clients who are Eligible for Specialized Services by Survey Group: Newcomers Only

Labour Market Status	At Exit from PES		3 Months		At Exit or 3 Months		At Exit and 3 Months	
	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients
	n=140	n=170	n=106	n=163	n=140	n=170	n=140	n=170
<b>Employed</b>	77.9%*	95.9%*	83.0%	84.7%	82.1%*	96.5%*	58.6%*	80.6%*
<b>Other than Employed</b>	22.1%*	4.1%*	17.0%	15.3%	17.9%*	3.5%*	41.4%*	19.4%*
	$\chi^2(1) = 21.55$ , p <.05		$\chi^2(1) = 0.036$ , p = .850		$\chi^2(1) = 15.96$ , p <.05		$\chi^2(1) = 16.90$ , p <.05	

\*Denotes column proportions that differ significantly at p <.05.

### ***Outcomes for Newcomers to Canada: The Net Treatment Effect of IES***

A propensity score analysis was conducted on the labour market outcomes of newcomers to Canada.

The findings indicate that there were no significantly different employment outcomes estimated between IES clients and Matched Community clients. That is, based on the sample, the chance of a newcomer to Canada being employed at any of the four analysis points (exit, 3 months, exit or 3 months, exit and 3 months) is estimated to be no different regardless of whether they are an IES client, or a Matched Community client.

### ***IES vs Matched Community Clients: Overall Employment Outcomes***

A comparison was conducted of the overall employment outcomes between respondents from the IES Client Survey and the Survey of Clients from Matched Communities at the PES exit, and 3-month checkpoints, along with an analysis of employment outcomes for those employed at exit or 3 months, and for those employed consecutively at exit and 3 months. The findings show that for the IES client group, employment rates ranged from 91.5% at time of exit from PES, to 74.3% at 3 months. In comparison, for the Matched Community clients, employment rates

ranged from 73.5% at time of exit from PES, to 70.5% at 3 months. Moreover, it can be concluded that IES clients have consistently higher employment rates across both time points (from exit to the 3-month point). However, the higher employment rate for IES clients was only statistically significant at exit (Table 32). Nevertheless, IES clients had significantly higher employment rates than Matched Community clients when considering their employment at *exit or 3 months* (92.4% and 77.2% respectively), as well as when considering the consecutive employment rate at both *exit and 3 months* (67% and 52.4% respectively).

Table 32: Employment Outcomes of Employment Services Clients by Survey Group

	At Exit from PES		3 Months		At Exit or 3 Months		At Exit and 3 Months	
	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients	Matched Comm.	IES Clients
	<b>n=1,083</b>	<b>n=1,031</b>	<b>n=862</b>	<b>n=944</b>	<b>n=1,083</b>	<b>n=1,031</b>	<b>n=1,083</b>	<b>n=1,031</b>
<b>Employed</b>	73.5%*	91.5%*	70.5%	74.3%	77.2%*	92.4%*	52.4%*	67.0%*
<b>Other than Employed</b>	26.5%*	8.5%*	29.5%	25.7%	22.8%*	7.6%*	47.6%*	33.0%*
	$\chi^2(1) = 115.59, p < .05$		$\chi^2(1) = 2.95, p < .09$		$\chi^2(1) = 93.14, p < .05$		$\chi^2(1) = 46.83, p < .05$	

\*Denotes column proportions that differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

#### ***Overall Employment Outcomes by Client Survey Group: The Net Treatment Effect of IES***

A propensity score analysis was conducted on the labour market outcomes of IES Survey Clients and Matched Community Survey Clients. As with other propensity analyses, the model only estimated the employment outcomes of those who completed PES, and there were four analysis points: exit, 3 months, exit or 3 months, exit and 3 months.

The findings suggest that, overall, IES clients have a higher probability of being employed between their exit, and the 3-month point than clients from Matched Communities. At exit, IES clients have a 24.7% higher chance of being employed than Matched Community clients (ATE=.247 ( $p < .001$ ))), they also have a 13.1% higher chance of being employed at 3 months (ATE=.131 ( $p < .001$ ))). Additionally, the probability of IES clients being employed at exit or 3 months is 23.1% higher than that of Matched Community clients (ATE=.231 ( $p < .001$ ))). Lastly the chances of IES clients being consecutively employed at exit and 3 months is 27.3% higher compared to Matched Community clients (ATE=.273, ( $p < .001$ ))).

## Ability of Clients to Sustain Quality Employment

### ***IES Clients: Characteristics Indicative of “Quality Employment”***

There is no universally agreed upon definition of what constitutes “quality employment,” as it can have both objective and subjective components. Nevertheless, objective measures<sup>76</sup> of employment quality are commonly associated with continuity of the employment relationship (e.g., permanent employment status); working hours that are sufficient to earn an income that meets one’s needs (e.g., fulltime hours); compensation that is sufficient to meet one’s needs (e.g., “benefits” and/or wages); and the ability to earn a sufficient income to meet one’s needs through a single job.

The findings indicate that the majority of IES clients in the sample were employed 20 or more hours per week throughout the 12-month period, starting at 86% upon exit, and reaching 62% by the 12-month point.<sup>77</sup> Overall, 87% of respondents were working 20 hours or more per week at some point between their exit from PES, and the 12-month checkpoint. It was also found that, on average, IES clients worked about 33 hours a week throughout the four time points. The percentage of respondents with a permanent job at each of the four time points ranged between 78% at exit, and 81% by 12-months. Additionally, the average hourly wage ranged from a low of \$18.68 at exit from PES, to a high of \$19.69 by the 12-month checkpoint. The percentage of respondents working more than one job at the same time was marginal throughout the four time points. However, up to 3% of respondents had worked more than one job simultaneously sometime between exit from PES, and the 12-month point (Table 33).

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<sup>76</sup> Quality employment was measured using the above-mentioned common indicators of using the available data from the administrative files that were linked to IES Client Survey respondents.

<sup>77</sup> An aggregate of all response from the 1,031 respondents over the four checkpoints. This gives a more accurate description of overall weekly hours worked, as the calculations are based on individual level information (e.g., the sum of all weekly hours worked by individuals, divided by the total number of individual datapoints).

Table 33: Labour Market Characteristics of IES Clients

		At Exit from PES	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months	Total
		n=1,031	n=944	n=822	n=398	n=1,031
<b>Employed 20 hours or more per week (%)</b>		86%	67%	63%	62%	87%
		n=925	n=691	n=560	n=263	n=2,439
<b>Weekly hours worked</b>	<b>Average</b>	32.9 (9.1)	33.3 (9.2)	33.4 (9.4)	33.9 (9.2)	33.3 (9.2)
	<b>Standard Dev.±</b>	37.5	37.5	37.5	37.5	38.0
	<b>Median</b>					
		n=938	n=699	n=565	n=265	n=954
<b>Permanent job (%)</b>		78%	79%	81%	81%	83%
		n=875	n=658	n=530	n=255	n=2,318
<b>Hourly wage</b>	<b>Average</b>	\$18.68 (\$5.74)	\$19.17 (\$5.94)	\$19.43 (\$6.39)	\$19.69 (\$6.52)	\$19.10 (\$6.05)
	<b>Standard Dev.±</b>					
	<b>Median</b>	\$17.00	\$17.00	\$17.49	\$18.00	\$17.00
		n=942	n=701	n=567	n=267	n=953
<b>Working more than one job at a time (%)</b>		2.4%	2.4%	2.3%	1.5%	3.4%

### Extent to Which Employment and Training Services Help Clients Meet Their Employment Goals (Compared to Matched Clients)

With respect to self-reported outcomes and goals attained by IES and Matched Community clients, it was found that IES clients attained their goals at higher proportions than Matched Community clients. For instance, it was found that 60.0% of IES clients reported that they found the kind of job they wanted, compared to 55.0% of Matched Community clients; 59.0% of IES clients reported that they achieved their goal of getting a long-term job compared to 55.1% of respondents from Matched Communities; and 64.6% of IES clients met their goal of securing a job where they work 30 or more hours a week most of the time, while 57.3% of clients from Matched Communities achieved the same goal. Table 34 outlines the different in attained self-reported outcomes.

Table 34: Employment Services Goals Met

Question	Matched Comm.	IES Clients
<b>What goals did you meet because of the services and supports from &lt;Employment Ontario service provider? Choose “Yes” for every goal you met. Choose “No” for each goal that you didn’t meet. Choose “Not a goal” if it was never a goal.</b>		
Question Item	Yes (%)**	Yes (%)**
You got the type of job you wanted	55.1%*	60.0%*
You are making the amount of money you wanted	39.9%	41.0%
You are working the number of hours you wanted each week	59.9%*	64.4%*
You have a job where you work more than 30 hours a week most of the time	57.3%*	64.6%*
You got a long-term job	50.1%*	59.0%*
You started your own business	6.4%	7.2%
You got the job help services you wanted. Like job search skills, interview skills, coaching	66.7%	67.6%
You are in some type of Ontario skills and training program. Like Second Career, Apprenticeship, Literacy and Basic Skills	23.2%*	17.8%*
You are in a learning program like a high school or college program	27.3%*	16.5%*
You got support for job costs like bus trips or work supplies	24.6%*	36.4%*
You got support for a disability so that you can work	12.4%	13.4%
You got support while you had a job. Like help dealing with work changes, or job coaching	30.9%	32.3%
You got support for things like personal safety, housing, food, health or other personal life situations	23.9%*	28.6%*
You got special services that fit your needs. For example, job carving	27.4%	26.7%

\*Denotes column proportions that differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

\*\*As a percentage of the total number of “Yes”, “No”, and “Not a Goal” responses for the item. Total counts vary for each item response, but range between 1,562 to 2,096 valid cases.

### ***Hours and Wages in Relation to Client Goals***

In an effort to evaluate whether actual outcomes in weekly hours and wages match IES client goals at time of entry into PES, an examination of these goals as set out in the administrative data was completed.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Based on available matched administrative data on IES Client goals at time of entry into PES.

It was found that for the IES Client Survey group, the goals for number of hours worked averaged at 35.9, with a median of 40 hours. Additionally, the goals for hourly wages were indicated at \$18.74 on average, with a median of \$17.00.

Table 35: Goal Hours and Wages among IES Clients

Goal	Mean (S.D.)	Median	Min.	Max	Total
<b>Weekly hours</b>	35.9 (7.61)	40.0	4.0	60.0	<b>n=1,204</b>
<b>Hourly wage</b>	\$18.74 (\$5.59)	\$17.00	\$13.00	\$50.00	<b>n=1,166</b>

To present a concise but comprehensive overview of IES client's actual wages and hours in relation to their individual goals, we present below (Table 36) the percentage of clients who met or exceeded their individually stated hours and wage goals (herein stated as attained their goals) relative to the four time periods, or, at any point between exit and the 12-month checkpoint.

The findings indicate that upon exit from PES, 54% of IES clients had attained their stated "hourly wage" goal. The percentage of clients who attain their wage goals at the 3, 6 and 12-month checkpoints remained relatively stable within a range of 43% to 45%. However, 62% of IES clients achieved their individual "hourly wage" goal at some point between their exit from PES, and the 12-month checkpoint. Upon exit from PES, 54% of IES clients in the survey had obtained their stated "hourly wage" goal.

The percentage attaining their "weekly hours" goal at the 3, 6 and 12-month checkpoint ranged from 37% to 42%. However, only 56% of IES clients achieved their individual "weekly hours" goal at some point between their exit from PES, and the 12-month checkpoint. Additionally, upon exit from PES, only 50% of IES clients had attained their stated "weekly hours" goal.

Table 36: Hours and Wages in Relation to IES Client Goals

	Percentage of IES Clients Achieving Goal				
	Exit from PES	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months	At Any Time Point
	n=970	n=885	n=893	n=378	n=970
<b>Percentage who met or exceeded their hourly wage goal*</b>	54%	45%	43%	44%	62%
	<b>n=996</b>	<b>n=914</b>	<b>n=793</b>	<b>n=382</b>	<b>n=996</b>
<b>Percentage who met or exceeded their goal weekly hours*</b>	50%	42%	39%	37%	56%

\*If the actual wage was less than 50 cents of the goal wage, the wage goal was coded as “met”. If the actual weekly hours worked was less than 1 hour of the weekly hours goal, the goal was coded as “met”.

### 3.4.2 Extent to Which EST Achieves Employer-Level Outcomes

#### Employers Reporting Tangible Benefits

The benefits of EST were also found to be positive amongst employer groups. The findings reveal that among responding employers, 68% indicated that they had hired an employment services jobseeker after they completed their job trial or placement. For employers who had hired such jobseekers, a follow up question was asked about the extent to which their organization’s overall capacity has improved after hiring employees from the Employment Ontario Service provider. For this follow-up question, organizational capacity was defined to employers as an increase in staffing and resources required to carry out business. Responses to this follow up question illustrate that about one-half (48%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their organization’s overall capacity improved after hiring a jobseeker after they completed their job trial or placement (Table 37).

Table 37: Employer Perceptions that their Organizational Capacity has Improved after Hiring Jobseekers Who Completed their Job Trial or Placement

Question Item	Total*
	n=193
<b>Q20: To what extent do you agree or disagree that your organization's overall capacity has improved after hiring employees from the Employment Ontario service provider?</b>	
Strongly disagree	1%
Disagree	8%
Neither agree nor disagree	42%
Agree	35%
Strongly agree	13%
Don't know	0%
Prefer not to answer	2%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

## Extent to Which Employers Have Access to Talent

This section addresses questions related to the percentage of employers who report increased access to talent through the pool of workers provided by Employment Ontario service providers, both before and after receiving services.

### ***Finding the “Right” Workers Before and After Participating in Employment Services***

The findings indicate that **before** participating in employment services, approximately 48% of employers reported difficulties or challenges (to a large or very large extent) associated with *finding* workers with the right skills and training. This subset of employers reported that these difficulties or challenges mainly related to lack of qualified applicants (87%), financial barriers with hiring qualified applicants (47%), and financial barrier in paying for training (38%) (Table 38).

Table 38: Employer Challenges or Difficulties with Finding the Right Workers Before Participating in Employment Services

Question Item	Total
	n=193
<b>Q4: Before receiving services from the Employment Ontario service provider sometime between January 1, 2021 and May 20, 2022, to what extent did your organization encounter challenges or difficulties in finding workers with the right skills and training?</b>	
To no extent	2%
To a small extent	17%
To a moderate extent	33%
To a large extent	30%
To a very large extent	18%
Don't know	1%
Prefer not to answer	1%
<b>Q5: Before receiving services from the Employment Ontario service provider sometime between January 1, 2021 and May 20, 2022, what challenges or difficulties did your organization encounter in finding workers with the right skills and training?</b>	
<b>Those answering, "To a large extent" or "To a very large extent" to Q4</b>	<b>n=93*</b>
Financial barriers in paying for training	38%
Financial barriers in hiring qualified applicants	47%
Lack of qualified applicants	87%
Lack of employees in your company who could conduct training	24%
Lack of time for training	28%
Not knowing what kind of training is needed	5%
Other (Please specify)	24%
Don't know	0%
Prefer not to answer	0%

Further to these findings, employers were asked to reflect on whether their ability to find workers with the right skills and training changed *after* participating in employment services. About one-quarter (26%) of employers indicated that their ability to find workers improved, while nearly three-quarters (72%) reported it stayed the same or worsened. Employers who indicated that their ability to find workers stayed the same or worsened indicated this happened because they had a lack of qualified applications, suggesting an ongoing labour supply problem (85%); they had financial barriers in hiring qualified applicants (42%); and they had financial barriers in paying training (31%) or lack of time to offer training (30%) (Table 39).

Table 39: Employer Ability to Find Workers after Participating in Services

Question Item	Total n=193*
<b>Q7: After receiving services from the Employment Ontario service provider sometime between January 1, 2021 and May 20, 2022, has your organization's ability to find workers with the right skills and training improved, stayed about the same, or worsened compared to before participating in employment services?</b>	
Improved	26%
Stayed about the same	59%
Worsened	13%
Don't know	0%
Prefer not to answer	1%
<b>Q8: After receiving services from the Employment Ontario service provider sometime between January 1, 2021 and May 20, 2022, what challenges or difficulties does your organization continue to encounter in finding workers with the right skills and training?</b>	
<b>Those answering "Worsened" or "Stayed about the same" to Q7</b>	<b>141*</b>
Financial barriers in paying for training	31%
Financial barriers in hiring qualified applicants	42%
Lack of qualified applicants	85%
Lack of employees in your company who could conduct training	21%
Lack of time for training	30%
Not knowing what kind of training is needed	3%
Other (Please specify)	18%
Don't know	2%
Prefer not to answer	0%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

### ***Conclusions about Finding the Right Workers as a Result of Participating in Employment Services***

- Almost half of responding employers indicated their challenges in finding the right workers was "great" or "very great" prior to participating in services. However, about a quarter of respondents indicated their ability to find the right workers improved since participating in services, while only 13% indicating the situation worsened compared to before.
- It is important to note that post-participation, employers continue to experience many of the same major challenges or difficulties with finding the right workers. However, there was a reduction in the occurrence of these challenges after participating, with the most substantial decline in the areas of financial barriers in paying for training (from 38% to 31%); and financial barriers in hiring qualified applicants (from 47% to 42%).

## Retaining the “Right” Workers Before and After Participating in Employment Services

With respect to the employers’ abilities to retain workers in comparison to before and after accessing ES, it was found that *before* participating in employment services, approximately 29% of employers reported difficulties or challenges *retaining* workers (to a “large extent” or a “very large extent”).

Table 40: Employer Challenges or Difficulties with *Retaining* the Right Workers Before Participating in Employment Services

Question Item	Total n=193*
<b>Q6: Before receiving services from the Employment Ontario service provider sometime between January 1, 2021 and May 20, 2022, to what extent did your organization encounter challenges or difficulties in retaining workers with the right skills and training?</b>	
To no extent	8%
To a small extent	24%
To a moderate extent	37%
To a large extent	16%
To a very large extent	13%
Don’t know	1%
Prefer not to answer	1%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

In comparison, after receiving ES services, approximately 19% of responding employers indicated that *retention* of workers with the right skills and training had improved compared to before participating in employment services, while 65% reported that it stayed about the same.

Table 41: Employer Ability to *Retain* Workers after Participating in Services

Question Item	Total n=193*
<b>Q9: After receiving services from the Employment Ontario service provider sometime between January 1, 2021 and May 20, 2022, has your organization's retention of workers with the right skills and training increased, stayed about the same, or decreased compared to before participating in integrated services?</b>	
Increased	19%
Stayed about the same	65%
Decreased	13%
Don't know	1%
Prefer not to answer	1%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

### ***Conclusions about Retaining the Right Workers as a Result of Participating in Employment Services***

More than one-quarter (29%) of employers indicated challenges or difficulties in *retaining* the right workers (“large extent”, or “very large extent”) prior to participating in services. However, only 19% reported their ability to retain workers increased after receiving ES services.

Additionally, 13% of respondents indicated that retention of workers decreased since participating in services.

### **Satisfaction with Financial Incentives and Other Resources**

#### ***Outcomes of Employer Supports and Services for Workers with Disabilities***

The outcomes of employer supports and services for workers with disabilities was measured through a question about whether the services and supports received (to help meet the needs of employment services for jobseekers with disabilities) made their organization more capable of accommodating jobseekers with disabilities in the future. Additionally, employers were also asked whether employment services provided sufficient services and supports to accommodate jobseekers with disabilities. Respondents who reported that the supports were not sufficient were asked to provide the reasons for this. The findings are outlined in Table 42.

Table 42: Employer Satisfaction with Employment Services and Supports Related to Employing Workers with Disabilities

Question Item	Total n=193*
<b>Q10.3: The services or supports my organization received to help meet the needs of employment services to jobseekers with disabilities, has made my organization more capable of accommodating jobseekers with disabilities in the future</b>	
Yes	62%
No	38%
<b>Q10.4: Employment services provides sufficient supports for my organization to accommodate employment services jobseekers with disabilities in Ontario</b>	
Yes	67%
No	33%
<b>Q11: What did you find lacking in terms of the supports for your organization to hire workers with disabilities?</b>	
<b>Those answering “No” to Q10.4</b>	<b>n=44*</b>
The eligibility criteria to receive resources and supports for hiring workers with disabilities was too narrow	30%
The instruction given to employers about hiring workers with disabilities was insufficient	41%
The employment services or financial supports were insufficient for finding, training, or retaining workers with disabilities	51%
The employment services or financial supports were insufficient for providing workplace accommodations for workers with disabilities (e.g., variable work hours, or implementing accessibility requirements)	38%
The Employment Ontario service provider did not respond in a timely manner to my organization’s questions and concerns about workers with disabilities	8%
Other (please explain)	42%
Don’t know	11%
Prefer not to answer	2%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

### ***Outcomes of Employer Supports and Services for Workers who are Eligible for Specialized Services***

In terms of employer satisfaction with ES supports, one-half (51%) report that the supports they have received have increased the capabilities in their organization so that they can accommodate workers who are eligible for specialized services. Another half (55%) indicated that employment services provided sufficient supports to help their organization hire these jobseekers. The findings are outlined in Table 43.

Table 43: Employer Satisfaction with Employment Services and Supports Related to Employing Workers who are Eligible for Specialized Services

Question Item	Total n=193*
<b>Q12.3: The supports and services my organization received to help meet the needs of employment services to jobseekers who participate in specialized services, has made my organization more capable of accommodating such jobseekers</b>	
Yes	51%
No	24%
Does not apply	10%
Don't Know	10%
Prefer not to answer	4%
<b>Q12.4: Employment services provides sufficient resources and supports for my organization to hire employment services jobseekers who participate in specialized services</b>	
Yes	55%
No	20%
Does not apply	9%
Don't Know	13%
Prefer not to answer	4%
<b>Q13: What did you find lacking in terms of the resources and supports for your organization to hire workers who are eligible for specialized services in Ontario?</b>	
<b>Those answering "No" to Q12.4</b>	<b>n=39*</b>
The eligibility criteria to receive resources and supports for hiring workers who are eligible for specialized services was too narrow	52%
The instruction given to employers was insufficient about hiring workers who are eligible for specialized services	50%
The financial supports were insufficient for finding, training, or retaining workers who are eligible for specialized services	44%
The financial supports were insufficient for providing workplace accommodations to workers who are eligible for specialized services (e.g., variable work hours, or implementing accessibility requirements)	34%
The Employment Ontario service provider did not respond in a timely manner to my organization's questions and concerns about workers who are eligible for specialized services	16%
Other (please explain)	28%
Don't know	13%
Prefer not to answer	0%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

## Participation in Job Placements: Extent to which Employers are Connected to the Right Workers with the Right Skills

Employers were also queried about whether they were connected with the “right” workers with the “right” skills. The findings indicate that nearly three-quarters (71%) of employers overall indicated that the IES jobseekers who work or worked in their organization demonstrated the right skills for their organization’s needs. For those (19%) who reported that they didn’t have the right skills, responses indicate this is due to issues with soft skills (75%), and lack of specialized work-related skills (53%).

Table 44: Were Employers being Connected to the “Right” Workers with the “Right” Skills?

Question Item	Total n=193*
<b>Q23: Overall, did the employment services jobseeker(s) who work or worked in your organization demonstrate the right skills for your organization's needs?</b>	
Yes	71%
No	19%
Don't know	6%
Prefer not to answer	5%
<b>Q24: What skills could be improved among the employment services jobseekers who work or worked in your organization?</b>	
<b>Those answering, “No” to Q23</b>	<b>n=36*</b>
Essential skills. For example, reading, writing, document use, numeracy, oral communication, thinking, digital technology, working with others	41%
Occupational skills. For example, credentials and experience	44%
Specialized work-related skills. For example, unique knowledge, or technical skills	53%
Soft skills. For example, work ethic, teamwork, attitude, communication, flexibility, time management	75%
Other (please specify)	20%
Don't know	0%
Prefer not to answer	7%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

### ***Being Connected with the Right Workers: Jobseekers who did not Finish Services***

Greater than one-third (38%) of employers reported that their jobseekers started but did not finish their job trial or placement with their organization. The most common reasons provided for the incomplete placement was that jobseekers had poor overall work performance (58%), the job trial or placement was not a good fit for the jobseeker and/or the organization (53%), and jobseekers had ongoing absenteeism or punctuality issues (50%). Other responses related

to challenges with work behaviour (48%), and challenges with learning or skill development (43%).

Table 45: Employer Survey: Jobseekers who Started but did not Finish Services and Why

Question Item	Total
	n=193*
<b>Q15: To the best of your knowledge, between January 1, 2021 and May 20, 2022, did you have any employment services jobseekers who started but did NOT complete their job trial or job placement with your organization?</b>	
Yes	38%
No	57%
Don't know	5%
Prefer not to answer	1%
<b>Q16: Could you please identify why any employment services jobseekers started but did NOT complete their job trial or job placement with your organization?</b>	
<b>Those answering, "Yes" to Q15</b>	<b>n=74*</b>
Jobseeker(s) left the job trial or job placement because they were no longer receiving employment services. For example, they exited the system by choice, or their Employment Ontario service provider decided not to continue their service	14%
Jobseeker(s) access to employment services ended by the Employment Ontario service provider	5%
Jobseeker(s) had ongoing absenteeism or punctuality issues	50%
Jobseeker(s) had poor overall work performance	58%
The job trial or placement was not a good fit (from the jobseeker and/or your organization)	53%
The Employment Ontario service provider did not provide enough help to address any issues with the job trial or placement	13%
Jobseeker(s) had challenges with learning or skill development	43%
Jobseeker(s) had challenges related to work behaviour (e.g., poor attitude, poor teamwork, difficulty with supervision)	48%
Accommodations did not meet the needs of jobseeker(s) so they were unable to do the job due to a disability, despite being accommodated	10%
Your organization was unable to address issues that came up with the job trial or placement.	8%
Jobseeker(s) left the job trial or job placement for reasons which are unknown	31%
Other (Please specify)	22%
Don't know	3%
Prefer not to answer	0%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

### ***Being Connected with the Right Workers: Jobseekers who Finished their Services***

With respect to hiring jobseekers and the degree to which they completed their job trials/job placements, it was found that two-thirds (68%) of employers hired jobseekers after finishing their services. Greater than four-in-five (81%) of those jobseekers that were hired were working at least 20 hours a week.

That said, among the employers who did hire workers after completing their job trials/job placements, almost one in ten (9%) indicated that these hires were no longer employed with the organization at the time of the survey. Collectively, the most prominent reasons why workers were not hired or were no longer working with the employers includes the job was not a good fit (for the jobseeker and/or the organization; 42%); poor overall work performance (38%); and challenges with learning or skills development (35%) or work behaviour (33%).

**Table 46: Employer Survey: Jobseekers who were hired after Finishing Services, Work Hours, and Main Reasons Hired Workers were No Longer Employed with the Organization**

Question Item	Total n=193*
<b>Q17: To the best of your knowledge, between January 1 and May 20, 2022, did your organization hire any employment services jobseekers AFTER they completed their job trial or job placement?</b>	
Yes	68%
No	27%
Don't know	5%
Prefer not to answer	1%
<b>Q18: To the best of your knowledge, what percentage of employment services jobseekers that your organization hired after their job trial or job placement typically work at least 20 hours a week?</b>	
<b>Those answering, "Yes" to Q17</b>	<b>n=130*</b>
Average percentage working at least 20 hours a week	81.1%
<u>None</u> are still employed with the organization	9%
Don't know	4%
Prefer not to answer	2%
<b>Q19: What were the main reasons that employment services jobseekers were NOT employed with your organization <u>after</u> completing their job trial or job placement?</b>	
<b>Those answering, "No" to Q17 and "None are still employed with the organization" in Q18</b>	<b>n=63*</b>
Jobseeker(s) no longer required	19%
The organization did not have the financial resources to hire the jobseeker(s)	7%
Jobseeker(s) had ongoing absenteeism or punctuality issues	28%

Question Item	Total
	n=193*
Jobseeker(s) had poor overall work performance	38%
The job was not a good fit (from the jobseeker and/or the organization).	42%
Jobseeker(s) required training which the organization could not provide	5%
Jobseeker(s) had challenges with learning or skill development	35%
Jobseeker(s) had challenges related to work behavior (for example, poor attitude, poor teamwork, difficulty with supervision)	33%
Accommodations did not meet the needs of jobseeker(s) so they were unable to do the job due to a disability, despite being accommodated	13%
Jobseeker(s) declined an offer of employment	15%
The work was seasonal, casual, or jobseeker(s) were students	19%
The pandemic closed the organization	10%
Jobseeker(s) were not hired for reasons unknown	7%
Other (Please specify)	28%
Don't know	2%
Prefer not to answer	2%

\*Responses were weighted to equal the total population of employers by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data

### 3.4.3 Extent to Which EST is Achieving its System Intended Outcomes

This section evaluates the extent to which EST is achieving its intended outcomes in relation to client pathways, including referrals to employment services stream, and from streams to EAP subgoals. This section also examines pathways from EAP subgoals to EAP outcomes; and referrals from social assistance to employment services.

Overall, policy and design documents<sup>79</sup> indicate that EST aims to provide clients with more targeted and integrated services and supports that address their needs in a more comprehensive way and make it easier for them to navigate the system, i.e., to provide supports “in a highly coordinated and integrated manner.<sup>80</sup> Essentially, the new system should ensure that clients “have access to the services they need when they need them.”<sup>81</sup> To achieve this, clients are presented with an integrated pathway. Note, all SA-referred clients are provided with case-managed services and do not enter into the self-directed stream.

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<sup>79</sup> Employment Ontario – Prototype Policy and Design – Integrated Case Management and Employment Action Plan (EAP) for Assisted Services Version 2.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

## Client Pathways

### ***From Referrals to Employment Services Streams***

In examining the extent to which EST is achieving its intended outcomes, it is important to note the pathways from referrals to the three ES streams (Stream A, B, and C). Table 47 provides a breakdown of respondents from the IES Client Survey according to client origin and Employment Services stream.

Apart from the three pathways, there are also two origin types depending on which caseworker (SA or EO) completes sections of the CAT with a client. The first origin type has clients referred by Social Assistance and are labelled SA-R. All other IES clients are labelled Not Referred by Social Assistance (NSA-R) and enter into IES directly through EO, as reflected by having the entire CAT completed by an EO caseworker. Whether a client originates as a Social Assistance referral or not, does not determine their streaming results. Streaming depends on the answers given when completing the CAT.

The findings indicate that Stream A clients were largely comprised of NSA-R clients (95%). Stream B was also largely concentrated with NSA-R clients (77%). In contrast, the largest percentage of respondents in Stream C were SA-R (58%), with a sizeable percentage of SA-R clients also found in Stream B (23%).

**Table 47: IES Client Survey: Employment Services Stream by Client Origin**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Client Origin</b>	<b>n=299</b>	<b>n=409</b>	<b>n=546</b>	<b>n=1,254</b>
<b>Referred by Social Assistance (SA-R)</b>	5%	23%	58%	34%
<b>Not Referred by Social Assistance (NSA-R)</b>	95%	77%	42%	66%

### ***From Streams to EAP Subgoals***

In evaluating the pathways of clients with at least one record of subgoal,<sup>82</sup> from client origin (SA-referred or NSA) to each of the three streams and subsequent eight EAP subgoals, it was found that SA-referred clients were largely concentrated in Stream C, and NSA clients were largely concentrated in Stream A. However, three subgoals have notable differences between client origin and stream (Table 48).

Employment assistance services was the most popular subgoal regardless of client origin and stream. However, in Stream A, 66% of EO clients had this goal compared to 54% of SA-referred clients – a difference of 12%. Nevertheless, the percentage difference between EO and SA clients who have this subgoal diminishes from Stream A to B, and then narrows further from Stream B to C. In contrast, the second most popular subgoal, jobseeker financial supports, has a relatively higher utilization among SA-referred clients across all three streams (7% higher in Stream A, 10% higher in Stream B, and 7% higher in Stream C). Lastly, retention was the third most popular subgoal among all streams, however, only Stream A had a substantial difference in this goal by client origin: 15% of SA-referred clients had this goal in Stream A, compared to 9% of EO clients.

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<sup>82</sup>As noted in the Reach Section, the provided EAP information for the 1,254 IES Client Survey respondents contains multiple records of subgoals and plan items for each client, for a total of 6,304 records. This is explained by the fact that clients may have been pursuing multiple distinct plan items falling under the same subgoal, either concurrently, or at multiple time points during the reference period. Alternatively, clients may have also pursued multiple plan items under different subgoals, either concurrently or at multiple points during the time under study. As such, simply listing the percentage of subgoals or plan items according to client origin and stream would present a skewed and convoluted picture of client pathways.

Table 48: Breakdown of IES Client Pathways by Client Origin, Stream, and EAP Subgoal\*

Subgoal (n=8)	Stream A		Stream B		Stream C		Total
	SA-R	NSA-R	SA-R	NSA-R	SA-R	NSA-R	
Clients n=15	Clients n=284	Clients n=95	Clients n=314	Clients n=316	Clients n=230	Clients n=1,254	
Records n=26	Records n=425	Records n=183	Records n=536	Records n=632	Records n=478	Records n=2,280	
Employer Financial Supports	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	5%	6%
Employment Assistance Services	54%	66%	52%	58%	49%	47%	99%
Jobseeker Financial Supports	15%	8%	22%	12%	22%	15%	28%
Life Stabilization	8%	4%	4%	4%	7%	9%	11%
Retention	15%	9%	11%	10%	8%	12%	18%
Skills Development - Ministry Delivered Programs	0%	4%	3%	6%	2%	3%	6%
Skills Development - Other	4%	2%	4%	4%	3%	3%	6%
Specialized Services	0%	4%	1%	4%	4%	8%	8%
Undisclosed	--	--	--	--	--	<1%	<1%
<b>Average Subgoals per Client**</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.8</b>

\*Percentages are calculated by dividing the total number of distinct subgoals per client in the stream, by the total unweighted number of clients in that stream.

\*\*Calculated by dividing the total number of distinct subgoal records per client in that stream, by the total number of clients in that stream.

## From EAP Subgoals to EAP Outcomes

This section examines the pathways from EAP subgoals to EAP outcomes (through an analysis of respondents' EAP completion status), and labour market outcomes after completing pre-employment services (PES).

The findings indicate that the percentage of respondents who completed PES is high across all client origins, and within each stream. Completions range from a low of 77% among SA-referred clients in Stream C, to a high of 87% among NSA-R clients in Stream A and Stream C. However, it

is noted that in Stream A and C, the completion rate for NSA-R clients was 7% to 10% higher than for SA-R clients.

Moreover, among those clients who completed PES, the percentage who were employed in some form after exiting their completed services is high across all streams and client origins. This ranged from a low of 83% employed among SA-R clients in Stream A, to a high of 96% employed among NSA-R clients in Stream A. At time of exit, NSA-R clients tended to have higher employment rates across all streams. However, there was only a 3% difference between the two groups in Stream B and C. There was also a 13% difference found in employment rates at time of exit in Stream A (83% for SA-R clients and 96% for NSA-R clients).<sup>83</sup>

Table 49: Breakdown of IES Client Pathways by Origin, Stream, and EAP Subgoal

Name of Subgoal	Stream A		Stream B		Stream C		Total
	SA-R	NSA-R	SA-R	NSA-R	SA-R	NSA-R	
<b>Name of Subgoal</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>1,254</b>
Completed PES	80%	87%	80%	81%	77%	87%	82%
Early Exit	20%	13%	20%	19%	23%	13%	18%
<b>Outcomes after completing PES</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>1,031</b>
Employed at some point between Exit and 12-month checkpoints	83%	96%	92%	96%	88%	91%	93%
Other*	17%	2%	8%	4%	12%	9%	7%

\*Includes all other responses except being employed

## Perceptions of Clients Referred from Social Assistance to Employment Services

The IES Client Survey queried clients' experiences with their referrals from SA to ES. The analysis includes a comparison by the three prototype catchment areas, and demographics.

### Analysis by Catchment Areas

The findings indicate that over three quarters (76%) of SA-R clients reported that the referral to ES worked well for them. Reasons for the referral not working well vary by catchment area, although one of the most common reasons is that the client's questions or needs were not

<sup>83</sup> This difference should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of SA-referred Clients in Stream A.

taken seriously enough as they moved between services (42%). Open-ended comments further elaborate on the reasons for the referrals not working, with one highlight being that recommendations from service providers were not helpful or insightful. For example, many reported that the jobs they were recommended to take were below their required wage or expertise compared to the employment they held previously. The qualitative findings indicate that the referral process may not always work well for SA-R clients who are not employment-ready, and who may require life stabilization supports prior to being referred to ES.

Table 50: Clients Perceptions of their Referral from Social Assistance to Employment Services

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara	Muskoka-Kawarthas	Peel	Total
	n=164	n=142	n=120	n=426
<b>Q2: Did the referral from social assistance to employment services work well for you?</b>				
Yes	76%	81%	64%	74%
No	13%	12%	20%	14%
Don't know	8%	5%	9%	8%
Prefer not to answer	3%	2%	7%	4%
<b>Q3: Why did the referral from social assistance to employment services NOT work well for you?</b>				
<b>Those answering "No" to Q2:</b>	<b>n=21</b>	<b>n=17</b>	<b>n=24</b>	<b>n=62</b>
Thought that workers in social assistance and the Employment Ontario service provider were not working well together to help you	17%	35%	39%	26%
Didn't receive services in a timely and efficient way - you had to repeat your story	24%	39%	39%	30%
Didn't receive services in a timely and efficient way - your information didn't match	14%	22%	10%	13%
Didn't receive services in a timely and efficient way - you had to go back and forth between services	21%	33%	20%	22%

Question Item	Hamilton-Niagara	Muskoka-Kawarthas	Peel	Total
	n=164	n=142	n=120	n=426
Felt that you weren't quite ready for employment services yet	18%	25%	23%	20%
Didn't know what to expect as you moved between services	25%	28%	19%	23%
Felt that your questions or needs were not taken seriously enough as you moved between services	42%	27%	46%	42%
Other reasons (please explain)	34%	55%	34%	36%
Don't know	4%	8%	0%	3%
Prefer not to answer	16%	0%	0%	9%

### ***Analysis by Demographics***

Clients' experience with referrals are wide and varied by catchment area and demographics. It was found that those who completed their EAP generally reported that the referral worked well compared to those who exited early. But regardless, the Muskoka-Kawarthas catchment tended to have the highest percentage of those agreeing it was helpful. Additionally, clients in Employment Stream A also reported higher levels of success with their referrals.

Demographics by referrals are reported in Table 51.

Table 51: Client Perceptions of Referral from Social Assistance to Employment Services: by Respondent Key Characteristics<sup>84</sup>

<b>Q2: Did the referral from social assistance to employment services work well for you?</b>						
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Item Response</b>					
		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>	
		<b>n=164</b>	<b>n=142</b>	<b>n=120</b>	<b>n=426</b>	
<b>EAP completion status</b>						
<b>Completed PES</b>	Yes	77%	80%	72%	76%	
	No	10%	13%	15%	12%	
	Don't know	9%	6%	9%	9%	
	Prefer not to answer	4%	2%	5%	4%	
<b>Early exit</b>						
	Yes	75%	90%	47%	68%	
	No	20%	10%	32%	23%	
	Don't know	3%	0%	8%	5%	
	Prefer not to answer	2%	0%	13%	5%	
<b>Employment services stream</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>	
<b>Stream A</b>	Yes	100%	100%	49%	84%	
	No	0%	0%	17%	5%	
	Don't know	0%	0%	17%	5%	
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	17%	5%	
<b>Stream B</b>	Yes	83%	67%	55%	74%	
	No	8%	20%	25%	14%	
	Don't know	4%	9%	16%	8%	
	Prefer not to answer	5%	4%	3%	4%	
<b>Stream C</b>	Yes	73%	85%	68%	74%	

<sup>84</sup> Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data. Due to small cell sizes, the sample numbers have been suppressed. The percentages, however, are reflective of the weighted survey findings.

<b>Q2: Did the referral from social assistance to employment services work well for you?</b>					
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Item Response</b>				
		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
		<b>n=164</b>	<b>n=142</b>	<b>n=120</b>	<b>n=426</b>
	No	15%	10%	18%	15%
	Don't know	9%	4%	6%	8%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	1%	8%	4%
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
<b>Man</b>	Yes	72%	76%	65%	71%
	No	15%	15%	22%	16%
	Don't know	11%	6%	6%	9%
	Prefer not to answer	2%	2%	6%	3%
<b>Woman</b>	Yes	79%	85%	64%	76%
	No	12%	9%	17%	13%
	Don't know	5%	5%	11%	6%
	Prefer not to answer	5%	1%	8%	5%
<b>All Other</b>	Yes	100%	65%	40%	82%
	No	0%	35%	60%	18%
<b>Disability</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
<b>Yes</b>	Yes	73%	84%	63%	72%
	No	15%	13%	19%	16%
	Don't know	9%	3%	9%	8%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	0%	9%	4%
<b>No</b>	Yes	81%	77%	65%	76%
	No	10%	11%	20%	13%
	Don't know	6%	8%	9%	7%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	4%	6%	4%
<b>Age group</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
<b>16-29</b>	Yes	74%	75%	51%	69%

<b>Q2: Did the referral from social assistance to employment services work well for you?</b>					
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Item Response</b>				
		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
		<b>n=164</b>	<b>n=142</b>	<b>n=120</b>	<b>n=426</b>
	No	11%	14%	27%	14%
	Don't know	12%	6%	15%	12%
	Prefer not to answer	4%	5%	8%	5%
<b>30-44</b>	Yes	82%	86%	67%	79%
	No	11%	10%	19%	13%
	Don't know	5%	4%	6%	5%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	0%	8%	4%
<b>45-64</b>	Yes	73%	80%	74%	74%
	No	19%	15%	13%	17%
	Don't know	5%	5%	6%	5%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	0%	6%	4%
<b>Indigenous</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
<b>Yes</b>	Yes	47%	91%	64%	61%
	No	53%	0%	36%	37%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	9%	0%	2%
<b>No</b>	Yes	76%	80%	66%	74%
	No	12%	14%	19%	14%
	Don't know	8%	6%	9%	8%
	Prefer not to answer	4%	1%	5%	4%
<b>Undisclosed</b>	Yes	100%	100%	13%	86%
	No	0%	0%	19%	3%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	69%	11%
<b>Francophone</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
<b>Yes</b>	Yes	93%	100%	100%	94%

<b>Q2: Did the referral from social assistance to employment services work well for you?</b>					
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Item Response</b>				
		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
		<b>n=164</b>	<b>n=142</b>	<b>n=120</b>	<b>n=426</b>
	Prefer not to answer	7%	0%	0%	6%
<b>No</b>	Yes	75%	81%	63%	73%
	No	14%	13%	20%	15%
	Don't know	8%	5%	9%	8%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	1%	8%	4%
<b>Undisclosed</b>	Yes	100%	62%	73%	79%
	No	0%	14%	27%	14%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	24%	0%	8%
<b>Racialized</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
<b>Yes</b>	Yes	85%	83%	67%	77%
	No	7%	5%	17%	11%
	Don't know	4%	8%	9%	6%
	Prefer not to answer	4%	5%	8%	6%
<b>No</b>	Yes	72%	81%	57%	72%
	No	16%	14%	28%	17%
	Don't know	10%	5%	10%	9%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	1%	6%	3%
<b>Main source of income</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
<b>ODSP or OW</b>	Yes	75%	81%	64%	73%
	No	14%	12%	21%	15%
	Don't know	8%	5%	7%	7%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	2%	7%	4%
<b>Other</b>	Yes	100%	81%	51%	83%
	No	0%	13%	0%	3%
	Don't know	0%	6%	33%	10%

<b>Q2: Did the referral from social assistance to employment services work well for you?</b>					
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Item Response</b>				
		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
		<b>n=164</b>	<b>n=142</b>	<b>n=120</b>	<b>n=426</b>
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	16%	4%
<b>No Income Source</b>	Yes	100%	100%	72%	86%
	No	0%	0%	14%	7%
	Don't know	0%	0%	14%	7%
<b>Education Level</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
<b>Less than Gr 12 or equivalent</b>	Yes	69%	83%	62%	70%
	No	12%	10%	5%	10%
	Don't know	15%	0%	19%	14%
	Prefer not to answer	4%	7%	14%	6%
<b>Gr 12 or equivalent- OAC/ Gr13</b>	Yes	76%	79%	68%	74%
	No	20%	13%	22%	19%
	Don't know	3%	9%	3%	4%
	Prefer not to answer	2%	0%	7%	2%
<b>Some postsecondary - apprenticeship/coll./univ.</b>	Yes	83%	77%	66%	78%
	No	12%	20%	18%	15%
	Don't know	2%	3%	0%	2%
	Prefer not to answer	2%	0%	16%	5%
<b>Cert. of apprenticeship, Journeyperson, cert./dip.</b>	Yes	74%	83%	44%	68%
	No	5%	9%	43%	14%
	Don't know	14%	8%	13%	13%
	Prefer not to answer	7%	0%	0%	5%

<b>Q2: Did the referral from social assistance to employment services work well for you?</b>					
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Item Response</b>				
		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
		<b>n=164</b>	<b>n=142</b>	<b>n=120</b>	<b>n=426</b>
<b>Bachelor's degree/post-grad.</b>	Yes	93%	100%	76%	84.6%
	No	7%	0%	10%	8%
	Don't know	0%	0%	10%	5%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	3%	2%
<b>Newcomer</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
Yes	Yes	88%	100%	73%	80%
	No	6%	0%	21%	14%
	Don't know	0%	0%	3%	2%
	Prefer not to answer	6%	0%	3%	4%
<b>No</b>	Yes	75%	81%	61%	73%
	No	13%	13%	19%	15%
	Don't know	8%	5%	11%	8%
	Prefer not to answer	3%	2%	9%	4%
<b>Youth with higher support needs</b>		<b>Hamilton-Niagara*</b>	<b>Muskoka-Kawarthas*</b>	<b>Peel*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
Yes	Yes	65%	78%	58%	66%
	No	11%	16%	24%	14%
	Don't know	18%	4%	12%	15%
	Prefer not to answer	7%	2%	6%	6%
<b>No</b>	Yes	85%	68%	46%	73%
	No	10%	10%	29%	15%
	Don't know	5%	12%	17%	9%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	10%	8%	3%

\*Responses were weighted to equal total population breakdowns by age-group by gender by catchment, as obtained from the MLITSD administrative data.

## **Receiving Life Stabilization Supports**

The provision of LSSs to clients with barriers to employment is a critical feature of EST. At a high level, while LSSs are offered as supports to clients while they enter employment services, and also once they find a job to help them stay in employment, they are perceived as barriers to clients who may not be ready to seek employment, for example, if they are unemployed or precariously employed and are homeless or in health crisis (physical health, mental health, or addiction). Examples of life stabilization activities may include providing supports that address critical housing issues and helping to stabilize housing, and addressing and stabilizing their health. The risk of mental health and substance use is collected in the CAT, in Module 1, from SA-referred clients. While LSSs are mainly provided through social assistance to SA clients, receiving these services does not exclude SA clients from simultaneously receiving employment services too. Moreover, non-SA clients, i.e., those directly accessing IES, can be referred to LSSs if they are identified as being needed during the initial assessment with the SSMs. By combining both life stabilization and employment services, the new system thus acknowledges that LSSs might need to be provided either prior to and/or in tandem with employment services to improve employment outcomes.

## **Key Stakeholders' Perceptions of Life Stabilization Supports**

Many participants from both Ministries, caseworkers, municipalities, SSMs, service providers and clients indicated that there is some misalignment of LSSs to employment services. Service providers indicated that it is difficult to support clients who are not employment-ready. These respondents emphasized that the focus is on getting clients to work and not enough on meeting the specific needs of clients with barriers including clients with disabilities.

Because the funding model includes performance-based funding that compensates SSMs based on client outcomes related to employment, it is perceived that this results in an emphasis on working with clients who are most employable. At the same time, if highly barriered clients are mis-streamed this creates a further disincentive to dedicate the appropriate amount of case workers' time to clients based on their needs.

Participants explained that this immediate focus on employment is not always beneficial, especially for SA clients who may need stabilization supports before they are ready for employment services. For example, ODSP caseworkers explained that many SA clients need to address barriers to work including for example food and shelter, before they are ready to shift their focus to getting ready for employment. SSMs conduct service level determination (SLD) for EO-entry clients only, while SA clients go directly into case-managed services. SSMs can use their own locally determined approach for SLD to determine if clients are to be self-directed or

case-managed. SLD is one of the three assessments (in addition to the Common Assessment and Readiness For Employment Services) that help determine a client's information, barriers, needs and service level intensity.

The findings indicate there is some confusion amongst stakeholders (e.g., service providers and SA caseworkers) in terms of whether LSSs are offered by SA caseworkers in ODSP and OW, or by EO through SSMs and service providers. Moreover, some ODSP caseworkers indicated they are not sure what supports are available to clients when they are (or not) ready for work. They also report that the system does not provide enough resources to be used to refer clients to LSSs. There is a perception by OW caseworkers, that they no longer issue funds for LSSs, and that there are limited funds available from EO caseworkers to support clients' needs. According to one participant, *"there is confusion for who is responsible for life stabilization supports"* (OW caseworker). They also feel that EO is too employment focused with little coordination provided around mental health supports.

Both SSMs and EO service providers concur that not a lot of thought has been put into providing LSSs to clients. They do however believe that both SA and non-SA clients are being referred for LSSs related to housing, health, and childcare, and that the system is leveraging the expertise of service providers in the catchment areas that offer a variety of services. Respondents from one SSM indicated that they could not speak to the process of providing LSSs, because this is happening at the service provider level, and that there is a lot of learning associated with these supports because they were not part of EO previously. Several SSM participants perceived that they needed to increase their capacity to provide LSSs.

ODSP caseworkers explained that it is time consuming for caseworkers to look externally for the services and supports, and rely on their own personal knowledge of services and supports that exist in the community. Caseworkers explained that they would benefit from coordinated resources and tools to support LSSs. According to service providers, they are referring clients to other community organizations for life stabilization, and providing services in house, including coaching. That said, service providers noted that they are limited in what they can do because of limited resources.

According to the EST Funding Guidelines, "Service System Managers will be required to work in collaboration with other partners in the community to ensure that employment-related financial supports are used where needed and do not duplicate funding a client may be receiving from other sources for the same purpose (e.g., Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, Ministry of Health). It is expected that SSMs will be familiar with supports

available to their clients through government and other entities".<sup>85</sup> Moreover, funding is available to job-seekers and may be used to remove temporary barriers to participation in employment and training activities or starting/maintaining a job. Examples of employment-related financial supports to jobseekers include: transportation, work clothing or uniforms, tools and special equipment, emergency or infrequent child care.<sup>86</sup>

Caseworkers, community partners, municipalities, SSM, and MCCSS stakeholders believed that sequencing is very important and oftentimes people need LSSs before they can look for a job. For example, SSM stakeholders mentioned that they automatically return clients experiencing homelessness to SA. MLITSD representatives concur that the system does not adequately incentivize EO to direct resources to the provision of LSSs to help clients move towards employment, and that there is a need for more awareness of available supports.

Most clients concur that supports (e.g., housing, mental health, substance use, transportation, childcare) are an essential prerequisite to employment. Returned clients (i.e., clients that were referred but for various reasons did not receive services, for example, because they could not reach them, or because they were not ready for employment) feel it is important to be provided with transportation, childcare, and other resources that will assist them with getting back on their feet. EO only clients (i.e., self-directed clients or those who have only accessed EO services but not SA services) felt that the system could do more to:

- Let clients know about other government services (e.g., notify clients if they qualify for a free bus pass under a certain income, supports for newcomers, housing supports).
- Provide childcare supports that enable clients to take advantage of courses offered. Attending these programs without funding for childcare would cause financial stress.
- Provide assistance in finding job experience in Canada, even if it is volunteer experience.
- Link newcomer clients with other newcomers who have successfully integrated into skilled professions to provide mentorship.

## **Stakeholders Perceptions of Integrated Case Management and Service Delivery Transformation**

### ***Clear Roles and Responsibilities***

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<sup>85</sup> EST Funding Guidelines, July 12, 2020 Final.

<sup>86</sup> EST Funding Guidelines, July 12, 2020 Final.

Some respondents from MLITSD and MCCSS perceived that the two Ministries have “different world views,” which results in two systems that are not reinforcing each other. According to several representatives from MCCSS the different cultures and mandates across the two Ministries made it difficult to prioritize issues related to SA. Initially service providers perceived that the two Ministries were not well aligned, and communication was lacking. Some service providers indicate that their collaboration with MLITSD staff and understanding of the system is getting better.

Most respondents across stakeholder groups agreed that there has been a perceived hierarchical power struggle between the municipalities and the SSMs, resulting in municipalities not readily sharing client information. One SSM representative indicated that municipalities have not been ready or willing to collaborate. As a result, SSMs report that they have spent more time and effort on relationship management than expected. Further, this is impacting the number of clients being referred from SA to SSMs.

Under the new integrated system, SSM/Service Provider employment caseworkers are responsible for setting employment goals within clients’ EAPs, however, there is no need for SA caseworkers to identify concrete employment goals for their clients. While under the old system, LSSs were only provided by SA caseworkers, under the new system both SA and EO caseworkers are expected to address life stabilization needs of their clients (i.e., SA caseworkers are responsible for providing LSSs for SA clients while EO caseworkers are responsible for LSS referrals and service coordination for EO-only clients).

SSMs report having fantastic relationships with EO service providers, facilitated by frequent meetings to facilitate collaboration. Some community partner respondents indicated that they have difficulties communicating with SSMs, while others reported having good interactions. Those who reported strong relationships mentioned that SSMs had been responsive to inquiries, provided training on system updates, and had been receptive to suggestions. EO Service providers noted that, amongst other things, their role involves service planning and coordination including first and foremost placing clients in employment positions that are sustainable. They also feel their role is to refer clients to LSSs or other community programs, even though they believe that they will not meet their targets if they do so.

*"Yes, we refer clients to other community organizations for life stabilization and also host our own workshops; we are responsible for these clients. We integrate coaching, motivational components, but there's a difference between what we want to do and what we can do because of our limited capacity...Stream C clients need more support, specific supports. The way we are assigned targets, we need adequate support to help us provide these services to meet these clients' needs."* (Service Provider)

Service providers also reported that their role complements that of SSMs and they are working in close alignment to ensure that the needs of their clients are met.

*"They (the SSMs) are working very closely with us. Working with local specialized agencies, for example, CMHA has been good. At one point it felt like a competition but now they have the support role and we have the employment role and the relationship has improved greatly."* (Service Provider).

As with SSMs and service providers, ODSP and OW caseworkers report engaging in joint planning to support referrals between their offices and EO. They also reported completing the first part of the CAT with their clients to commence the process of steaming their clients to suitable services and ultimately, employment. That said, some caseworkers reported a disconnect in the focus on employment versus the provision of LSSs that will ensure that their clients are employment-ready. As a result, they feel that their role as provider of LSSs has changed since the implementation of EST given the funding shift to EO. There is a general impression that the role of EO is employment focused with little coordination or support for mental health. There is also an impression that there is less money available overall to support clients' life stabilization needs, and that clients are being sent back and forth through multiple doors with promises of support, that are not always met.

## 4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

While the objectives of the evaluation are to provide causal inferences on the extent to which participating in the EST prototype achieved its intended outcomes, several limitations in data design and estimation made the findings inconclusive. As a result, there are no conclusions and recommendations provided in this report.

## Appendix A: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
<p><b>Relevance:</b> The extent to which the Employment Services Transformation model is addressing service need and demand, is flexible and responsive to the needs of participants, and is appropriate to the priorities and needs of key stakeholders.</p>				
<p>1. To what extent is Employment Services Transformation relevant to the employment needs of clients?</p>	<p><b>Activities to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SSMs integrate Social Assistance recipients into Employment Services</li> <li>Employment service providers develop and implement client service planning and coordination</li> <li>Service providers meet participants' employment and training needs with appropriate resources and interventions, including life stabilization supports</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcomes to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clients have access to the services they need when they need them.</li> </ul>	Key stakeholders' perceptions on integration and the relevance of services to client needs	Key informant interviews/focus groups	MLTSD and MCCSS staff; SSMs; service providers; caseworkers; community partners; municipalities; clients

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
		Mapping of client employment and training needs Tracking of employment and training interventions delivered to clients	Administrative data	Administrative data analysis; Common Assessment Tool; Employment Action Plan; Action Plan
		Client perceptions and experiences with service delivery Client perceptions on relevance and whether needs were met through services and supports accessed	Surveys	Clients
2. To what extent is Employment Services Transformation relevant to the workforce needs of employers?	<b>Activities to be analyzed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SSMs assess and complement needs of local businesses</li> </ul>	Key stakeholders' perceptions on the relevance of services and services received	Key informant interviews/focus groups	MLTSD and MCCSS staff; SSMs; service providers; caseworkers; community partners; municipalities; employers
		Proportion of employers who express services align with their workplace needs	Surveys	Employers
3. To what extent does Employment Services Transformation align with local labour market needs and broader economic shifts?	<b>Outcomes to be analyzed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service delivery system addresses the needs of local community</li> <li>Service delivery is responsive to broader economic shifts</li> </ul>	Evidence of alignment of employment and skills training programs with current labour market needs	Document review Labour market analysis	MLTSD and MCCSS identified EST documents Grey literature

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
		Perceptions on the extent to which service delivery system meets local needs and is responsive to broader economic shifts	Key informant interviews/focus groups	MLTSD and MCCSS staff; SSMs; service providers; caseworkers; community partners; municipalities
<b>Reach: The extent to which Employment Services Transformation is delivering services to the intended populations.</b>				
4. To what extent is Employment Services Transformation delivering services to employers with workforce development needs?	<p><b>Activities to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with employers to provide them with supports to train and hire new staff</li> </ul>	Type of employers accessing employment services (e.g., size, industry/sector) Number of employers who provided job placements and job trials	Administrative data analysis	Employer data
			Surveys	Employers

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
5. To what extent is Employment Services Transformation delivering services to participants who have different or specialized service needs and pathways to employment?	<p><b>Outcomes to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry identified target client group are served, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Assistance clients</li> <li>General population of clients with disabilities</li> <li>Youth with higher support needs</li> <li>Indigenous clients</li> <li>Francophone clients</li> <li>Newcomer clients</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Type of clients accessing employment services (e.g., demographics, education levels, client needs, etc.)</p> <p>Percentage of clients served by client circumstances or segment (stream A, B, C), who face barriers to employment</p> <p>Client pathways (e.g., referral to other organizations, participation in various programs, employment and training interventions, etc.)</p>	Administrative data analysis	Administrative data analysis; Common Assessment Tool; Employment Action Plan; Action Plan
<b>Delivery: The extent to which Employment Services Transformation has been implemented and is being delivered in the intended manner.</b>				
6. To what extent was Employment Services Transformation implemented in ways consistent with its design?	<p><b>Activities to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry commissions SSMs on the basis of merit and performance</li> <li>SSMs oversee service design, planning, provision and outcomes</li> <li>SSMs and providers are incentivized to innovate and increase efficiency</li> <li>Ministry rewards SSMs to achieve provincially mandated outcomes for</li> </ul>	<p>Congruence between implementation and design of EST (e.g., commissioning approach, integration of service delivery, transformation of services)</p> <p>Instances of correction of duplication of benefit / service delivery</p> <p>Key stakeholders' perceptions</p>	<p>Key informant interviews/focus groups</p> <p>Document Review</p>	<p>MLTSD and MCCSS staff; SSMs; service providers; caseworkers; community partners, municipalities; clients</p> <p>MLTSD and MCCSS identified EST documents</p>

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
	clients through performance-based funding	on client pathways Perceptions on ministry and key stakeholder roles and responsibilities Instances of innovation in relation to incentives		
7. What are the key factors supporting or hindering the implementation of Employment Services Transformation?	<p><b>Outcomes to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service system is innovative and continuously improving</li> <li>Collaboration with employers, municipalities, community partners and other stakeholders with the goal to support local economic development priorities</li> </ul>	Key stakeholders' perceptions about factors supporting or hindering the delivery of services within the integrated system  Measures of collaboration with employers, municipalities, community partners and other stakeholders (e.g., partnership development, referral return rate, etc.)	Key informant interviews/focus groups	MLTSD and MCCSS staff; SSMs service providers; caseworkers; community partners; municipalities; employers
8. To what extent do policy and business processes support implementation of integrated case management and transition of service delivery?	<p><b>Activities to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action Plan</li> <li>Employment Action Plan</li> <li>Common Assessment Tool</li> <li>Performance Measurement Framework</li> <li>Incentive and Consequence Framework</li> <li>SSM Oversight of Service Providers</li> <li>IT Systems (EOIS-CaMS)</li> </ul>	Perceptions on the extent to which system processes support or hinder implementation of integrated case management and transformation of service delivery	Key informant interviews/focus groups	MLTSD and MCCSS staff; SSMs service providers; caseworkers; municipalities

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
<b>Effectiveness: The extent to which Employment Services Transformation is achieving or demonstrating progress towards the intended outcomes.</b>				
9. To what extent is Employment Services Transformation achieving its intended system-level outcomes?	<b>Outcomes to be analyzed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment services are effectively coordinated with other life stabilizing supports</li> <li>Integrated case management enables effective client transition between systems and ensures participation compliance</li> <li>Referrals to and from life stabilization supports and employment services are aligned</li> <li>SSMs ensure that service providers meet provincially mandated outcomes</li> <li>Ministry stewards a contestable and sustainable service system market</li> </ul>	Client pathways (i.e., referrals, streams, employment action plan items, outcomes) Referrals from and returns to SA Wait lists for clients accessing services (time) % of SSM's and service providers meeting intended outcomes (targets)	Administrative data analysis	Administrative data analysis; Common Assessment Tool; Employment Action Plan; Action Plan
		Key stakeholders' perceptions on referrals; integration; transformation of services; coordination of services (i.e., with life stabilizing supports); ability to meet provincially mandated outcomes and priorities; and system stewardship.	Key informant interviews/focus groups	MLTSD and MCCSS staff; SSMs; service providers; caseworkers; municipalities; clients

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
10. To what extent is Employment Services Transformation achieving its intended client-level outcomes?	<p><b>Outcomes to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients progress towards employment</li> <li>• Clients obtain quality, sustainable employment</li> <li>• Employment and training services help clients meet their employment goals</li> </ul>	<p>Congruence between employment action plan; action plan and actual client needs</p> <p>% of participants who complete pre-employment services (by client segment, demographics and needs)</p> <p>% of participants who attained specific outcomes related to the completed interventions (e.g., completed training/ work experience; credentials/ certification earned; in further training/education, life stabilization)</p> <p>% of OW and ODSP clients who exit SA</p> <p>% of OW and ODSP clients who return to SA after exiting for employment</p> <p>Employment outcomes by client segment, demographics and client needs</p> <p>Quality of employment (industry of employment, the number of jobs held simultaneously, union membership, and part- or full-time hours; wage)</p> <p>Hours worked/week &amp; # of weeks worked in relation to</p>	Administrative data analysis	Administrative data analysis; Common Assessment Tool; Employment Action Plan; Action Plan

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
		client goals (e.g., a PWD's goal might be 10 hours/ week) % of active EI clients exiting employment insurance because of attaining employment Reduction in average time on ODSP and OW		
			Surveys	Clients Matched Clients
		Clients' perceptions of application of services received Comparative analysis of EST catchment clients to matched group of ES clients in non-catchment areas	Surveys	Clients Matched Clients

Evaluation Questions	Activities and Outcomes to be Analyzed	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources of Data
11. To what extent is Employment Services Transformation achieving its intended employer-level outcomes?	<p><b>Outcomes to be analyzed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers have the necessary resources and supports to employ individuals, including client target groups identified by the ministry</li> <li>Employers hire from the pool of Employment Ontario (as one of the sources) clients</li> <li>Employers increasingly hire and retain individuals, including client target groups identified by the ministry</li> <li>Employers are connected to the right workers with the right skills</li> </ul>	<p>% of employers who report increased access to talent through access of Employment Ontario client pool</p> <p>% of employers satisfied with the financial incentives and other resources for employing individuals, including client target groups identified by the ministry</p> <p>% of employers participating in job placements, who felt that their skill needs were met</p> <p>Employers' satisfaction with services</p> <p>Employers reporting tangible benefits (e.g., increased productivity, more orders)</p> <p>% of clients hired and retained by employers over a period of time (such as 12 months after exit)</p>	<p>Administrative data analysis</p> <p>Surveys</p>	<p>Employer data</p> <p>Employers</p>