

Evaluation Report:

The New Canadians Employment Initiative Program

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Acronyms

COIN	—	Community Opportunity & Innovation Network
LFA	—	Logical Framework Analysis
NCC	—	New Canadians Centre
NCEI	—	New Canadians Employment Initiative
OTF	—	Ontario Trillium Foundation
RBM	—	Results Based Management
TCCBE	—	Trent Centre for Community Based Education
NCEI	—	New Canadian Employment Initiative

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the success and relevance of the New Canadians Employment Initiative (NCEI) program in relation to its objectives, and assess whether the needs expressed by clients that participated in the program have been met. We produced this report based on a review of the program documents (such as funding guidelines, project proposal, and reports), interview with program participants, surveys via questionnaires, and focus group discussions. Our study reveals some impressive outcomes as well as critical concerns that are fundamental to some policy recommendations for the overall improvement of the program. Below are our key findings and recommendations.

Key Findings:

- A. Participants in the NCEI program acquired Skills that are applicable in the Canadian labor market.
- B. All participants in the program gained knowledge about cross-cultural and interpersonal communication for successful integration in the Canadian labor market.
- C. Participants acquired the skills for resume/cover letter preparation and access to sources of information on employment within and outside the Peterborough community.
- D. The program is successful in terms of its ability to create an enabling environment for new immigrants to acquire preliminary work experience as well as gain some employability skills; these experiences and skills are relevant to the needs of new immigrants.
- E. Some technical improvements in management and training are required in order to create more opportunities for new immigrants to integrate effectively in the labor market.

Recommendations

Our recommendations draw from the overall assessment of the program. We took cognizance of participants' appraisals of the program—what they considered as its successes and pitfalls—and their suggestions for ways of improving the program. In addition, recognizing the unintended outcomes of the program enabled us to make possible recommendations that would be useful to achieving the overall objectives of the program in the future. Below is a list of our recommendations.

- A. There should be workshops on *cross-cultural communications in the workplace*, as that would give all NCEI participants the necessary orientations for effective functioning in their placement environments.
- B. The NCCP should ensure that all participants receive introductory computer training to enable them develop some computer skills prior to their placement assignments.
- C. There should be opportunities for professional immigrants to acquaint themselves with computer software and applications that relates with their professions, as that would give them competitive skills in the job market.
- D. There should be renewed efforts to deploy participants in job placements that relate to their professions or career goals.
- E. The placement environments should be formal, as that would enable participants to experience the formalities of an actual working environment.

1.0 Description and Purpose of Evaluation

The purpose of this project is to assess the New Canadians Employment Initiative (NCEI) program offered by the New Canadian Center Peterborough (NCCP). Our research aims to achieve two things: First, it seeks to determine the success and relevance of the NCEI program in relation to its objectives. Secondly, it seeks to determine whether the needs expressed by clients of the NCEI program have been met. Central to this study is the question of whether or not the NCEI is addressing the issues of employment for its clients.

The NCCP contacted the Trent Centre for Community Based Education (TCCBE) requesting an evaluation of the NCEI program. We conducted this evaluation at the request of the TCCBE based on the terms of reference given by the NCCP. This report is intended to be primarily useful for decision-making by the board of directors of the NCCP and the donor—the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). Other secondary users are the Trent Centre for Community Based Education (TCCBE) and the department of International Development Studies at Trent University (See figure 1.0). While we acknowledge the importance of the OTF in the NCEI program, we omitted the organization in the organogram on reason that we are not obligated to them as we are to the NCCP and other secondary users of this report.

Even though we operate as summative evaluators, we assume that it is the responsibility of the NCCP to make this report available to the funding agency. Being a summative evaluation, our findings reflect both the intended and unintended outcomes of the program, with possible recommendations that the host organization will find useful for improving the program.

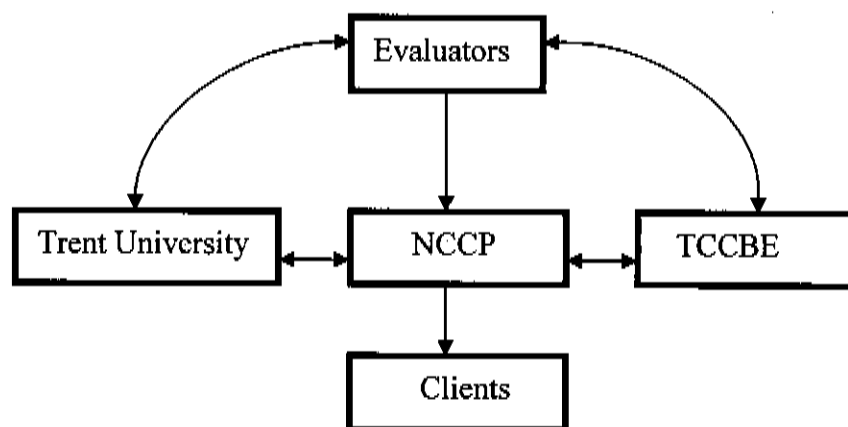
NCEI EVALUATION ORGANOGRAM

Figure 1.0

1.1 The New Canadians Centre Peterborough

The NCCP is a community-based organization established in 1979 to provide immigration and settlements services to new immigrants resident in Peterborough and its surrounding area. The core mandates of the NCCP are:¹

1. To support immigrants and refugees and ease the process of adjusting to a new life in Canada;
2. To provide Staff and facilities for settlement services required by new Canadians;
3. To act and advocate as resource partner for new Canadians;
4. To expand and adjust services to evolving needs of new Canadians and the community by providing training to Board Members, Staff, Volunteers, Community groups and Employers;
5. To promote acceptance of new Canadians through education and awareness projects;
6. To increase the involvement of new Canadians as active participants in determining the direction of the agency;
7. Fundraising in order to broaden and improve the quality of community services to new Canadians.

Based on its mandates, the NCCP has implemented various programs aimed at providing key services to the immigrant community in Peterborough. These programs, of which the NCEI is the most recent, are dependent on donor funding for their operations. The table below (figure 2.0) shows the breakdown of the main donors and the NCCP programs they support.²

¹ Information about the mandate of NCCP is available at www.NCCPeterborough.ca/mandate.html

² See <http://www.NCCPeterborough.ca/Funders.html>

Donor Organization	Program Funded
Citizenship and Immigrations Canada (CIC)	1) Immigration Settlements Adjustment Program 2) Host program. 3) LINC Assessment Centre
Service Canada/Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)	1) Employment Assistance Service (EAS) for foreign trained professionals 2) Summer career placement program
Industry Canada	1) Community Access projects c/o Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN).
Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)	1) New Canadians Employment initiative
Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)	1) New comer settlement program 2) Summer employment program
United Way of Peterborough and District	1) Core settlement services

³Figure 2.0

A cursory review of the NCCP mandate and the type of programs funded by its donors indicates that employment and training are key components of the services provided by the organization. This is important because Canada's immigration system attracts highly skilled labor from around the world, yet immigrants face a myriad of problems on arrival in Canada.

The most pressing issue for immigrants is their inability to integrate in the Canadian job market. For highly skilled immigrants, the challenge upon arrival into the country is the realization that there is non-recognition of foreign credentials by both employers as well as licensing bodies. Secondly, Canadian employers demand for local experience has proven to be a major block towards immigrants gaining employment. According to Reitz (2001), these barriers create a situation of skills under-utilization, with immigrants having to struggle to attain jobs that are lower than their training levels.⁴

According to the Conference Board of Canada, immigrants constitute three quarters of an estimated 540,000 unemployed and underemployed Canadians. In terms of economic output, the Conference Board estimates that hundreds of thousands of

³ New Canadian Center 2006-2007 Annual Report

⁴ Reitz, 2001

immigrants could earn between \$8,000 to \$12,000 more per year if there was improved recognition of foreign training and credentials.⁵

Immigrants who settle in Peterborough and its surrounding areas find themselves facing the pressures of unemployment for the reasons stated above. The NCCP thus introduced the NCEI program as a response to the needs of immigrants who face problems of unemployment due to lack of Canadian work experience.

⁵ Finlayson, 2003, pp.6-7

2.0 Background Information and Discussion

2.1 The New Canadian Employment Initiative (NCEI)

Program Goals

The NCEI program was initiated with the motive to organize work placements for training and hands on experience for immigrants, ensuring that new Canadians gain relevant work experience that most employers require as a pre-requisite for employment.

The NCEI is a program that offers four months of “free work placement training” to clients of the NCC.⁶ The pilot project began in 2006, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) in conjunction with the NCCP and the Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN). It is targeted at different categories of new immigrants resident in the Peterborough area, such as “permanent residents, convention refugees, live in caregivers and others approved in principles.”⁷

At the community level, the program aims to assist new immigrants to integrate in the community workplace, thus enhancing their capacity to be productive members of society. At the national level, it is responsive to the human capital drive required for building a strong domestic economy. This is why the underutilization of immigrant labor has been central to the concerns of immigrants. This implies that even though the program is based in Peterborough its relevance at the national level cannot be underestimated.

Funding Rationale

In order for the program to qualify for funding, the OTF set out the following objectives for the program:

1. 60 New Canadians were to participate in the program
2. 24 Clients were to be placed in internships

⁶ See NCEI Program Information at <http://www.NCCPeterborough.ca/NCEI%20Applicant%20Information%20Sheet.pdf>

⁷ Ibid

3. 24 Clients were to be matched with job mentors.
4. 20% Of the internships should be from outside Peterborough
5. 12-15 Clients have to find jobs within 6 months of completing the internship
6. Gender Parity in the number of participants.

A progress report written in June 2007 assessing the set targets came to the following conclusions:⁸

1. As of June 1st 2007, thirty one out of the expected sixty participants had taken part in the program. The shortfall was attributed to the timing of the program i.e. during the summer there were less clients.
2. 17 Out of the expected 24 clients obtained internships. The shortfall in numbers was attributed to the fact that only one set of clients had finished the training, and once the second and third set completed their training then the number increased to 26.
3. 8 Clients had been matched with job mentors out of the expected 24. According to the progress report, as of June 1st only 8 clients had completed the entire program, and therefore the mentorship rate was at 100%.
4. Only 5% of the expected 20% of internships were from outside Peterborough while 2 out of 9 of new placements were outside Peterborough.
5. 4 clients gained employment within 6 months of completing the program out of the expected 12-15 clients. Taking into consideration that only 8 clients had completed training at this stage, the employment rate was at an impressive 50%.
A further increase in the percentage is noted considering that 2 clients opted to pursue further education and start their own projects respectively.

Apart from the funder-defined objectives, the NCEI also set out further objectives for the program to achieve. These goals were based on the needs of the clients in relation to employment barriers. The further defined goals were:

1. To provide local work reference and work experience

⁸ NCEI progress report June 2007

2. To provide clients with networking opportunities

2.2 Program Clients

Prospective clients must fulfill the following set of criteria in order to participate in the NCEI:⁹

1. Attend a maximum of 15 hours of class if enrolled in an institution of learning.
2. Must be unemployed
3. Must be Permanent residents or recent Canadian immigrants
4. Must be internationally trained
5. Have to be available for the job-training workshop and the 16 weeks work placement.

Even when prospective clients fulfilled the above set of criteria, there was a further process of elimination based on an interview process to select the most suitable clients for the program. Candidates faced eliminated on the following grounds:¹⁰

1. If they were already employed
2. If their language skills were insufficient, i.e. the grasp of English was too low for them to be able to participate in the program. Individuals eliminated for this reason were however encouraged to reapply in future.
3. If an applicant was educated in Canada, and had previous work experience in the country, they were eliminated as they are seen to be highly employable
4. In some cases, the placement employer would decide that a particular participant was not suitable for the position.

⁹ NCEI Program files

¹⁰ Ibid

The NCEI program is structured into two phases as shown in the table below:

Phase 1 (4 weeks)	Phase 2 (16 weeks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Program Promotion ❖ Participant recruitment ❖ Capacity skills and mapping ❖ Needs Assessment ❖ Employment action planning ❖ Employability skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Internships ❖ On-going job development ❖ Job mentorship

¹¹Fig 2.1

2.3 Work Placements

The NCEI structure operates with the provision of placement and training opportunities available through four training enterprises as outlined below:

Training Enterprise	Skills Match
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Food service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Food handling and Preparation ➤ Customer service ➤ Retail merchandising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Business Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Accounting ➤ Accounts payable and receivable ➤ Payroll administration ➤ Marketing and promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Human Resource Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working with diversity ➤ Social work ➤ Training with ESL learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Computer software and hardware ➤ Repairs ➤ Web design ➤ Work portals ➤ Language labs ➤ Online translation

¹²Fig 2.2

¹¹ NCEI program administration files

¹² Ibid

2.4 COIN Partnership

As a means of providing work placements in the above training enterprises, NCC collaborates with COIN, which runs sustainable community enterprises. COIN's sustainable enterprises are specifically geared to help individuals who are facing employment barriers. The NCEI work placements therefore come from the following specific COIN enterprises:

2.4.1 COIN Food Services

COIN Food Services is comprised of two training enterprises:

I. World 2 Go Catering Training

The World 2 Go Catering initiative, which started in 1996, was the beginning of COIN's endeavor to deliver food services training skills to those with employment barriers. Working in a kitchen with experienced trainers, trainees learn how to prepare lunch items such as sandwiches, cheese trays, cookies, desserts and soups as well as hot items such as lasagna and quiches.

II. Natural Blends Café Training

After the success of World 2 Go Foods, the Natural Blend Café was opened in the Peterborough Public Library in 2001 to enhance the customer relations skills of individuals with intellectual challenges as well as others facing various employment barriers. Trainees learn how to use a cash register, serve food to customers, interact with customers by taking their orders, and all other aspects of the daily operation of a café. All training is done at the Natural Blends Café site, which is located in the Peterborough Public Library. Trainees are introduced to a customer service environment to learn how

to properly interact with customers and gain retail food industry experience and skills. Interns may have the option of training in the kitchen with World2Go Foods to gain skills and knowledge of the catering industry.

TEKdesk

Tekdesk provides a broad range of technology support and services to Ontario public libraries and non-profit organizations. The program was initiated in 2002 as a COIN social enterprise with the Peterborough Public library. The program offers lessons through eLearning as well as managing language and technology labs.

Work Placement Administration

The work placements in the NCEI are made available at the places run by COIN. The positions are then posted and applications are made, with the NCC committee matching people with the available placements. We noted that the matching process was not rigid with skills not necessarily used as core criteria. Applicants then have to undertake an interview process with the placement managers in the various enterprises, hence the rejection of some applicants who were nevertheless encouraged to reapply in the future.

Successful applicants undertake a 16 week work placement with an hourly wage of \$10.00 working 10 hours a week. During the work placements, the participants were under the supervision of the placement managers who were in charge of assigning them various tasks and helping them out with any arising issues. A meeting is held at the mid-point of the program between the clients and the NCC where participants are asked about the program's effectiveness.

Wage payment was possible due to the funding by the OTF who provided funding for one year only. The new funders i.e. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) agreed to fund the program on condition that wages are no longer paid. As a result, the program is currently undergoing a change of format, with emphasis placed on the experience gained and the client's needs.

Once clients completed the internship period, the NCC provided support in assisting the clients to gain employment. This is accomplished through the attachment of clients with job counselors within the NCC as well as linking clients with external agencies such as Job Connect. Clients are given useful advice and assistance on resume preparations, writing of cover letters as well as participating in mock interviews.

3.0 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was carried out in conformity with the project agreement reached between the evaluators, NCCP, TCCBE, and Trent University. It complies with the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) guidelines for research on human subjects, contained in the instructions issued by the ethics committee of the International Development Studies (IDS) department at Trent University.

We consulted the program documents in order to assist in the design of our questionnaire and interview questions. These documents provided the background information about the program, which was fundamental to the success of the focus group meeting. The NCC staff offered tremendous support in making the relevant documents and information available to us. Information from the program documents enabled us to test for the validity and reliability of our data in relation to its appropriateness to the program outcomes.

Two major constraints to this evaluation were *communication* with clients and *time*. It was difficult establishing early communication with clients, which prompted us to seek the assistance of the host organization in distributing the questionnaires to clients and organizing them for a focus group discussion. While the staff of the NCCP made tremendous effort at convening the first focus group meeting between the evaluators and clients, the meeting could not hold due to inclement weather. Time was lost in the process especially that the NCC requested more time to communicate with the clients before reconvening the meeting. The meeting finally reconvened after five days from the initial cancellation date. These constraints hindered the possibility for the evaluation to progress in accordance with the initial schedule due to non-availability of data.

3.1 Design of the Evaluation

The design of our evaluation conformed to a Results-Based Management (RBM) framework. Our choice of RBM reflects contemporary policy challenges in program evaluation caused by the shift from the Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) approach to RBM. However, our methodological stance underlies the rationale that the NCEI program was initiated to address the issue of lack of Canadian work experience for

immigrants, which was the fundamental need expressed by clients during our study. The RBM framework enabled us to match the objectives of the program with its intended outcomes as well as assess the impact of the resources committed into the program.

It was difficult using the LFA approach in assessing the needs expressed by the NCEI clients for obvious reasons. For instance, our study revealed that some of the NCEI clients trained in foreign professions such as Islamic law, which is inapplicable within the Canadian legal jurisdiction and could potentially affect their prospects for employment in such regulated professions. Nevertheless, the RBM framework highlighted the changes that occurred during the program, such as the development of human capital skills and capacity building by clients, which are required for integration in the Canadian labor market. It also brought to light findings such as the adaptation of clients to the Canadian work environment. This however, does not imply that NCEI clients who immigrated to Canada with Islamic law degrees will qualify as legal practitioners in Canada; it only highlight the fact that such clients have gained the tools to perform tasks relating to legal research, which is a way of understanding legal matters in Canada and adapting to the Canadian work environment. In light of this, it was imperative to adopt an RBM framework in analyzing the NCEI program, as that allowed for an assessment of the prospects and shortcomings of this methodological approach.

3.1.1 Results-Based Management (RBM)

The Treasury Board of Canada defines Results-Based Management as “a life-cycle approach to management that integrates strategy, people, resources, processes and measurements to improve decision-making, transparency, and accountability”.¹³ “The approach focuses on achieving outcomes, implementing performance measurement, learning and changing, and reporting performance”¹⁴. According to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the aim of RBM is to achieve results through the improvement of “program and management effectiveness and accountability”¹⁵.

¹³ Notes on RBM are available at the Treasury Board of Canada online documents. See http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/rbm-gar_e.asp

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ See UNFPA at <http://www.unfpa.org/results/>

These broad definitions can be summarized into a simple definition of RBM as the effective management of resources in order to achieve targeted results.

The ADB broadens our understanding of the RBM by conceptualizing the approach through an all-encompassing four-dimensional analysis, namely:¹⁶

- “Specified results that are measurable, monitorable and relevant;
- Resources that are adequate for achieving the targeted results;
- Organizational arrangements that ensure authority and responsibilities are aligned with results and resources; and
- Processes for planning, monitoring, communicating and resource release that enable the organization to convert resources into the desired results.”

3.1.2 The RBM Framework

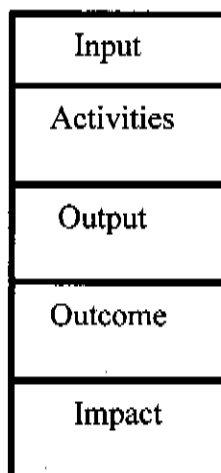


Figure 3.0

Below, we indicate a detailed analysis of the RBM framework and its implications for the evaluation of the NCEI program.

¹⁶ The Four Dimensions of RBM are given by the ADB and are available at <http://www.adb.org/projects/rbm/about.asp>

1. Input:

Input is the first level of the RBM framework and is used to define the resources put into a program. In the case of the NCEI, the input is the material resources such as the funding by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the human resources that coordinated the program.

2. Activities

Activities refer to the programmatic manner in which the inputs are used. The following were the various activities governing the NCEI program.

- i. Employability Preparation
- ii. Capacity and Skill mapping
- iii. Work placement assessment and application
- iv. Support Group and Networking
- v. Employability readiness
- vi. Work placement
- vii. Follow up.

3. Output

Output is a direct consequence of the activities. It is a cause and effect reaction. Below are the outputs that occurred as the direct result of the program activities.

- i. Capacity building
- ii. Matching specific skills with relevant placement
- iii. Clients made contacts for future employment
- iv. Hands on experience
- v. Employment Counseling
- vi. Clients developed on-the-job confidence

4. Outcome

In the RBM framework, outcome refers to an indicator of the success of the program. The following are the outcomes of the NCEI program.

- i. Skill acquisition
- ii. Cultural interaction in the workplace

- iii. Resume/cover letter preparation/ access to sources of employment information

5. Impact

Impact is the desired long-term change that is experienced as a result of the program. In the RBM framework, the impacts are linked to the program's goals and objectives. Based on the project goals and the resources invested to promote the various activities and outcomes of the program, two impacts occurred as listed below. These impacts have both long term and short-term effects on participants of the program.

- i. Increased employability
- ii. Adaptation to the Canadian work environment

A breakdown of the various definitions of the RBM framework is derived from the work of Cummings (1997).

3.1.3 Limitations of the RBM Approach

Adopting an RBM framework presented critical challenges such as its inability to accommodate the program's unintended outcomes. This observation reveals some practical challenges that evaluators often confront—especially when evaluating programs that seek to access outcomes based on the critical needs expressed by the participants of a program—and how they struggle against these challenges. While some of the needs expressed by the NCEI participants drew on logical conclusions that could well fit within an LFA evaluation design, the RBM suffered some limitations. However, we overcame these shortcomings by extending the scope of the RBM framework to accommodate some critical concerns observed during the study.

Within the scope of our study, we observed that it is impossible to rely solely on the RBM in drawing conclusions on whether or not the NCEI program addressed its intended goals and the needs of clients, given its limitations. While the unintended outcomes are critical to the quality of our inquiry, it was possible to justify our use of RBM because it enabled us to match program outcomes with their performance indicators and the overall program goals.

3.2 Background Research

Document Review

The NCC forwarded the NCEI program file for the evaluator's review. The file included the progress report to the OTF dated June 01, 2007, and other relevant documents about the history of the program and performance indicators. The NCC staff also provided a list of 10 participants. The list of participants constitutes our primary source of data for the evaluation.

A review of the NCEI program documents indicates that the program involves two phases. The first phase involves program promotion, participant recruitment, HR capacity mapping and inventory of the client's skills, needs assessment, employment action planning, and employability skills training. The second phase involves internships, ongoing job development, and job mentoring. We named these two phases as the preliminary phase and the placement phase.

Outcome Measuring Instruments

The three instruments used in measuring the outcome of the evaluation are questionnaires, focus group discussion, and interviews.¹⁷ The questionnaire was designed to obtain some useful insights into the various stages of the program. We included the focus group meeting in order to create a forum for interaction, where the clients could individually share their experiences about the program. Interviews gave us the opportunity to engage the clients in one-on-one discussion and enabled us to probe into some questions that needed further elaboration.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection for this evaluation was designed to access information from the

¹⁷ See Appendixes 1 and 2 for samples of questionnaire and interview questions.

two stages of the NCEI program through document review, a preliminary survey via questionnaires, focus group discussion and interviews. The evaluators ensured that this evaluation is not simply about identifying specific issues and their prevalence, but also learning what is important about these issues from the perspective of those being affected by the program. Because of the few clients that participated in the NCEI program, the evaluators had the leeway to generate as much data as was necessary for decision-making through qualitative inquiry.

Preliminary Survey

Data collection began with the design of surveys via questionnaires by the two evaluators, followed by the dissemination of the questionnaires to the 9 clients involved in the program. The initial schedule for data collection involved two stages: We intended to release questionnaires to participants and follow up with interviews based on the responses from the surveys. However, we altered the initial schedule due to technicalities arising from a breakdown in communication with the clients. Renewed efforts at data collection involved some adjustments to the initial schedule with the inclusion of a focus group meeting. These technicalities and readjustments made it impossible to meet the timeline for our evaluation exercise.

The questionnaire contained 19 questions structured to test different aspects of the participants' experience about the program. We tested the clients' behaviors and actions concerning job search in Canada, which enabled us to obtain information on their employment and training backgrounds prior to enrolment in the NCEI program. These questions closely followed a set of other questions that sought to inquire about the opinions of clients concerning various aspects of the program. We structured the next sets of questions to provide information about the perceptions of clients concerning the program. We were able to understand the feelings of clients and the emotional responses to their experiences of the program. Finally, we structured the last sets of questions in a way that enabled us to generate data about the knowledge of clients concerning their experiences and overall impression of the program. These questions gave us a clue to the valuable experiences gained by the clients during the program. Through the preliminary

survey, we were able to assess the usefulness of the preliminary phase of the NCEI program in preparing the clients for their transition to the next phase of the placement program.

Focus Group Meeting

Three out of nine clients participated in the focus group meeting. These clients had worked together, performed similar assignments, or gone through similar experiences during the placement phase of the program. The central discussion in the meeting aimed to assess the two stages of the program, and drew extensively on the questionnaire. Thus, it was a valuable source of generating original data from clients, and an opportunity to validate the results of our questionnaire.

The focus group meeting brought to light the unintended outcomes of the program and made possible some of the criticisms that bear on the limitations of strictly adhering to an RBM evaluation approach. This is important because it set the foundation for the framing of our interview questions, which enabled us to probe into some of the reasons for the unintended outcomes and make recommendations where necessary.

Interviews

We interviewed 4 out of 9 participants. During the interview process, we sought to understand the initial motivations for the clients' involvement in the program and their expectations. This led to probing into the skills developed during the two stages of the program, the aspects of the program that were appealing or unappealing, and how the program could be improved. Some of the questions required participants to appraise their overall experiences of the program, which was important in understanding the cultural nuances of the work placement environment, and how that translated into both the intended and unintended outcomes of the program.

Overall, the interview was fundamental to the collection of qualitative data that premised on the effects of the NCEI program. It brought to light the question of whether the NCEI program addressed the needs expressed by clients, and gave us the opportunity

to validate whether the program prepared the participants for integration in the labor market or if it met their expectations.

We adopted the standardized open-ended interview using a set of 10 questions administered in a sequential manner.¹⁸ This system enabled us to obtain systematic data from respondents, as all participants experienced the same set of questions. This was particularly important because it simplified the process of data analysis. However, while some of the questions created room for probing, it was possible for both evaluators to exercise some flexibility in obtaining relevant data from respondents, but at the same time minimizing interviewer effects.

3.4 Implementation Measures

The survey questions were designed in very simplistic language. This enabled some clients to make personal comments on certain questions.

The focus group was formal and interactive. It lasted for two hours and was moderated by the evaluators. Clients were given the opportunity to express themselves freely and ask questions at anytime during the meeting.

The interviews took place under formal settings and relaxed environments that promoted interaction between the evaluators and the clients.

¹⁸ See appendix 2 for interview questions.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Preliminary Survey Findings

1. Data obtained from the questionnaire reveal that the NCC played a prominent role in ensuring the successful outcome of the program.
2. Ninety percent of the respondents indicated that they were university/college graduates, while the remaining ten percent indicated they were high school graduates (See figure 4.0).
3. Fifty six percent of the respondents indicated that they had attempted to gain employment in the country before taking part in the program, while forty-four percent did not attempt to gain employment prior to enrolment in the program (See figure 5.0).
4. One hundred percent of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the initial interview with the NCC; the reason is that it prepared them for the subsequent interview with the placement manager, by enabling them to understand how they might present their skills.¹⁹
5. Fifty five percent of the respondents stated that the training process gave them new skills that they did not previously possess; Forty-five percent indicated that the skills they gained were complementary to previous skills (See figure 6.0).
6. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents found the references given by their placement managers helpful in them gaining employment after completion of the program; eleven percent of the respondents did not find the references helpful (see figure 7.0).
7. Thirty-three percent of the respondents indicated that they gained employment within 3 months after completion of the program, thirty-three percent within 3-7 months, eleven percent over twelve months, and twenty-two percent did not gain employment after completing the program (see figure 8.0).

¹⁹ We obtained this data based on the responses to questions 6 and 7 in the questionnaire, which aimed to measure the overall effectiveness of the interview process.

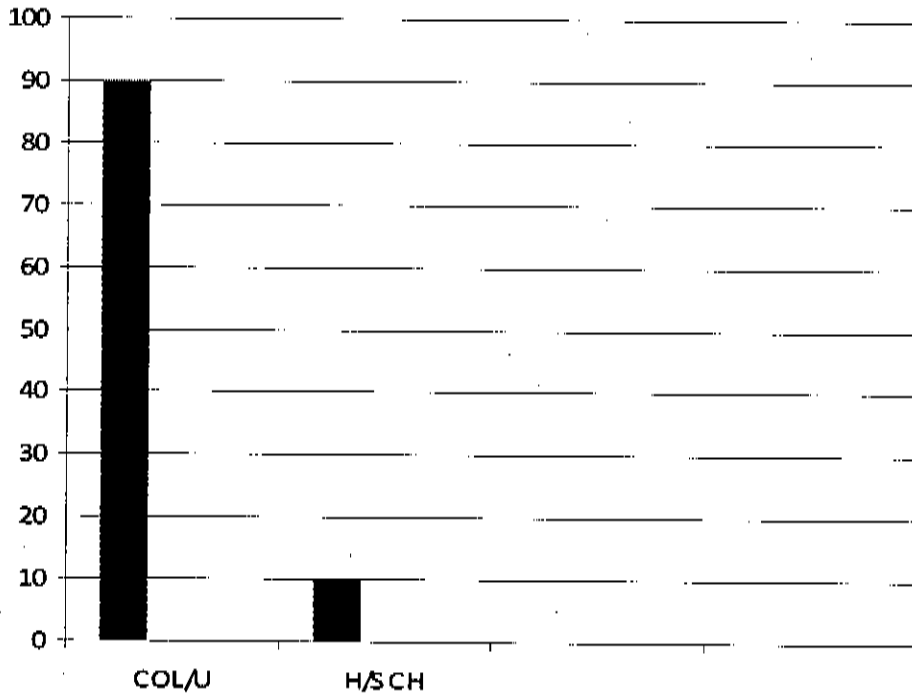


Figure 4.0: Educational Profiles of Clients showing University/College graduates versus High School graduates (See question 3 in the questionnaire)

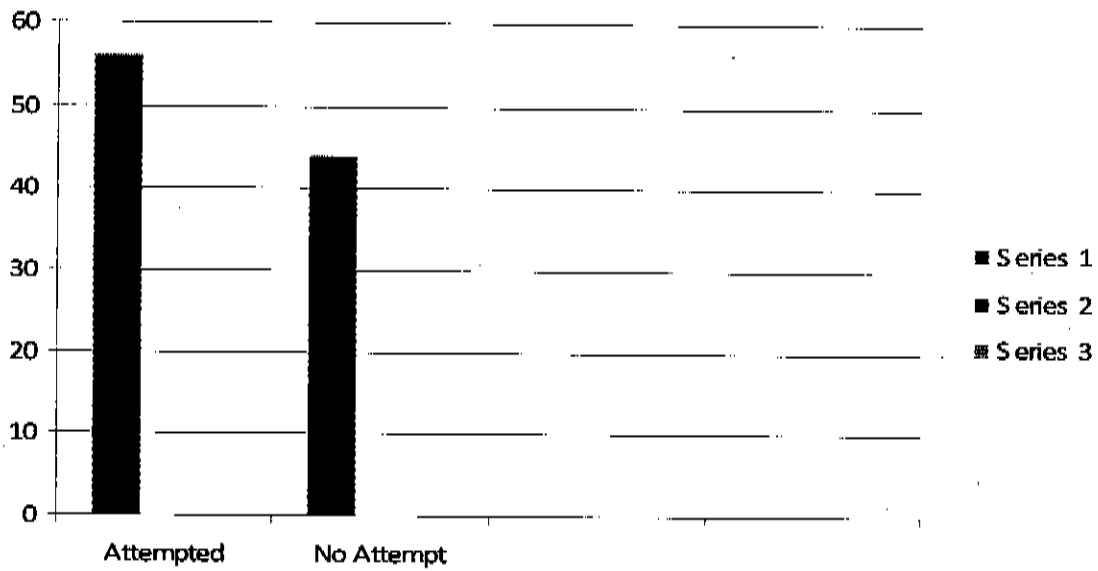


Figure 5.0: Employment Attempt Prior to Participation in the NCEI Program. (See question 4 in the questionnaire)

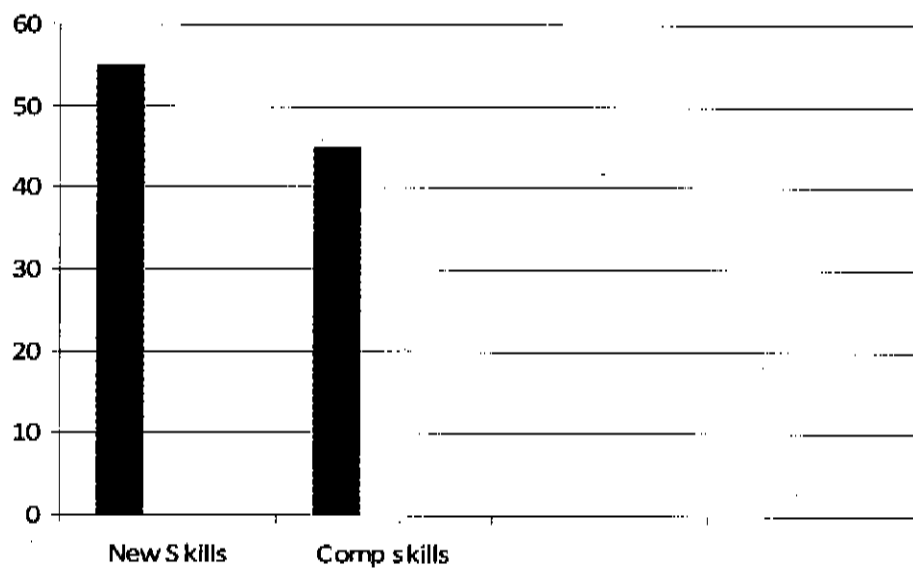


Figure 6.0: Percentage of Clients that gained *New* and *Complementary Skills* during the Program (See question 13 in the questionnaire)

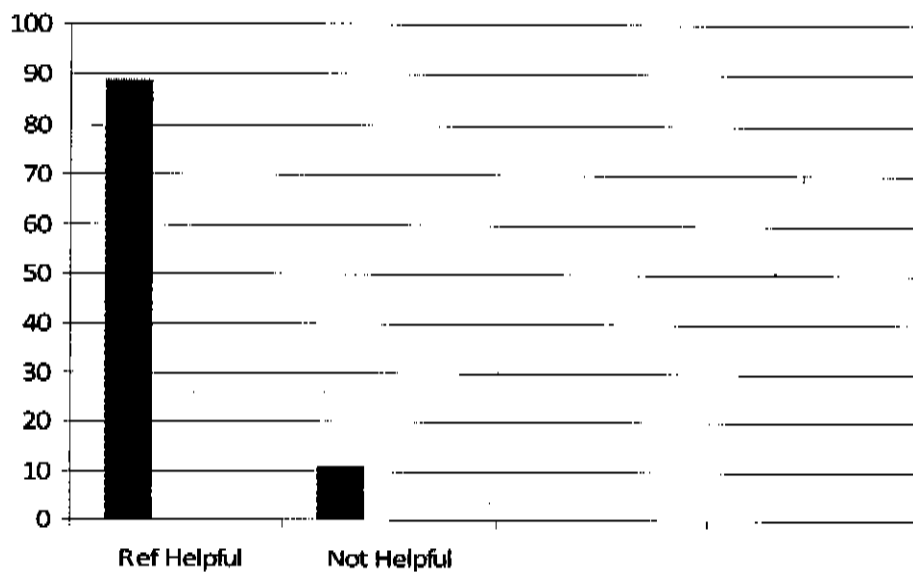


Figure 7.0: Percentage of Clients who found their references helpful and unhelpful for employment after the program. (See question 19 in the questionnaire)

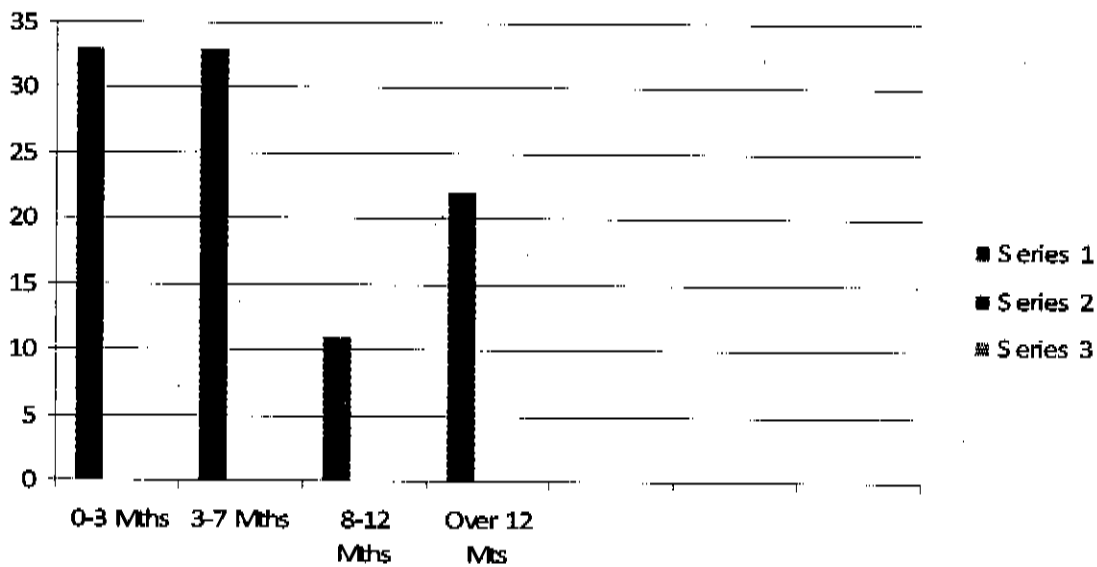


Figure 8.0: Time taken by Clients to gain employment after completion of the program (See question 18 in the questionnaire)

4.2 Findings from the Focus Group Discussion

On-the-job Confidence

Findings from the focus group meeting reveal that the work placement created an atmosphere for clients to work with minimal supervision. This was instrumental to clients gaining on-the-job confidence. For instance, one client noted that:

“I learnt a lot because we had a supervisor who assigned roles to us and was checking our progress. I was able to do independent marketing research by visiting organizations and collecting information”.

Development of Research Skills

When asked to describe some of the skills they gained during the program, some clients stated that they developed research skills in various areas. One client noted that through conducting research, she gained a wider knowledge of legal issues in Canada

such as gender rights, employment laws and human rights. Another client noted that she was able to explore her research skills in the marketing area.

Teamwork

Clients acknowledged the importance of teamwork during the work placement. They admitted that teamwork was necessary for them since they do not possess any previous work experience in Canada, and it afforded them the opportunity to learn from people who already possessed some experiences. As one of them remarked:

“Teamwork is important because you can learn from people who have more experience”.

Networking

Study from the focus group reveals that the placement environment is favorable for networking. Clients agreed that the program was a valuable experience for networking and making the necessary contacts for future employment opportunities; that networking was integral to their overall experiences during the placement.

4.3 Findings from the Interview

Findings from the interview reveal both successes and challenges of the program. On the one hand, the successes bear on the fact that the program enabled clients to gain divergent skills as well as adapt to the Canadian working environment. On the other hand, some clients felt that the program did not meet their expectations, because of their deployment to work placements that did not align with their interests. This is a potential challenge of the program, as these clients prefer to be deployed in areas that connect with their career goals. However, all participants in the program either learnt new skills or adapted to an existing set of skills that are relevant in the Canadian labor market. As one client noted:

“During the program, I learnt how to research information on the internet; I also learnt typing skills, report writing,

and acquired more knowledge about word document”.

These skills are particularly important because many clients admitted that they did not previously possess computer skills, but realized that they cannot function in the Canadian labor market without the knowledge of computer.

Many clients indicated that the program gave them access to sources of employment information and the opportunity to learn about interviewing, resume preparation, and cover letter. They found these skills to be important and beneficial in their subsequent search for employment opportunities. One person stated that:

“It was a good chance to learn about interview and the importance of resume and cover letter”.

4.4 Unintended Outcomes

Some of the results of our findings unfolded as unintended outcomes of the program. Although some clients had earlier on expressed some of these challenges during the focus group meeting, we were able to dig deeper into their implications for the program’s success during the interview process. However, given our methodological approach to the evaluation, it is difficult to fix these challenges within the RBM framework. Hence, it becomes imperative that we highlight these challenges as they also reveal some of the unintended successful outcomes of the program that could serve as reference point for subsequent evaluations.

Awareness

The program increased the awareness of clients about their rights as workers. By performing tasks such as filling of time sheets and gender-based research, some clients expressed their awareness of labor and gender rights. One client summed it up by saying:

“I didn’t know that women had these many rights”.

Specialized Computer Training

A major concern expressed by clients was the lack of specialized computer training. The use of computer technology in the workplace implies that clients without the necessary computer skills find themselves at a disadvantage compared to others with these skills. As one client noted:

“We did not have the computer skills to compete with other Canadians”.

Lack of specialized training also affected the completion of tasks during the work placement, especially that some jobs required multi-tasking. As one client put it:

“It is difficult multitasking without the necessary computer skills”.

4.5 Analysis of Evaluation Findings

4.5.1 Skill Acquisition

A look at the survey responses to questions that dealt with the issue of skills displayed two issues. One is the agreement by the clients that the program was indeed crucial in teaching them new skills that they did not previously possess. Question 13 of the survey particularly tackled the need for skills acquisition in the work placement program. The data we obtained from clients indicates that although the skills they gained through the training program were important, they were still lacking; majority of the clients required extra skills to complement skills they already possessed.

Based on the above questionnaire data, the interview session aimed to find out specifically what skills the clients learnt as well as the ones they felt were missing from the program. Questions 2 and 4 of the interview proved particularly helpful with the clients outlining their views on the issue of skill acquisition. A pattern developed in the answering of question 2, with different clients mentioning that they acquired relevant skills in their respective work placements.

Clients used question 4 of the interview to highlight on the issue of skill acquisition. While clients were unanimous in their agreement that they have indeed gained new skills, the consensus within the groups was that there were certain skill sets

that were lacking in the NCEI work placement program. Upon further probing in the interview process, the answering patterns showed that there was a general lack of knowledge in the usage of specialized computer software and bookkeeping. This is a concern that the clients also brought up in the focus group meeting, where they expressed their hindrances in applying for vacant positions because of this handicap.

Networking

The survey aimed to measure whether or not the program participants were successful at establishing networks that have proved to be of particular help in securing employment opportunities. The participants were asked:

Q15. The work placement proved to be a valuable experience for networking and making contacts for future employment opportunities.

A) Strongly agree B) Agree C) Undecided D) Disagree E) Strongly Disagree

The answering pattern pointed to a general agreement with 5 of the clients strongly agreeing with the statement and the remaining 4 opting for the agree option. In order to probe further into the effectiveness of the networking process, the theme was explored in question 9 of the interview, where clients were given a chance to elaborate on the effectiveness of networking. Responses to this question were generally positive, with the exception of one client who pointed out that networking was a difficult process because of perceived cultural differences.

Skills Mapping

A key theme that clients brought up was the issue of relevance of the program in terms of career goals. Having established through question 3 of the survey that the program clients had a high level of education the next step was to determine whether their expectations were met. Question 1 and 11 of the interview asked the clients what their expectations were and whether or not they had been met. A pattern emerged, with clients profile and background having a significant influence in whether they viewed the

program to be successful. At the root of the matter was the concern by some clients that the program did not give them the training that would help them attain the same professions that they had prior to immigrating to Canada. The program was thus a failure to them for this particular reason, which is understandable given that the NCEI is unable to provide placements in professions that require accreditation.

Employment Counseling

As a means of determining the effectiveness of the NCC in providing follow up for the program participants, Question 5 of the interview sought to identify the key follow up areas. According to the clients, the NCC provided the following support:

- 1) Introduced clients to job websites
- 2) Assisted clients in further networking
- 3) Provided link up with job connect who provided clients with important information such as resume writing
- 4) Mock interviews

During the interview, clients expressed satisfaction with the follow up services, noting that the NCC played a significant role in assisting them gain employment opportunities.

Hands on Experience

Depending on the placement type, the clients indicated that the structure of the program enabled them to gain hands on experience. Question 14 in the questionnaire revealed that placement managers gave clients the leeway to work without supervision. As a result, clients were able to exercise some degree of independence in terms of accomplishing job tasks. Clients also responded positively when asked whether they can apply the skills gained in the work placement in their present occupations.

Cultural Interactions

Our study reveals that clients of the NCEI encountered challenges in workplace communication due to cultural differences. While the work placement is meant to create an enabling environment for clients to gain work experience by working with Canadians, a working knowledge of English language is required to facilitate communications between the various parties. Besides, workplace practices differ between countries, which require the clients to adapt to Canadian practices as part of their experience. Clients therefore encountered difficulties in communicating with Canadians, with cultural misunderstandings initially breeding some ill-conceived notions amongst clients.

Question 16 of the survey asked the clients about the sensitivity of the workplace environment to their needs as immigrants. Seven clients responded that the environment was sensitive to their needs while two responded that the environment was insensitive to their needs. Based on this result question 6 of the interview sought to probe deeper into the reasons that clients had given concerning their perceptions of the work placement environment. An analysis of the data obtained from these questions proves that the cultural challenges experienced by clients eventually transformed into their *adaptation* to the Canadian work culture. As one person stated:

“In one of the offices I felt that I was not too welcomed, but later realized my perceptions were informed by cultural differences. I tried to be polite, respectful, but respect my culture. Even though I struggled with English, I was able to adapt”.

Similarly, another participant stated that:

“I encountered challenges in each area of the placement because everything was different from my culture. The cooking and baking were different. So I adjusted my culture to suit with the Canadian way of doing things”.

Figure 9.0 shows a summary of the data analysis based on an RBM framework.

An RBM Analysis of the NCEI Evaluation Program

<p>Input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finance (Funding)
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employability Preparation ▪ Capacity and Skill mapping ▪ Work placement assessment & application ▪ Support group and networking ▪ Employability readiness ▪ Work placement ▪ Follow-up
<p>Output:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity building ▪ Match specific skills with relevant placement ▪ Clients made contacts for future employment ▪ Hands on experience ▪ Employment counseling ▪ Clients developed on-the-job confidence
<p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skill acquisition ▪ Work experience ▪ Cultural interaction in the workplace ▪ Resume/cover letter preparation/ access to information on sources of employment
<p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased employability ▪ Adaptation to the Canadian work environment

Figure 9.0

Conclusion

This report sought to determine the success and relevance of the NCEI program in relation to its objectives, and whether the needs expressed by clients of the NCEI program have been met. We conducted a summative evaluation to determine the outcome of the NCEI using an RBM evaluation approach. This methodological approach focuses on balancing the results of the NCEI program with its corresponding inputs and overall objectives.

We gathered data through surveys via questionnaires, a focus group discussion and interviews. Results from the study indicate that the NCEI clients acquired skills and gained Canadian work experience. We provided an analysis of how these results came about. Our study revealed both the intended and unintended outcomes of the program. First, the intended outcomes emerged from the fact that clients of the NCEI acquired relevant skills through the program, thus enhancing their chances of gaining employment in Canada. Secondly, through the work placement training, clients gained experience about cross-cultural communication in the workplace, which was instrumental to their adaptation to the Canadian work culture. Thirdly, clients gained hands-on-experience during the placement training, which is important for their integration in the labor market. These outcomes indicate that the program equipped participants with the skills required to gain confidence in their ability to demonstrate their experiences in the labor market.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are based on an assessment of the intended and unintended outcomes of the NCEI program. It is our hope that the recommendations stated below would be useful to achieving the overall objectives of the program in the future.

1. There should be workshops on *cross-cultural communications in the workplace*, as that would give all NCEI participants the necessary orientations for effective functioning in their placement environments.
2. The NCCP should ensure that all participants receive introductory computer training to enable them develop some computer skills prior to their placement assignments.
3. There should be opportunities for professional immigrants to acquaint themselves with computer software and applications that relates with their professions, as that would give them competitive skills in the job market.
4. There should be renewed efforts to deploy participants in job placements that relate to their professions or career goals.
5. The placement environments should be formal, as that would enable participants to experience the formalities of an actual working environment.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information for the evaluation of the NCEI program. Information obtained from respondents will not be used for any other purpose other than the intended purpose. Please, use the highlighter to indicate your options below.

1. How did you find out about the New Canadian Employment initiative?
 - A) Word of mouth
 - B) Media
 - C) New Canadians Centre staff
 - D) Other sources, please specify _____

2. How long have you been living in Canada before taking part in the employment initiative program? _____

3. What level of education had you previously attained before immigrating to Canada?
 - A) Elementary School education
 - B) High school education
 - C) College education
 - D) University education
 - E) Other, please specify _____

4. Before taking part in the employment initiative, did you attempt to gain employment?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No

5. If you answered yes to the above question, please indicate how you went about your search for employment
 - A) Employment agency
 - B) Responding to advertised vacancies
 - C) Other, please specify _____

6. How comfortable were you during the interview process to determine your eligibility for the program?

- A) Very comfortable
 - B) Somewhat comfortable
 - C) Somewhat uncomfortable
 - D) Very uncomfortable
7. The interview process:
- A) Enabled me to give a fair overview of my qualifications
 - B) Enabled me to give a comprehensive overview of my qualifications
 - C) Did not enable me to give an overview of my qualifications
8. What area of training were you assigned? _____
9. The skills gained during the training process....
- A) Were skills that I did not previously possess
 - B) Were complementary to previous skills
10. The delivery of the training was:
- A) Very clear and precise
 - B) Somewhat clear and precise
 - C) Somewhat unclear
 - D) Very unclear
11. My overall impression of the training could be summarised as:
- A) Excellent B) Good C) Fair D) poor
12. The training given by the employment initiative adequately prepared me for the interview process with the placement managers.
- A) True B) False C) I don't know
13. The responsibilities given to me during the work placement program
- A) Required the skills that were gained through the training program
 - B) Did not require any of the skills that were gained through the training program
 - C) Required some of the skills that were gained in the training program as well as some extra skills not taught by the program
 - D) Required all the skills gained through the training program as well as some extra skills not taught by the program
14. During the work placement, the placement manager
- A) Was very comfortable in letting me work without supervision
 - B) Was somewhat comfortable in letting me work without supervision

- C) Was somewhat uncomfortable in letting me work without supervision
 - D) Was very uncomfortable in letting me work without supervision
15. The work placement proves to be a valuable experience for networking and making contacts for future employment opportunities
- A) Strongly Agree B) Agree C) Undecided D) Disagree E) Strongly Disagree
16. The work placement environment:
- A) Was very sensitive to my needs as an immigrant
 - B) Was somehow sensitive to my needs as an immigrant
 - C) Was somehow insensitive to my needs as an immigrant
 - D) Was very insensitive to my needs as an immigrant
17. The work placement has prepared me to fully integrate in the labour market
- A) A Great deal B) Somewhat C) Not too much D) Not at all
18. After the work placement program, I was able to gain employment
- A) Within 0-3months of completion of the placement
 - B) Within 4-7 months of completion of the placement
 - C) Within 8-12 months of completion of the placement
 - D) Over 12 months after completion of the placement
19. References given by my placement manager:
- A) Were very helpful in me gaining employment
 - B) Were somehow helpful in me gaining employment
 - C) Were somewhat unhelpful in me gaining employment
 - D) Were very unhelpful in me gaining employment

Appendix 2

Interview Guide

1. What were your expectations when you applied to take part in the program?
2. What new skills did you learn:
 - a) During the training
 - b) During the work placement
3. What aspects of the job training did you like and dislike
4. Were there any aspects that you felt were missing or that should have been included in the training process?
5. Has the New Canadian Center been of assistance in following up after the end of the work placement?
6. What were some of the challenges that you encountered in the work placement, in cultural terms. How were you able to adapt and fit in?
7. To what extent has the program fully prepared you for integration into the labour market?
8. How long did it take you to find employment after the program and why do you think it took that long?
9. How useful were the networks that you gained during the work placement process in aiding you in getting employment?
10. Given your experience in the program, how do you think that the overall program could be improved?
11. Were your expectations for taking part in the program met?