Impact of the Community Service Order Program

Includes:

Final Report

By
Adam Bala-Gaye & Nicolas Valverde

Completed for: Community Counselling and Resource Centre

Supervising Professor: Chris Beyers

Trent Centre for Community-Based Education

IMPACT OF THE COMMUNITY

SERVICE ORDER PROGRAM

Adam Bala-Gaye & Nicolas Valverde

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Abbreviations

CCRC   **Community Counseling and Resource Center**

CSO   **Community Service Order**

IDST 4220   **International Development Studies 4220 – Assessment of Development**

Projects

NGO   **Non-Governmental Organization**

TCCBE   **Trent Centre for Community-Based Education**

<ins>Terminology</ins>

Clients - Individuals who have been assigned Community Service by a court and who have entered the CSO Program at CCRC

Partner Organization – a community agency that hosts 'clients' from CCRC's CSO Program

Executive Summary

The Community Service Order program is one of the many programs run by the Community Counselling and Resource Centre in Peterborough. It places people who have been assigned community service by the court into organizations in Peterborough. This evaluation seeks to examine the impact of the CSO program through its effects on recidivism as well as its impact on the host organizations. Our findings were:

- A high level of client satisfaction on the surveys, and there is a high completion rate amongst clients of the CSO program.

- The literature suggests Community Service Order programs reduce recidivism which indicates that the CSO program at the CCRC likely has the effect of reducing recidivism.

- Furthermore the likely reduction in recidivism combined with the number of hours contributed to non-profits and community organizations by CSO clients indicates that the CSO program has a positive impact on the wider community.

- The host organization surveys and interviews indicate that the CSO program is seen as positive and has a positive impact on the organizations involved with it.

Our recommendations are:

- That the next evaluation of the CSO program either focus solely on the quantitative data which requires higher levels of access to the Offender Tracking and Information System

Database, or it focuses more comprehensively on the impact of the clients community

service on the host organizations and the community.

|Introduction

CCRC has existed in the community for over 60 years and provides a variety of programs to help strengthen lives and community well-being. The CSO Program has been a valuable asset within the Peterborough community and has been successfully providing services since 1978. The goal of the CSO program is to provide individualized community-based placements that offer clients an opportunity to become contributing members of the community. The CSO Program currently works with 185 placement agencies in the City and County of Peterborough. Placement opportunities raise self-confidence, enhance work skills, encourage responsible behavior and provide constructive activities for leisure time.

The CCRC runs the Community Service Orders program (CSO); offers an alternative solution to jail time; i.e. probation hours in the form of a service in the community. This ensures social justice and in the process, enhances skill development through the various organizations they are matched with to complete client hours. The commitment to the program means that clients stay out of trouble and focus on becoming better individuals and citizens within the community.

Services are provided to clients, aged 18 years or older, who have been referred by probation. After an in-depth assessment with CSO staff, clients are assigned to complete hours at a non-profit organization or a municipally funded service in Peterborough or Peterborough County. Clients are placed based on their abilities, skills, interests, availability and within any restrictions the placement organizations themselves might have. Direct supervision is provided by the

placements. CSO staff provides case management services and support to clients in

collaboration with Probation and community partners.

The central research question we looked to answer was, "Determine the effectiveness of the

Community Service Order program based on recidivism rate and impact on the community."

Evaluation Methodology

Our project evaluation was initiated in September 2013, after a thorough process of filling out

an ethics application from the International Development Studies department (IDST) and a

Project Agreement. Our project evaluation is in coordination with the TCCBE and our host

organization, Community Counseling and Resource Center (CCRC) to evaluate the impact of

Community Service Order Program in Peterborough. The CSO Program is a community-based

sentencing option that permits the court to order offenders to perform community service

hours as a condition of probation. It is a member of the Ontario Community Justice and is

funded by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

We first met with CCRC's Manager, Shelley Giardino and Resource Development Coordinator,

Hanah McFarlane to go over preliminary reviews of the CSO literature and data files. After

compiling statistical data on offenders, who have been assigned community service, termed

'clients' at the CCRC, we proceeded toward designing a pilot for our survey and interview

questionnaire.

The evaluation project lasted around six months. We reviewed the CSO data literature,

disseminated surveys and conducted phone interviews with the host organizations. We

received seven responses from both questionnaires and the findings have been used to

understand the impact of the program in the community and to look at ways in which it can be

better improved.

In preparing this final report, a thorough evaluation of the CSO data for the last seven years was

carried out. We compiled all the statistical data provided by the CCRC, which included data

from the years 2007-2013 that showed the number of new referrals to the program, the number of completions, the number of people who were charged for not completing their CSO, and the number of hours completed. A survey that the clients fill out upon completion was also provided from the relevant years. We in turn designed a survey that was disseminated to CCRC's 93 host organizations within Peterborough, along with an interview of seven host organizations (Appendix 1). The methodologies elaborated in the following section ensure that the program evaluation are consistent with CCRC's wider vision, purpose and set objectives to further improve the CSO program.

Although we couldn't hold interviews with the clients themselves due to confidentiality issues, qualitative data was collected using online surveys, phone interviews and a personal CSO impact story from one of the clients made our findings particularly strong The survey and interview questionnaire were designed and structured in a language that was simple and linear; i.e. we chose not to have any follow up sub- questions but to keep the questions concise and specific (See Appendix 1). The surveys in question were sent out electronically by using a Survey Monkey template that we designed using the Mail Chimp login username and password from our host Organization, CCRC. The online surveys were disseminated to 93 subscribers.

Phone interviews were conducted around the same time with the various non- profit organizations that host the CSO programs and due to a confidentiality agreement, their identities shall remain anonymous. Out of the fifteen CSO programs contacted, we managed to get seven successfully completed interview responses. The knowledge gained during this

process was used to develop our understanding of the impact CSOs has had on clients and the impact on the community.

Our evaluation project was initiated by setting up a meeting with the Community Counseling and Resource Centre (CCRC), our host organization, to go over the literature and data sources. Reviewing the data provided key information we needed; such as choosing to focus on qualitative data rather than quantitative data based on information we had accessible to us considering the sensitive case matter and confidentiality issues of CSOs. The design and implementation process for the survey and interview was structured in a linear style that would prompt detail specific information about the program and the activities clients performed to complete their hours. The surveys were sent out to 93 CCRC subscribers and the interviews were conducted over the phone with fifteen CSO programs staff or employee who had ample knowledge of the program.

We conducted our interviews over the phone and not electronically in order to speed up the response process. Furthermore phone interviews allow for immediate clarification, if needed, in order to better understand the responses. Phone calls were made to the CSO program contacts over a period of two weeks. We identified ourselves as fourth year Trent students who are conducting a program evaluation on the impact of Community Service Orders in Peterborough for our host organization, CCRC. The contacts provided by CCRC had ample knowledge of the CSO program and, after our introduction, we proceeded to briefly explain the purpose of the interview and indicate the estimated time it will take to conduct the interview which took approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. We indicated how the data will be used and that we

had signed confidentiality agreements, which had been approved by the Trent University,

Department of International Development Ethics Committee, and the CCRC to ensure that their

identities will remain anonymous to everyone except the evaluators. We received seven

responses in total which helped increase our understanding of the impact the CSO program has

had and continues to have on the clients and the community. After the interview, we thanked

them for their time and attention and provided an email contact where we could be reached if

they have further questions, comments or concerns.

In summary, our research methods were:

- Review of quantitative data from CSO program, 2007-2013.

- Interviews with host organizations

- Survey of host organizations

- Literature review

Findings & Statistical Data

Individuals who have been assigned community service by the courts as part of their probation are referred to the CCRC by their probation officer. The CSO program caseworker has an initial meeting with the client, determines their capabilities, interests, and availability, along with any other factors relevant to their CSO such as current and prior charges, and places them with an organization in the community. Between 2007 and mid-2011, both youth and adults were assigned to this program. However, in mid-2011 the youth part of the CSO program was cut by the Ontario Ministry of Children & Youth Services across Ontario and responsibility for the Youth CSO program was left entirely with Probation Officers.

1. How many individuals have been placed in organizations by the Community Service Order (CSO) program?

Between 2007 and 2012 the CSO program had 1288 clients referred by the court. Of the clients who were referred to the CCRC in between 2007 and 2012, 1125 were seen on a single CSO , 134 were seen on two separate orders, 25 were seen on three separate orders, while two clients had four separate orders, and another two had five (Figure 1). This means that in total, the CSO program oversaw 1476 separate Community Service Orders in this time.
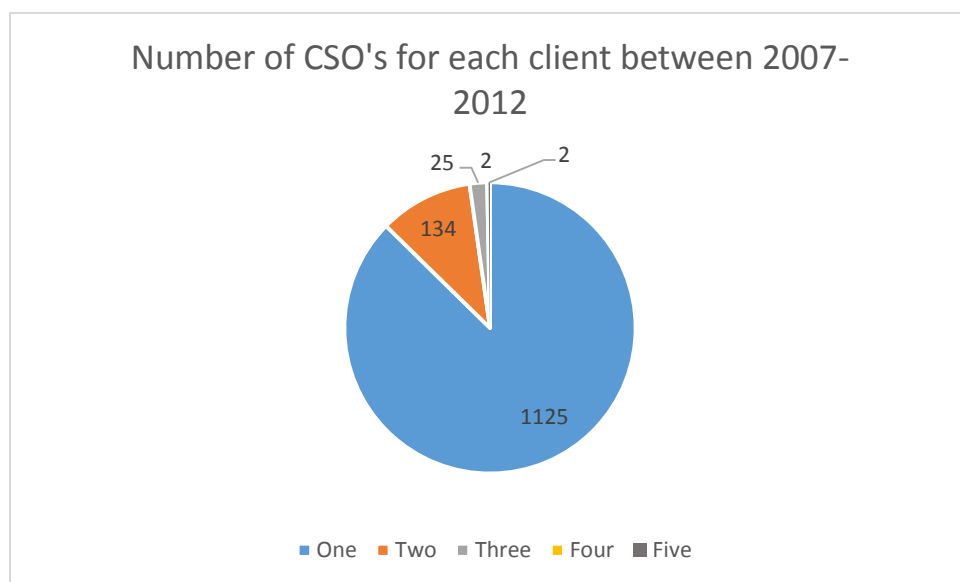

Number of CSO's for each client between 2007-2012

25 2 2
134
1125

One   Two   Three   Four   Five

Figure 1-CSO's per client 2007-2012

The number of new CSO's that are referred to the CCRC each year have remained relatively consistent over the period of 2007-2012. Figure 2 shows the number of new referrals between 2007 and 2013 for adults, and between 2007 and 2010 for youth.

Figure 2 shows that while there has been some modest fluctuation, there does not appear to be

a significant decreasing or increasing trend in the number of adult referrals that are overseen

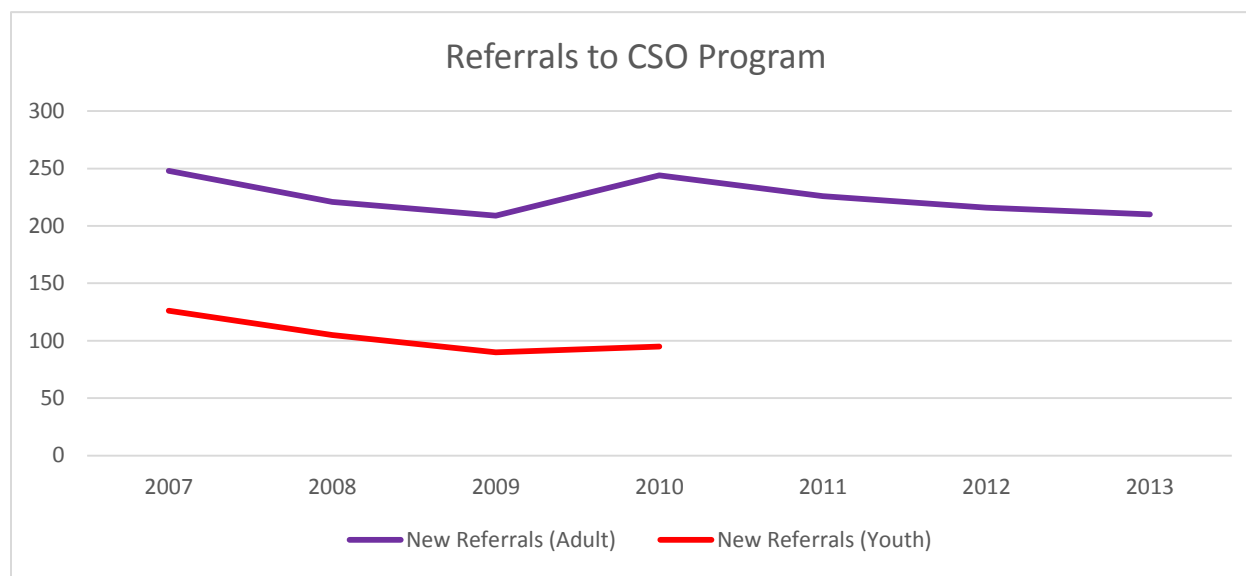by the CCRC. Over the past 7 years there has also been a relatively small increase in the per-

Referrals to CSO Program

Figure 2-Referrals to the CSO Program

client funding provided by the Ontario Government, which means that funding levels have not

kept up with the inflating cost associated with running the program.

2.   What are the results of the CSO's that are overseen by the CCRC?

There are three possible outcomes for a CSO that is overseen by the program manager. Either an individual completes their required hours, they transfer or do not complete the hours for a legitimate reason, or the probation officer decides to charge that individual for non-completion of their order'''. Figure 3 shows the outcome of each CSO that was completed by an adult for each of the years covered by this evaluation (2007-2013). Figure 4 shows that same data for the youth program in the years in which there is a full year of data (2007-2010). The data demonstrates that the vast majority of adult clients who enter the CSO program, complete the
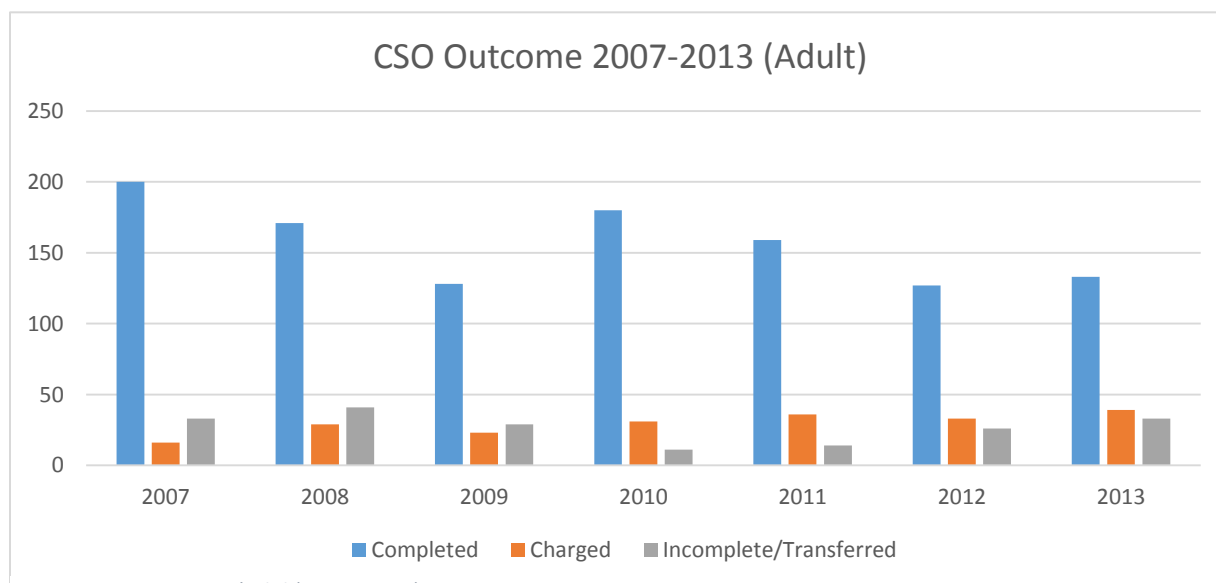

Figure 3-CSO Outcome (Adult) 2007-2013)

program to the satisfaction of their Probation Officer. The number of clients who are charged – which is more significant in judging the efficacy of the CSO program due to the fact that a 'Charged' designation indicates that the client failed to complete the program, while an 'Incomplete/Transferred' designation does not give insight into the end result of that client's

order– has remained consistently low over the past seven years. This is true of both the adult and youth categories.

The only significant year-to-year change is in the number of orders that are completed each year. We cannot truly glean anything from the changes in 'Incomplete/Transferred' as there is no tracking of clients once they leave the geographic area of Peterborough, nor any indication as for the reason they did not complete their order. The number of completed orders supervised in the youth program, if we only consider Figure 4, appears to have been in decline year-on-year. However, if we consider the number of completed orders as compared to the number of new referrals (Figure 5) we can see that the number of completed CSO's in the Youth program remained a relatively high proportion of the number of new referrals.
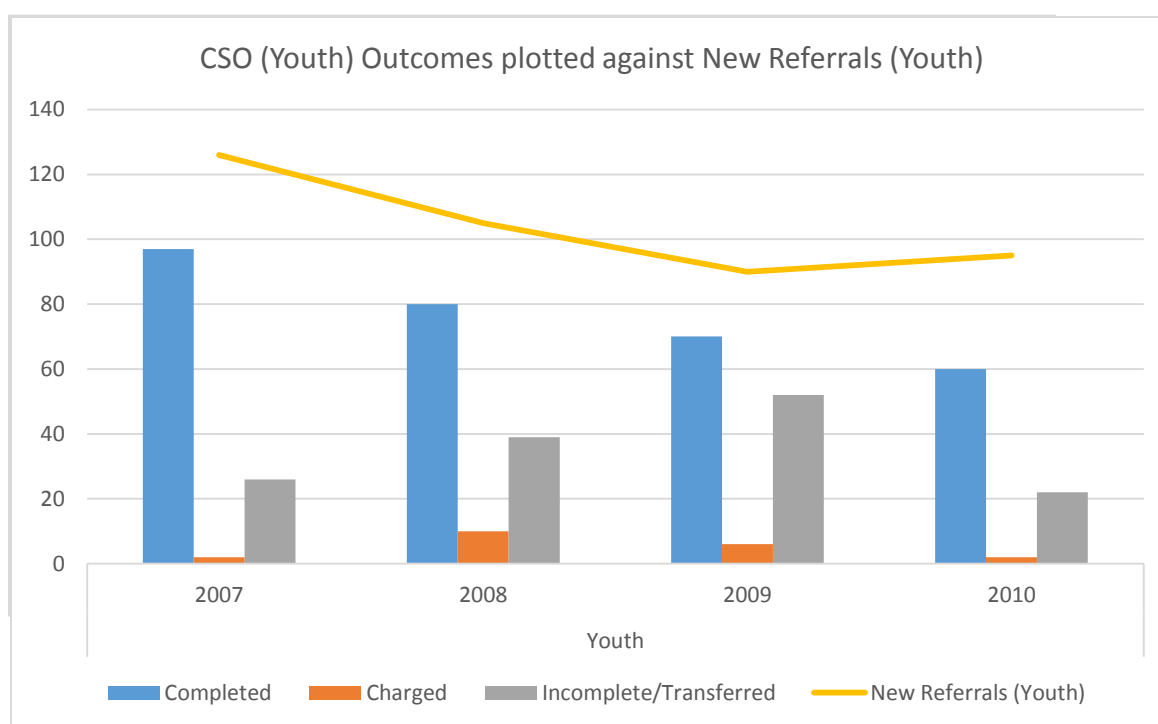

CSO (Youth) Outcomes plotted against New Referrals (Youth)

Figure 5- CSO Outcomes (Youth) vs New Referrals (Youth)

CSO Outcomes (Adult) plotted against New Referrals (Adult)

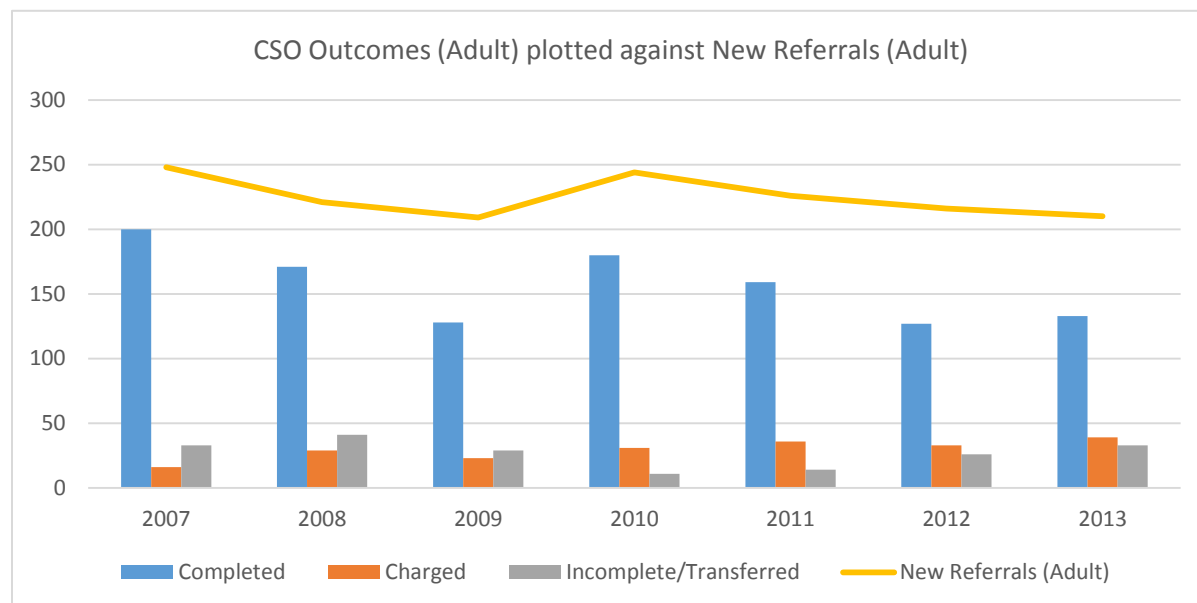Legend: Completed · Charged · Incomplete/Transferred · New Referrals (Adult)

Figure 6- CSO Outcomes vs New Referrals (Adult) 2007-2013

In regards the seeming fluctuation in the number of completed CSO's in the adult program, we can see that if we take the same approach as in Figure 5, there is a relatively strong correlation between the number of completed CSO's and the number of new referrals. While we cannot say that this is definitely the reason for the fluctuation in the Completed CSO's, we argue that it is a relatively safe assumption. Therefore it seems that the number of clients that complete the

CSO program is closely tied to the number of referrals – a number beyond the control of the CCRC.

3.   What do the clients say about the CSO program at the CCRC?

When a client completes their placement, there is a voluntary survey where they can offer feedback to the program about their placement and the program in general. The survey is distributed and collected by CSO caseworker. Between 2008 and 2012, 287 surveys were collected. This represents 37.5% of the total number of clients who completed the program. Of these surveys, all rated their placements as satisfactory. The accuracy of the survey in a quantitative sense is questionable. Since the surveys are meant to be handed directly to the program officer, it is possible that less criticism of the program would appear in the survey. However, this in no way means that the survey is not valuable. The survey comments can be useful as a source of qualitative data about the CSO program and the host organizations.

These include comments about their host organization: "very friendly," "helpful and non-judgemental," and "everything was perfect." Of all the comments about their host organizations, none were negatively slanted. The clients were also asked to comment on how helpful the CSO program manager was. They responded with comments like "very helpful," "very supportive," as well as comments that indicated that the CSO program officer was willing

to work with them to tailor a CSO volunteering schedule around their particular needs and interests. There were no negative comments about the CSO program manager.

Despite the potential bias towards a positive reflection of the CSO program, the overwhelmingly positive response is indicative of a generally positive feeling amongst the clients.

What can we infer from the statistical data?

While we cannot establish a direct link to recidivism rates we can draw a few conclusions from the data:

1. There is a high level of completion for the CSO programs, which has remained consistently high

2. There appears to be high level of satisfaction amongst the clients of the CSO program

<u>Impact on host organizations and the community</u>

The assigning of community service, while primarily meant as a way of rehabilitating those who have been convicted of a crime, also has the added benefit of providing volunteers to the non-profit sector in the community. When we asked most of the interviewees (host organizations) whether they planned on continuing their relationship with the CSO program they affirmed that they appreciate the help that they get from volunteers and they've had really great people come out and benefitted from a good experience. One the host organizations confirmed that "it is nice to have some young hands because some things are harder for our older volunteers to do". As indicated by one host organization, an effort is made to construct a sense of belonging and they send out weekly newsletters to ensure that volunteer stay updated on the latest news. "We send all volunteers our weekly newsletter, we thank the volunteers regularly, we have a yearly appreciation event, we nominate volunteers for the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards and we try to create meaningful volunteer positions or opportunities". A sense of belonging is consistent with the goals and objectives that the CSO program has for their clients and motivational factors such as giving out awards, keeping them informed and staying in touch

fosters relationships within the community, increases self-esteem and confidence and promotes pro-social behavior.

In the process, clients are able to gain and enhance valuable skills. One of the CSO clients, who we were fortunate to get a personal statement from, stated that the "CSO provided contacts potentially allowing me to continue to work in my field of work, just at a new capacity, new options… gave me hope for change and a future I thought was gone forever… I know now that building these relationships with CSO will allow me to make the changes I need to move forward". They commended the CCRC for helping her become a better person and a better citizen in her community and that it was particularly her caseworker's respect and encouraging attitude towards her that really made the process a lot easier. Today, she is using the skills she acquired through the CSO program to set up a website and continues to maintain that website for a public school and when asked if she still volunteers with her former placement, she claimed that she wish she could, however, lack of funding has currently made that impossible.

Volunteers are especially important to some non-profit organizations to ensure that programs are running smoothly and have the required capabilities perform their functions. Even those non-profits who don't rely strictly on volunteers make an effort to accommodate clients of the CSO Program. One such organization said, "people need to do hours and we make sure we have something to help them and the CSO is very helpful and supportive" says one interviewee.

Another interviewee stated that "here, they have the opportunities, rather than having to pay a fine they can't afford". They added, "I've been doing this a little over seven years. The time period that they give them to do the hours is a little too much". The member of the host

organization stated that most of his volunteers only had to complete five hours a month, which he deems a little insufficient. The placement supervisor indicated a wish to have clients complete more hours per month, in order to complete their designated probation hours faster as the opportunities are abundant and non- profit organizations are eager to help CSO clients achieve their end goals. However it should be noted that his comments were directed primarily towards youth volunteers, and due to a funding restriction the CSO Youth program was discontinued by the CCRC in 2010. Furthermore the precise schedule that hours need to be completed on is determined by the court.

The other research tool that we used to assess impact was a survey that was distributed to all the host organizations on the CCRC' email list. We got seven responses from organizations who have hosted clients.

As to whether they found the CSO clients useful to their organization, on a scale of 1-4 (where 1 is "Not Useful" and 4 is "Very Useful"), six clients answered 4 (Very Useful) while one client ranked it as a 2.

Notably, one organization has twice employed former CSO volunteers after the completion of their CSO mandated hours.

Six organizations felt that the CCRC did a good job selecting clients that were appropriate to their organization. The one organization who did not feel that the CSO Program selected appropriate clients suggested that "clients take our literacy profile to see if their reading, writing, numeracy skills are solid enough to help us. Also the referred person needs to go through an interview with us to see if it's a fit."

Another way of considering the impact of the CSO program on the community is to consider the number of hours that clients have completed under the program. Between 2007 and 2013, clients of the program logged 83,361 hours of community service. In purely economic terms, this would mean – taking the mean and median minimum wage during that time ($9.50) – that the CSO program represents a $791 930 boost to local non-profits and community organizations.

Outside of the strictly economic benefits of the work done by the CSO clients at their host organizations, a review of the literature indicates that Community Service Order programs are shown to reduce recidivism.[1] This conclusion is drawn from multiple studies across multiple jurisdictions.

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[1] Someda, Kei (2009) "An international comparative overview on the rehabilitation of offenders and effective measures for the prevention of recidivism" *Legal Medicine*. 11: 82-85.

|Project Achievements & Limitations

Qualitative data grounded our evaluation. We got first-hand information from people with ample knowledge of the CSO program and from one of the clients that had completed their CSO. We were able to acquire valuable information from the CSO program on how to improve the program in order to better serve the community and to benefit clients in the future. Three out of the seven respondents from the interview agreed that what would increase the likelihood of volunteers showing up is having some initial contact with the organization e.g. a phone call or a meeting so that they feel comfortable before they show up. They believe having volunteers involved in the process leading up to their placement with the organization enables a stronger connection so that they are more engaged in their placement.

All seven interview responses were positive and all interviewees assured us that they do plan on continuing and fostering their relationship with the CSO program in the future mostly because they've "seen first -hand the impact and the potential impact on the volunteer being engaged in the kind of community".

Our project goals and objectives outlined in our introduction was mostly achieved but not without a few obstacles. In evaluating Peterborough's Community Service Order Program, we

had to deal with sensitive cases in which confidentiality and anonymity of clients and CSOs was imperative. The importance of clients' anonymity unfortunately limited our research in terms of accessing ample firsthand accounts of personal impacts on those people who had gone through the CSO program, as well as limiting out ability to say much about some of the challenges such as the inability to complete a CSO and the contributing factors, the obstacles faced during the process, the skills they developed and how this helped them after completing the CSO program etc.

Lack of data on recidivism rates in Peterborough was a setback as we couldn't determine the impact (through evidentiary support) this had on the program and the community. We did not have access to the appropriate database to determine recidivism rates. The data needed to address the original research question is contained in the Offender Tracking and Information System (OTIS) database. This database tracks all a person's interactions with the criminal justice system and has the ability to track a person's interactions with the criminal justice system if they move to other cities within Canada. Furthermore, anonymity also prohibited us from getting basic demographic information such as the quantity of females or males registered in the CSO program, their age, race etc.

<u>Summary</u>

- The high level of client satisfaction on the surveys, the high completion rate amongst clients of the CSO program, and the literature that suggests Community Service programs reduce recidivism all indicate that the CSO program at the CCRC is serving its clients well.

- Furthermore the likely reduction in recidivism combined with the number of hours contributed to non-profits and community organizations indicate that the CSO program has a positive impact on the wider community.

- The host organization surveys and interviews indicate that the CSO program is seen as positive and has a positive impact on the organizations involved with it.

<u>Recommendations</u>

We have focused our recommendations on how future evaluations can be conducted in a way that improves the reliability and explanatory value of the data.

As discussed previously in the report, there were limitations on what information we could glean from the data we had access to. This information is contained in the OTIS Database. Access to this database generally restricted to people employed by the government, so accessing it to trace the impact of CSO's over the period following a person's completion of a CSO would take much more time than was possible here. If proper access was granted – which is a complicated process – the evaluation could trace the impact of the CSO program on its clients in terms of recidivism, which was an original research question for this project.

A second possible avenue for a further evaluation is to focus solely on the impact of the CSO clients on their placements with host organizations. Undertake a more comprehensive survey of the host organizations, possibly with more extensive interviews as well, and begin to examine what impact the CSO clients have on their host organizations, and thus on their communities.

We would recommend doing *either* one or the other as the depth needed to truly examine the

original research questions can likely only be achieved through focusing on either the more

advanced quantitative analysis or the more in-depth qualitative study.

Appendix 1

Partner Organization Survey

1. How many clients has your organization hosted in the past year?

2. What are the two main activities that clients perform in your program?

3. How useful are the activities that the CSO clients perform to your organization?

Not Useful			Very Useful
1	2	3	4

4. Has a client ever continued to volunteer or become employed by your organization after the completion of their CSO?

Yes No

5. If yes, how many times has this happened?

12345
Other (please specify)

6. Has your organization ever dismissed a client based on his or her behavior while in the program?

Yes No

7. If so, please indicate the number of times this has happened.

1 2 3 4 5
Other (please specify)

8. Do you feel the CSO staff screen clients being referred to your organization to ensure referrals are appropriate?

Yes No

9. Please tell us at least one thing that would make your experience with the CSO program more worthwhile.

10. How effective is the level of communication between you and the Community Service Order Program at Community Counselling and Resource Center (CCRC)?

Not Effective			Very Effective
1	2	3	4