

Analyzing the Impact and Challenging the Assumptions

A report that demonstrates the impact of government policies on unemployed persons and on community service deliverers

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Background

Community-based training is more than 140 years old in Canada and predates most other forms of education and training. From the earliest examples of agricultural cooperatives in the eighteenth century, the community-based training sector has evolved to meet the needs of community by community. The community-based training sector has been the foundation for other types of learning as well - apprenticeship and public libraries being only two examples. Community-based trainers have met the needs of a society and a country in transition on a continual basis for the last two centuries.

Governments did not become involved in funding or delivery of job training and employment services until the beginning of the 20th century. Before that time, the private and not-for-profit sectors were the only bodies concerned with and involved in providing training services to unemployed people.

The formation of the Federal Employment Service in 1919 resulted in a shift of the public expectation of responsibility for the provision of job placement and training. Control and responsibility remained almost entirely under the federal government until the 1970's when they began to supplement their services with a system of contracted services. Most training was delivered through community-based training agencies across Canada throughout the next two decades and proved to be extremely successful.

The economic growth that was an aftermath of both world wars peaked in the late 1970's. The subsequent downturn resulted in soaring unemployment and financial instability across the country. The working public became the victims of a rapidly changing industrial and technological environment, and contributed to the ranks of the unemployed and those in need of re-training. Citizens with no previous history in the labour force (e.g. youth and new immigrants) had increasing difficulty gaining a foothold.

This social and economic transformation caused governments to rethink their priorities in the 1990's. The federal government decided to devolve responsibility for some of its services to the provinces. Some would say that this decision was more about saving confederation than a belief that decentralization was an effective policy direction. They negotiated their portion of training dollars to the provinces in return for the transfer of responsibility for training. The provinces, eagerly seeking independence from the federal government and wanting autonomy in educational and training spending, agreed. In most cases, they were neither prepared nor able to meet the needs of their citizens.

The result has been a fragmentation of the social safety network, as it relates to employment, of this country. With no national standards to guide the negotiations, the principles of fairness, equality and accessibility were lost.

In British Columbia, the federal and provincial governments have entered into a co-managed Labour Market Agreement. Federal funding for training is still available to the client who has a work history and qualifies for Employment Insurance (EI). These clients are the most employment ready, autonomous, barrier free and equipped to access the job market independently. This funding, however, is subject to local decision-making and often runs out during the fiscal year. Clients who lack basic skills or have other social and/or economic disadvantages have little or no access to federal government funding. The continual withdrawal of the federal government from direct delivery of training in British Columbia was completed on June 30th, 1999.

The co-management model has provided multiple opportunities for neither level of government to take responsibility for results. The provincial government appears to lack the capacity and the will to assume responsibility for assisting its general citizenry to gain employment, focusing only on income assistance recipients. With the introduction of B.C. Benefits, it has become a skill to even obtain income assistance, let alone gain access to training programs. The continual forming and re-forming of provincial government ministries is a shell game, with the general public always the loser.

This survey, conducted by ASPECT in June and July 1999, of its 175 member agencies as well as the members of both the B.C. Career Colleges Association (BCCCA) and the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of B.C. (AAMSA), concludes that both levels of government have clearly abdicated their responsibility to their citizens.

The survey revealed that a strong sentiment still exists among community-based trainers in B.C. that access to government funded training should be broadened and considered an entitlement, providing it fits into the local labour market and that an appropriate needs determination is conducted. An overwhelming number of agencies (83%) indicated that they are turning away large numbers of people who have been determined by the funders to be ineligible. They are, however, in desperate need of training. Furthermore, 80% of respondents indicated that clients have to go through so many hoops to qualify for government assistance, many of them give up. This, combined with the elimination of federal government block funding has resulted in a profound lack of services for clients, particularly the most disadvantaged.

How do service providers continue to serve the needs of the most disadvantaged clients while being forced to run the agencies through fees, service charges and increasingly commercial forms of income to finance our operations? The focus on fiscal requirements while ignoring social impact may result in a greater negative impact on the future economy.

Community-based trainers are a sector founded on and committed to the clients and the communities they serve. This survey was initiated to analyze the impact and challenge the

assumptions of both government and service providers. It is clear from the survey results that we are in the midst of a profound moral and political crisis.

Setting the Scene

Federal

The Federal government enshrined into legislation the decision to transfer responsibility for training programs to the provinces in July of 1996. This decision was based on a growing unrest amongst the provinces. In particular, Quebec was threatening to leave Confederation if it was not granted more autonomy. The Labour Market Development Agreements were to be decided on a province by province basis. Negotiations with some provinces resulted in a complete transfer. Some, like British Columbia, opted for a co-management agreement.

Prior to 1990, training programs in British Columbia were almost entirely funded by the federal government under Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

The legislation required that block funding or project-based funding would end June 30th 1999. Perhaps because of the lengthy time frame for implementation, a “wait and see” attitude prevailed and many did not believe this would actually ever happen. In British Columbia, there are fourteen (14) HRDC offices who have all been given local decision-making power, and it appeared that many believed they would not have to implement the changes. There were even accusations that those of us who tried to prepare for the change were “fear mongering”.

But happen, it did. And when it did, many HRDC offices and therefore many training agencies were ill prepared to deal with it.

Change began with redefinition. Unemployment Insurance became Employment Insurance (EI) and eligibility for EI became more stringent, gradually eliminating 70% of citizens who would have qualified prior to 1996. Training programs were required to become more homogeneous, able to intake only those clients who were EI eligible. Agencies operating programs for Income Assistance clients were forced to run separate programs side-by-side. Integrated programming was a thing of the past. These programs were then threatened with elimination in June 1999 as EI clients were given training dollars to spend at the training institution of their choice. Programs were further threatened when the provincial government introduced legislation that required changes that would move any training program receiving client funds to be eligible for student loan status and, eventually, accreditation.

Provincial

Previous to 1990 in British Columbia, the majority of training programs had been funded by HRDC. The provincial Ministry of Social Services (MSS) funded a small percentage of programs for specific client groups (e.g. youth). In anticipation of the federal transfer of funds and responsibility for training, a newly elected New Democratic government set up a new Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, determined that they “would do things

better” than either the federal government or the MSS. In their idealism, they held focus groups to determine best practices and touted about a new era of both fiscal and performance based accountability. They envisioned programs designed to meet a diversity of client needs

Concurrently an economic downturn caused the social assistance roles to increase significantly and the training of all eligible clients proved to be too big a drain on a province still waiting for a complete transfer of funds. B.C. Benefits was introduced in 1996, making it difficult to obtain Income Assistance and enshrining the notion of training as a privilege, not a right. Clients were forced to jump through hoops to apply for I.A., and attendance at information sessions became compulsory. Clients were forced to become “compliant” for a period of three months before being able to gain access to job search assistance (resume service, job referrals) and could not access job training programs for 10 months.

The mistrust between federal and provincial government has resulted in a failure to move beyond the co-management agreement as had been anticipated and it appears that co-management will remain permanently. Client service has been used as a leverage point by both governments during negotiations. The federal government severely reduced service in order to reduce the dollars transferred to the province. The provincial government has reduced fiscal allocations for regional delivery of programs. Both levels of government have blamed each other throughout this long process.

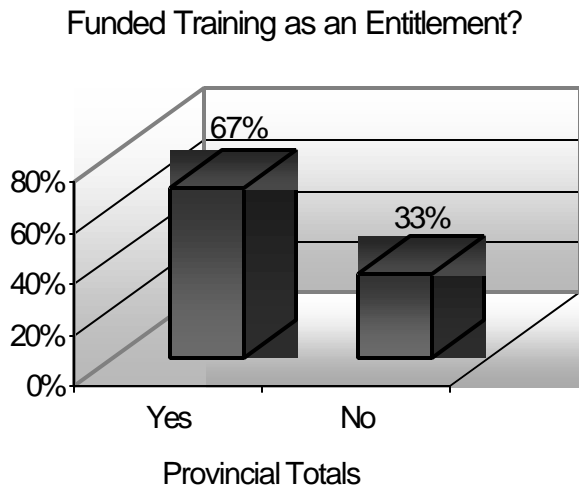
There has only been one loser the client.

Survey Results

Question #1

Should access to government funded training be an entitlement?

While 67% of respondents were in agreement, many tempered their “yes” response with suggestions of: broadening the criteria; ensuring that training fit labour market opportunities as well as client ability and; that access to training should have some sort of needs determination attached to it. The Interior region differed from the rest of the province in that 60% of them indicated that government funded training should not be an entitlement.



n = 102

REGION	Yes	No
FRASER VALLEY	79%	21%
INTERIOR	40%	60%
KOOTENAYS	71%	29%
METRO VANCOUVER	70%	30%
NORTH	73%	27%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	64%	36%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	67%	33%

" I think access to government funding is important in a democratic society..."

"Not an entitlement, but a cooperative social venture"

"Education and training should be accessible to all, however I don't think people should take it for granted and expect the government to hand the money over"

"That is very irresponsible, (it) does not promote success for client(s), only systems abuse by both training institution & client/students"

"It needs to be part of the overall plan that supports the return to work"

Question #2

Should eligibility for government funded training be broadened?

An overwhelming 96% thought the criteria should be broadened to include: (in ranking order) people with employment barriers (80%), the working poor (78%) youth (74%) equity groups (67%) and immigrants (63%).

n = 111

REGION	Yes	No	Equity Groups	Youth	Working Poor	Immigrants	Employment Barriers
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	96%	4%	67%	74%	78%	63%	80%

"All who need financial assistance; it should also include enough to live on"

"services should be available to those who need them"

"... should not be expected to fund schooling through student loans"

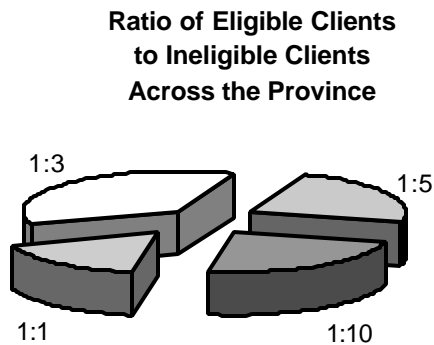
Others include:

- ♦ *"all individuals entitled to work in Canada."*
- ♦ *"on-reserve SA recipients."*
- ♦ *"women, especially single mothers."*
- ♦ *"those affected by technological change."*
- ♦ *"displaced workers."*

Question #3

What is the ratio of your agency's eligible to ineligible clients (eligibility as determined by the funder)?

83% of respondents report they are forced to turn away clients in need of training. 47% of programs found that they were turning away 5 or more clients who needed programming for every one who met their eligibility criteria. 24% were turning away more than 10. The provincial number would be even more dramatic were it not for the exception of the Kootenays with a high one-to-one ratio.



n = 75

REGION	1:1	1:3	1:5	1:10
FRASER VALLEY	18%	18%	27%	36%
INTERIOR	14%	14%	29%	43%
KOOTENAYS	33%	50%	0%	17%
METRO VANCOUVER	5%	47%	26%	21%
NORTH	10%	50%	20%	20%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	27%	32%	23%	18%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	17%	36%	23%	24%

"We work with a very broad client base which makes it impossible to estimate ratios"

"Funded by MAETT, so most referrals are eligible, other potential clients either go elsewhere or don't have options."

" In Surrey, concept of 'transparency of services' has resulted in better access for clients. Other than the obvious barriers (language, multiple disabilities, etc.) most clients receive services."

"Technically, eligibility is first determined on the EI claim and secondly whether or not a client needs training. That is not determined solely by the funder but based on the client's work history. It is far more complex than assuming a ratio".

Question #4

“Clients have to go through so many hoops to qualify for government training assistance that they become discouraged and give up”. In your opinion is this statement true?

Across the province, 80% of respondents felt that clients were being “put through too many hoops.” This was highest on Vancouver Island (91%) but considerably lower in the North (54%).

n = 104

REGION	True	False
FRASER VALLEY	79%	21%
INTERIOR	70%	30%
KOOTENAYS	86%	14%
METRO VANCOUVER	79%	21%
NORTH	54%	46%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	91%	9%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	80%	20%

“For people with disabilities these hoops are just one more set in life with many “hoops” to get through”

“Too much bureaucracy and red tape -

“Many don't give up, they can't; they just bear it.”

“(Clients) even miss a lot of opportunities because of the time it takes to access appointments and then the time before a decision is made about whether they qualify for services.”

“Many clients are frustrated/confused regarding the roles of Financial Assistant Workers, Training Consultants, Case Managers, Employment Counsellors, etc.”

“Yes and no, some so get discouraged but individuals need to recognize that hoops are necessary – to test motivation/money does not fall from the sky”

Question #5

Is there adequate life skills training available in your community?

It is necessary in this case to differentiate between the responses of BCCCA members and ASPECT members. The difference in results, almost reversed numbers, may be due to BCCCA members' focus on skills training, rather than life skills training. In addition, there may be differing perceptions as to what life skills training is.

n = 103

REGION	Yes	No
FRASER VALLEY	43%	57%
INTERIOR	36%	64%
KOOTENAYS	14%	86%
METRO VANCOUVER	50%	50%
NORTH	33%	66%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	39%	61%
ASPECT PROVINCIAL TOTALS	40%	60%
BCCA PROVINCIAL TOTALS	64%	36%

"Short term fixes, with little on-going support."

"Almost none, and we have a high need for this"

"Basic life skills is almost non-existent."

"The training offered is good, but so many clients need much more and longer exposure to undo a lifetime of bad experiences."

"In most cases the answer is yes, but for some specialty groups like youth and ESL it is very low"

"Life skills programming would fill a huge gap in our community."

"Too much, they need skills"

Question #6

In the past, has your agency received PBT or Block Funding from HRDC?

Overall, only 60% of respondents indicated they had received PBT or block funding in the past. Prior to 1990, most employment training programs were almost entirely funded by the federal government. Therefore, this study would indicate that either many new training agencies have been created over the last five years or that many agencies that had a history of delivering before the devolution are no longer in business.

n = 114

REGION	Yes	No
FRASER VALLEY	63%	37%
INTERIOR	66%	33%
KOOTENAYS	86%	14%
METRO VANCOUVER	63%	37%
NORTH	25%	75%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	59%	41%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	60%	40%

Question #7

Has the elimination of PBT/Block funding affected your programming?

Of the agencies that answered “yes”, they had previously received PBT or block funding, 76% indicated the elimination had affected their programming. Comments indicated the affect was profound, impacting not just on programs, but on communities.

n = 97

REGION	YES	No
FRASER VALLEY	53%	47%
INTERIOR	80%	20%
KOOTENAYS	50%	50%
METRO VANCOUVER	63%	37%
NORTH	50%	50%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	64%	36%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	57%	43%

"After 20 years of successful delivery, we are doing no employment skills training."

"Individuals are prevented from training with us in favour of the local college."

"Shorter programs therefore less support for multi-barriered clients."

"Our clients, mostly immigrants, prefer longer-term programs that offer holistic services"

"Reduced attendance in programs by 60-70%."

"Much more economical to focus on a group."

Every program we have has been delayed or postponed by several weeks. It is hard to operate this way"

"It was stupid move on HRDC, they should put it back. They say they are client-centered but they are not."

Question #8

Has the elimination of PBT/Block funding affected access to training for clients?

80% of respondents think that the elimination of PBT/block funding has affected access to training for clients. In the opinion of 90% of those, there is now less access to training than previously.

n = 90

REGION	Yes	No	More Access	Less Access
FRASER VALLEY	60%	40%	0%	100%
INTERIOR	86%	14%	0%	100%
KOOTENAYS	75%	25%	0%	100%
METRO VANCOUVER	88%	12%	5%	95%
NORTH	86%	14%	16%	66%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	81%	20%	4%	90%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	80%	20%	4%	90%

... "multi-barriered clients have difficulty fitting into and succeeding in mainstream college courses where instructors teach content but are not expected to (or qualified to) deal with personal issues and challenges, like poverty, etc."

"Less programs designed for target groups."

" I am turning away clients every day...many do not have the ability (guts, confidence) to lobby for training funds for themselves."

"There is nowhere to send most in-need clients. Real drop in numbers of training seats being offered for immigrants in the Vancouver area."

"Processes are extensive, many are lost in the process."

"We are no longer able to provide vocational/lifeskills for clients who are undereducated, unskilled."

Question #9

Has the elimination of PBT/Block funding affected your agency?

Given the fact that HRDC offices have been granted “local level decision making”, it is not surprising that there are vast regional differences in the extent that the elimination of block funding has affected agencies. This is abundantly clear in the Interior where we had wide extremes: only 55% of Interior respondents answered “yes” as compared to 100% of respondents in the Kootenays.

n = 89

REGION	Yes	No	Decreased Financial Risk	Increased Financial Risk	Increased Demand for Services	Decreased Demand for Services	Increased Staffing Levels	Decreased Staffing Levels	Increased Number of Programs	Decreased Number of Programs
FRASER VALLEY	85%	15%	0%	45%	36%	9%	9%	36%	9%	73%
INTERIOR	55%	44%	0%	60%	0%	60%	0%	20%	0%	40%
KOOTENAYS	100%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%	50%	50%
METRO VANCOUVER	62%	38%	6%	63%	18%	38%	6%	88%	6%	75%
NORTH	66%	33%	0%	75%	50%	25%	25%	25%	25%	50%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	70%	30%	0%	56%	22%	35%	4%	70%	9%	70%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	69%	31%	2%	55%	24%	31%	7%	61%	10%	67%

“We have increased programming but to the detriment of some multi-barriered clients.”

“Communities are losing out on the good work these projects used to perform.”

“As a not-for-profit agency, we are now forced to compete with subsidized institutions.”

“It has changed the program offerings at our agency, we now offer short term job search.”

“We are much more financially vulnerable now.”

“The changes result in fewer people being eligible for EI and, while this may result in savings to the EI fund, it is likely increasing the need for IA.”

“No longer offer programs specifically for young adults.”

“Decrease in hours of service.”

Question #10

Have changes to EI eligibility requirements affected client demographics?

81% of respondents indicated the changes to EI eligibility requirements had affected client demographics. 72% said there were fewer eligible clients and 35% stated that clients are less job-ready.

n = 98

REGION	Yes	No	More Eligible Clients	Less Eligible Clients	More Job Ready	Less Job Ready
FRASER VALLEY	80%	20%	0%	75%	25%	25%
INTERIOR	90%	10%	11%	77%	0%	33%
KOOTENAYS	100%	0%	50%	33%	17%	17%
METRO VANCOUVER	72%	28%	5%	81%	10%	38%
NORTH	77%	22%	29%	57%	14%	71%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	82%	18%	11%	75%	7%	29%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	81%	19%	13%	72%	9%	35%

"The changes result in fewer people being eligible for EI and, while this may be resulting in savings to the EI fund, it is likely increasing the need for IA."

"Multi-barriered clients are not accessing training."

"Some clients have moved to become eligible."

"More repeat clients..."

"Prospective clients are restricted from coming into training because they have no EI, may not qualify for BC Benefits."

"The changes have caused great harm to women who may be entering or returning to the workforce after long absences. In making the transition into the workforce (adjustment and skill development) part-time work is often their only option."

"Most youth and immigrants do not fall under EI eligibility."

Question #11

Have the changes to the EI eligibility requirements affected clients access to training?

A provincial average of 87% of respondents indicated that changes to EI eligibility had affected client access to training. Of those who said “yes”, 83% said there was less access to training.

n = 98

REGION	Yes	No	More Access	Less Access
FRASER VALLEY	92%	8%	9%	82%
INTERIOR	100%	0%	18%	82%
KOOTENAYS	100%	0%	0%	100%
METRO VANCOUVER	85%	15%	9%	77%
NORTH	89%	11%	25%	75%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	82%	18%	14%	86%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	87%	13%	13%	83%

“Clients are put through the wringer and are usually denied assistance.”

“More hours needed to qualify for less funding”

“Cost-sharing is not an option for some clients...some just don't have access to the funds.”

“ I believe due to tougher guidelines regarding accessing NFAI (financial contribution requirement) there is less access for some clients.”

“More clients now have the possibility of receiving training (mutual and reachback).”

“Opportunity Fund is available now, not a resource we had before.” (editorial note: the Opportunity Fund is a national program for people with disabilities and is outside the EI legislation)

Question #12

In your community, has client access to HRDC training funds (tuition and books) been consistent throughout the fiscal year?

Despite wide variations, 77% of respondents indicated there had been inconsistent access to training funds throughout the year.

n = 95

REGION	Yes	No
FRASER VALLEY	31%	69%
INTERIOR	50%	50%
KOOTENAYS	0%	100%
METRO VANCOUVER	13%	87%
NORTH	9%	91%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	29%	71%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	23%	77%

"Last year, funding dollars ran out leaving three months with no training funds."

"Clients have had to delay training plans when funds were frozen until the next fiscal year."

"Very inconsistent, but I think that is due to lack of HRDC staffing and time spent in the area."

"Local HRC's inability to forecast budget (i.e. running out of funds) necessitated closing down our HRDC program."

"....also great variation from community to community."

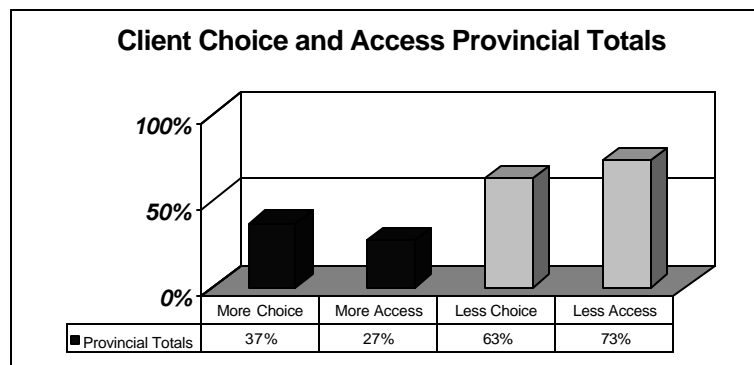
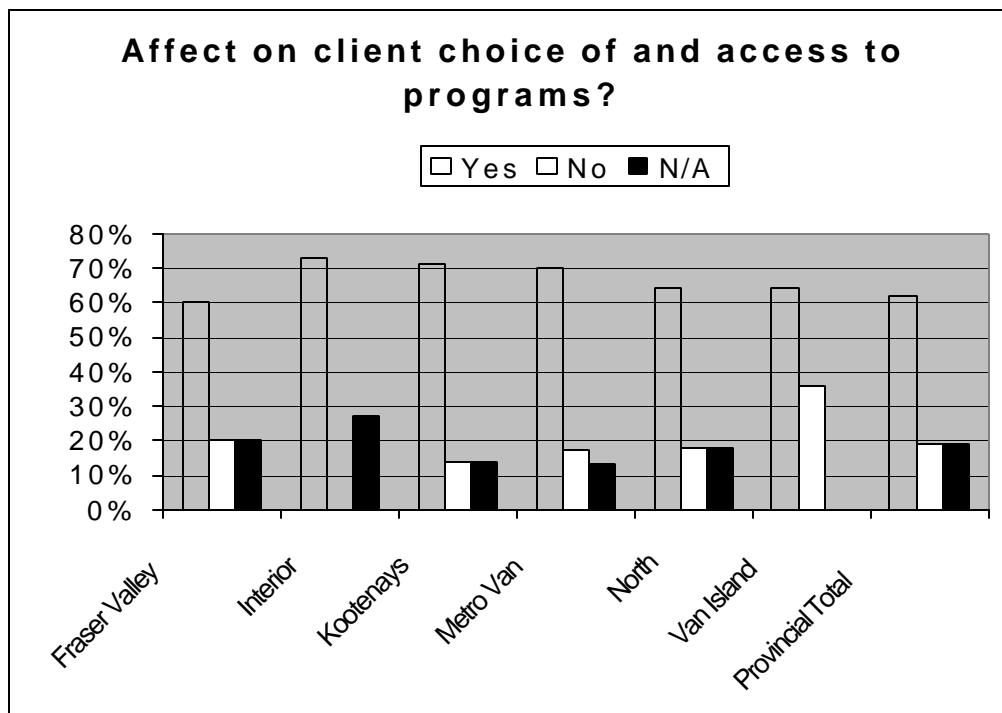
"Our HRDC office is quickly disintegrating! They only fund outreach type services despite our continual high unemployment rates of over 15%."

"HRDC financial management is a disaster!"

Question #13

Does the HRDC case management system affect client choice of and access to programs?

The following graph shows that overall 19% of respondents answered “not applicable” to this question. The reason may be that they do not receive HRDC clients; HRDC clients go through a formal case management system. 62% of the respondents stated that the HRDC case management system does indeed affect choice and access and the balance of 19% felt that access and choice is not affected.



The survey asked respondents to indicate in what way the HRDC case management systems affects clients. Of those who responded to the client choice and access component, we found that there is a general feeling across the province that the clients have been negatively affected by having less choice and less access to programs. The only region of the province that differed was the Interior where 57% indicated clients have more choice and they were equally split between whether clients currently have more or less access to programs.

"More individualized support over longer periods of time; more access, more choice on individual service - less programming."

"A lot of clients complain they are dictated to as to what (training) they want to go for."

"The ARC has become a direct competitor and does not refer to our agency."

"The most needy do not make it through the process. They need the assistance of 'holistic' programs. The process is too long."

"Learn about programs on all options, clients may not have known about these options."

"Case management per se seems to have had little impact."

"Too slow and complicated/and more confusion."

Question #14

How are the Phases of the BC Benefits program affecting your agency?

Not one agency in the province reports that their organization was at less financial risk. In fact, 33% of the sixty-six agencies report an increase. Fluctuating demand for service leads to both a lack of service stability and a lack of service consistency in communities. Changing targets with the resulting inability to have a long term vision or plan has resulted in agencies managing by crisis. Clearly the financial risk is of uppermost concern to respondents. While B.C. Benefits was created to serve the needs of clients, it may in fact be destabilizing the service delivery community. This delivery community is the key to assisting clients to become independent of income assistance. Destabilizing them may result in the BC Benefits program failing to achieve the goals of government.

Columns do not necessarily total 100% since respondents were given the option of multiple choices or may not have answered parts of the question. All percentages are based on the total number of respondents. The total number was calculated by including every respondent to any part of the main question.

n = 66

REGION	Decreased Financial Risk	Increased Financial Risk	Increased Demand for Services	Decreased Demand for Service	Increased Staffing	Decreased Staffing	Increased Programs	Decreased Programs
FRASER VALLEY	0%	50%	30%	40%	20%	40%	30%	50%
INTERIOR	0%	50%	50%	50%	25%	25%	0%	50%
KOOTENAYS	0%	50%	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%	50%
METRO VANCOUVER	0%	56%	17%	56%	11%	50%	11%	73%
NORTH	0%	33%	78%	11%	44%	11%	55%	11%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	0%	33%	24%	52%	14%	43%	24%	57%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	0%	44%	33%	44%	18%	36%	23%	45%

"Decreased demand when Phases were introduced; increased demand when Early Intervention Program was brought in."

"Most people on BC Benefits opt for student loans; others are too frightened to take the risk."

"...recently we experienced a program cut...2 lay-offs/2 reduced hours staff... we will have to hire and retrain..."

"client and staff frustration with a policy that restricts appropriate clients from entering MAETT funded intervention."

Question #15

How are the Phases of the BC Benefits program affecting clients?

81 % of the respondents state there is less access for clients. It is interesting to note that 40% of the respondents from the North indicate there is more access to programs for clients. This differs significantly from the rest of the province.

Province-wide, 73% indicate less choice. The differences are evident in each of the regions, however. The following chart shows the regional fluctuations for each of the categories. In the opinion of the respondents, the outcomes of B.C. Benefits have been opposite to the intention of the program.

n = 79

REGION	More Access	Less Access	More Choice	Less Choice	More Finding Own Jobs	Less Finding Own Jobs	On IA Longer Time	On IA Shorter Time	Unemployed Shorter Time	Unemployed Longer Time	Under-employed
FRASER VALLEY	10%	80%	10%	70%	20%	10%	20%	20%	20%	30%	60%
INTERIOR	20%	80%	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%	70%	0%	30%	50%
KOOTENAYS	0%	83%	0%	66%	0%	50%	0%	66%	0%	66%	66%
METRO VANCOUVER	16%	89%	10%	89%	5%	42%	5%	58%	5%	58%	47%
NORTH	40%	40%	20%	50%	30%	30%	20%	50%	10%	50%	50%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	8%	91%	8%	78%	4%	26%	0%	52%	4%	69%	74%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	15%	81%	11%	73%	11%	30%	6%	42%	6%	54%	59%

"In the Government's attempt to save money, they are creating barriers to financial independence"

"BC Benefits has created more programs but the phases result in less access/choice by the individual"

"Client morale and motivation is going down the tube! There is a general loss of hope"

"Pressure to get off IA causes people to make short term decisions"

"People with low literacy skills spend 10 months looking for jobs when they could be developing reading, writing, math..."

"Increased inertia and lower self-esteem while waiting to be eligible for Phase 3 programs."

Question #16

What do you believe have been the effects of the BC Benefits program on your community?

Responses to this question were varied. Overall, ASPECT respondents indicated the B.C. Benefits program has resulted in: fewer people being helped, increased poverty, increased health care costs, and increased criminal activity. Since respondents had the ability to choose more than one category, no column or row will total 100%.

n = 79

REGION	More People Helped	Less People Helped	Decreased Poverty	Increased Poverty	Decreased Health Costs	Increased Health Costs	Decreased Criminal Activity	Increased Criminal Activity
FRASER VALLEY	38%	46%	0%	54%	0%	31%	0%	8%
INTERIOR	50%	40%	10%	40%	0%	30%	10%	10%
KOOTENAYS	25%	75%	0%	75%	0%	50%	0%	75%
METRO VANCOUVER	10%	89%	0%	47%	0%	42%	0%	32%
NORTH	60%	30%	10%	50%	10%	50%	10%	50%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	22%	78%	4%	74%	4%	35%	0%	52%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	30%	65%	4%	57%	3%	38%	3%	35%

People are forced to engage in a lifestyle in which ... potential for physical danger and damaged sense of self-worth... results in higher health costs"

"The application process is more demoralizing and slower"

"Fewer people are eligible for Income Assistance"

"Benefits have decreased"

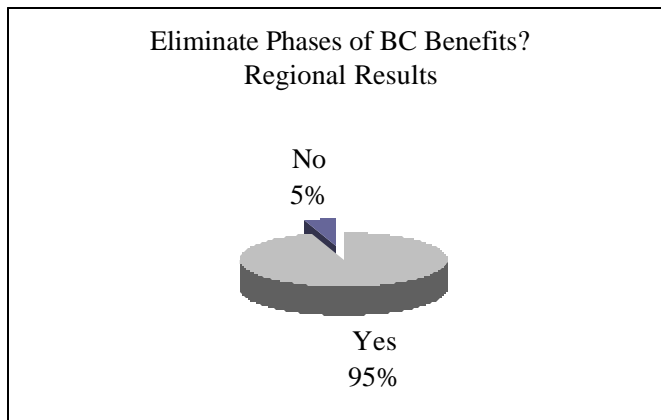
"High percentage of clients on anti-depressant drugs."

"We've got a casino, 2 pawn shops and a Salvation Army opened up...does that sound progressive."

Question #17

In your opinion, should the Phases of the BC Benefits program be eliminated?

An overwhelming 95% of respondents indicated that the Phases of the BC Benefits program should be eliminated. This result points to a need for further investigation by the province to assess the value and the efficacy of the phase system for clients receiving income support.



n = 89

REGION	Yes	No
FRASER VALLEY	92%	8%
INTERIOR	100%	0%
KOOTENAYS	100%	0%
METRO VANCOUVER	90%	10%
NORTH	89%	11%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	100%	0%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	95%	5%

"Not worth the administration and monitoring; (let's) put money into helping people when they need it."

"...strongly feel earlier intervention is required."

"I think clients are most likely in a position to make life and career changes within the first few months of being on assistance."

"Any person receiving BC Benefits should be entitled to all training or employment services from day one until they find work."

"Let's help them as soon as possible."

"People on income assistance sometimes have to wait too long for services, which increases depression, helplessness, etc."

Question #18

Have the requirements for financial and outcomes reporting affected the amount of time spent on the administration of the programs?

There was considerable agreement in responses to this question. Provincially, 90% of respondents answered affirmatively. Of those, 96% felt that more time was required. The comments below give a qualitative view of this issue. These and other comments from respondents clearly show that the reporting requirements utilize staff time to such a degree that client service is compromised.

n = 93

REGION	Yes	No	Less Time	More Time
FRASER VALLEY	92%	8%	9%	91%
INTERIOR	90%	10%	0%	100%
KOOTENAYS	100%	0%	0%	100%
METRO VANCOUVER	88%	12%	0%	100%
NORTH	80%	20%	0%	100%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	93%	7%	0%	92%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	90%	10%	1%	96%

"It seems we are constantly attending meetings to keep on top of all the changes occurring in our sector."

"When I brought this up to funders (HRDC), I was told to reduce the number of client services hours."

"Regardless... we just work more to complete the tasks."

"Replace meetings with electronic communication; many meetings seem (to be) for the benefit of government workers."

"The reporting required for both HRDC and the province indicate that short-term cost savings and accountability to the 'tax-payer' are more important than the delivery of quality service which results in long-term savings."

"Provincial demands are focussed on micro-management. They are more focussed on policies than on clients."

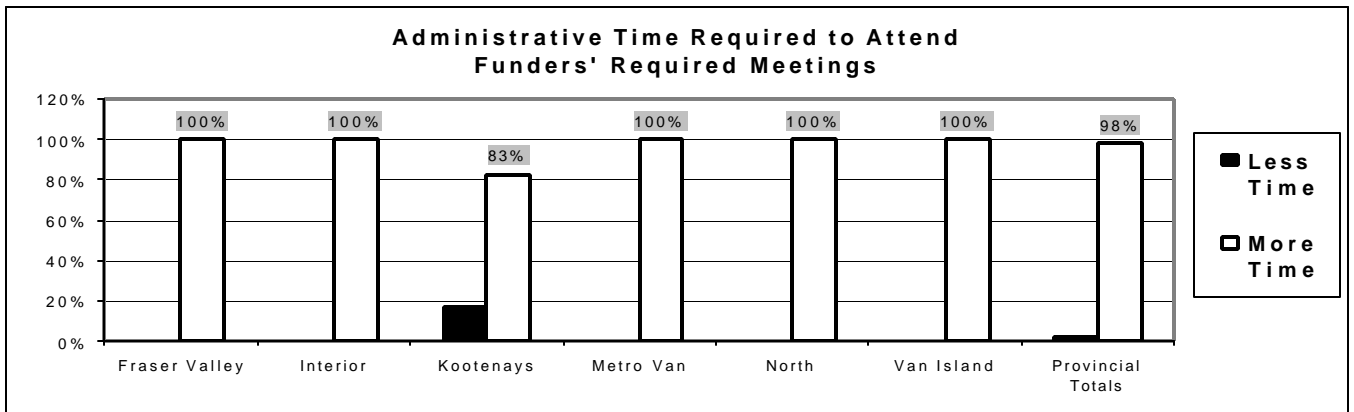
Question #19

Has the requirement (by funders) to attend meetings affected the time spent on the administration of programs?

For respondents who answered “yes” or “no” to this question the provincial total of 71% indicate that administration time is affected by the requirement to attend meetings. Of those, 98% indicated that more time is spent to fulfil the government requirement to attend meetings. The Interior was the only area of the province where they recorded that less time is required (17%)

n = 89

REGION	Yes	No
FRASER VALLEY	75%	25%
INTERIOR	67%	33%
KOOTENAYS	100%	0%
METRO VANCOUVER	52%	48%
NORTH	64%	36%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	82%	18%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	71%	29%



“Replace meetings with electronic communication, many meetings seem for the benefit of government workers.”

“When I brought this up with funders, I was told to reduce the number of client-service hours, HRDC.”

“Meetings are necessary to ensure smooth operations.” “But it is worth it!”

Question #20

Is your agency sufficiently compensated for the administration of programs?

80% of respondents indicated that they receive insufficient government compensation for the administration of programs. This lack of appropriate administrative capacity is a contributing factor in the destabilization of the service delivery sector. Both the federal and provincial governments will need to revisit their policies regarding the administration value of the services that are provided to their clients by community based service deliverers in British Columbia.

n=95

REGION	Yes	No
FRASER VALLEY	36%	64%
INTERIOR	20%	80%
KOOTENAYS	0%	100%
METRO VANCOUVER	18%	82%
NORTH	15%	85%
VANCOUVER ISLAND	21%	79%
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	20%	80%

"Both governments have decreased their administration dollars, but increased their expectations."

"There is no recognition given to the value of good administration."

"There is not adequate recognition of costs."

"Never - we are often asked to do follow-up and additional reporting when there is no funding provided for this in the contract."

"Not to industry standard."

"We likely invest twice as much."

Question

What suggestions can you make to resolve problems associated with program and funding changes?

ASPECT included a question in the survey that would afford the respondents the opportunity to tell us what changes they would suggest. It is our belief that criticism of policies and programs must include “strategies for change”. There were many suggestions and these have been divided into natural groupings. Please note that, subsequent to the survey completion, responsibility for programming was moved from MAETT to a new ministry. That ministry is the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security (MSDES) which will include the former Ministry of Human Resources. The balance of this document reflects that change.

The strategies for change fall into the following categories:

- Communication
- Partnerships
- Fair Payment of Services
- Holistic Programming
- Contracting

Communication

Consultation

Many respondents recommend consultation with service providers prior to implementation of new programming. One advised that ministries should “listen to the wisdom and experience of front line staff in terms of which policies make sense and which do not”. They suggest greater ongoing “true” consultation. They suggest a collaborative and consultative relationship between funder and service provider to create programs that will have the greatest value for clients and their outcomes.

Information

Keep everyone informed. Respondents suggest that governments share their goals and their vision. There was a suggestion that these goals and vision should be developed from community-up instead of government-down. They recommend that governments develop more effective communications strategies that result in a less formal but full exchange of information.

Community Liaison

This is very important to have effective communication levels between service providers and government departments. It was felt that it would result in a smooth and seamless process for clients. There was a suggestion that government employees be trained in the “dynamics of power” in order to help them to be accountable in their use of power. In

addition, it was recommended that “sensitivity training” be included for federal and provincial staff.

Partnership

Much was repeated as it relates to the concept of partnerships. There were partnership suggestions around government to government, ministry to ministry, agency to agency, and government to agency.

They suggest better interministerial cooperation with more jointly funded programming. In addition, much was said about better government to government cooperation related to the labour market development agreement. Resolution of the LMDA and its complete implementation is recommended to order to get on with the business of assisting unemployed people.

Respondents suggest that funders treat service providers as professional colleagues who are working with government as partners to provide quality services to clients.

One respondent recommended that funders continue to support and facilitate interagency collaboration in order to share resources, expertise, and other important activities.

Fair Payment of Services

Frequently repeated was the recommendation that fair compensation be given for services contracted for governments’ clients. Many recommended administration dollars should be included in the contracts for such items as program development, program coordination, increased staffing levels, staff benefits, and professional development among others. It appears that both levels of government expect leviathan efforts from their contractors for insufficient compensation.

There was a strong link made between insufficient compensation and the destabilization of the whole delivery system. The result of a fragmented delivery system will be higher costs, less client service, fewer choices for government to contract delivery, less access for clients, and a system that has more seams than a patchwork quilt.

Holistic Programming

Many suggestions about a client-centred approach in programming that uses as its framework a commitment to help clients to move forward to gain the skills that they need to be more employable. There were some recommendations to return to the project-based model of programming that HRDC used to contract. One respondent stated “our clients need a long term investment (more than two weeks)”. Another stated “put money into educating and empowering people and their situations”.

A client-centred approach would result in recognition that the clients' needs in the north differ from those in the south e.g. higher travel costs, less access to needed services, a smaller pool of jobs.

One respondent had several strongly worded suggestions for the province. That respondent addressed some of the provincial policies for people receiving income assistance by stating "eliminate the completion of humiliating work search sheets; increase transitional benefits; remove the 'once in a lifetime' component; increase return-to-work financial support; eliminate the 'quickest route to employment' mode which is forcing people into unacceptable life choices".

Contracting

Contracts

It was recommended that MSDES have specific timeframes for reviewing and contracting and that they honour those time frames.

Request for Proposals

It was recommended that MSDES make its RFP process more flexible and awarding contracts based on quality of service, client success and results, both short and long term. One respondent suggested that contracts should be awarded using the above criteria not on "how much money can be clawed back this year". Past successful delivery experience should be counted in the awarding of contracts not just the ability to write a proposal (which may turn out to be more sizzle than steak).

Multiyear Contracts

Several respondents recommended that long-term contracts would enable agencies to establish continuity, consistency and stability. One stated that "this is especially important to clients who are embarking on a long-term career plan and are forced to abandon it due to lack of service continuity". Many suggested three (3) year contracts to enhance long term planning, program re-development and redesign and innovation.

Strategies for Change

Recommendation #1

That both provincial and federal governments broaden the criteria for access to government funded programming. Eligibility to be based on a broader set of circumstances than an individual's type of government income support.

Recommendation #2

That programming for people with employment barriers, the working poor, youth, equity groups and immigrants are included in the both governments' policy agenda.

Recommendation #3

That governments re-evaluate their intake and qualification processes to create ones that are less complex.

Recommendation #4

That governments recognize that lifeskills is an important component in holistic programming.

Recommendation #5

That both the federal and provincial governments ensure accessibility for their clients and in doing so revisit the model of project-based training to learn why the model was more accessible than that which currently exists.

Recommendation #6

That both the federal and provincial governments ensure that their delivery mechanism, community service providers, remains robust and able to assist the governments to achieve the best value for its investment in client programming. Best value should mean that clients are economically and socially independent in the long term and able to contribute to the health of their communities.

Recommendation #7

That Phases of BC Benefits be eliminated immediately.

Recommendation #8

That the provincial government review its BC Benefits program to assess whether it has a positive or negative impact on assisting people, poverty levels, health costs and justice system costs.

Recommendation #9

That further research be undertaken by governments to assess whether requiring community service deliverers to “do more with less” is a policy, which enhances or detracts from positive long-term outcomes for clients. The question whether it costs less in the short term but significantly more in the long term needs to be investigated.

Recommendation #10

That both levels of government resolve the issues around the LMDA in an expeditious manner.

Recommendation #11

Interministerial cooperation with more jointly funded programming

URGENT!

ASPECT fax back survey (250) 382-9677

June 9, 1999

To all Executive Directors / Co-ordinators:

ASPECT would appreciate receiving the following information quickly in order to continue advocating effectively on behalf of members. You told us that changes to government funding and programming were impacting on both clients and member agencies. We need your specific information **now**. This data will be collated both regionally and provincially and made available to all member agencies that participate in the survey. Please complete the survey and fax it back to the **ASPECT** office as soon as possible.

This should take about 10 minutes of your time.

Demographics:

Agency operates in

- Fraser Valley
- Interior/Okanagan
- Kootenays
- Metro Vancouver
- North
- Vancouver Island

Identify specific communities

Agency funding consists of

- HRDC
- Other federal
- MAETT
- MHR
- Other provincial
- Other, please specify

Agency provides

- Foundation skills training (includes literacy, life skills, job search)
- English as a Second Language training
- Occupation-specific skills training
- Entrepreneurial skills
- Other please specify

If you wish to receive the survey results, please fill in this box-

agency _____

contact _____

person _____

ASPECT Impact Survey

1. Should access to government funded training be an entitlement?

- N/A Yes No

Comments:

2. Should eligibility for government funded training be broadened to include any or all of the criteria listed below?

- N/A Yes No

If **yes**, please specify (you may check more than one):

- Equity groups Working poor Employment Barriers
 Youth Immigrants Other: _____

Comments:

3. What is the ratio of your agency's eligible to ineligible clients (eligibility as determined by the funder)? For example, 1:3 means for every eligible client, 3 are deemed ineligible.

- 1:1 1:3 1:5 1:10 Other _____

4. "Clients have to go through so many hoops to qualify for government training assistance that they become discouraged and give up."

- In your opinion, this statement is True False

Comments:

5. Is there adequate life skills training available in your community?

- N/A Yes No

Comments:

6. In the past, has your agency received PBT or Block funding from HRDC?

- Yes No

7. Has the elimination of PBT/Block funding effected your programming?

- N/A Yes No

Comments:

8. Has the elimination of PBT/ Block funding effected access to training for clients?

- N/A Yes No

If **yes**, please specify:

- more access less access

Comments:

9. Has the elimination of PBT/Block funding effected your agency?

- N/A Yes No

If **yes**, please specify (you may check more than one):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> decreased financial risk | <input type="checkbox"/> increased financial risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> increased demand for services | <input type="checkbox"/> decreased demand for services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> increased staffing levels | <input type="checkbox"/> decreased staffing levels |
| <input type="checkbox"/> increased number of programs | <input type="checkbox"/> decreased number of programs |

Other _____

Comments:

10. Have the changes to the EI eligibility requirements effected client demographics?

- N/A Yes No

If **yes**, please specify (you may check more than one):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> more eligible clients | <input type="checkbox"/> fewer eligible clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> clients are more job ready | <input type="checkbox"/> clients are less job ready |

Other _____

Comments:

11. Have the changes to EI eligibility requirements effected clients' access to training?

- N/A Yes No

If **yes**, please specify:

- more access less access

Comments:

12. In your community, has client access to HRDC training funds (tuition and books) been consistent throughout the fiscal year?

- N/A Yes No

Comments:

13. Does the HRDC case management system effect client choice of and access to programs?

- N/A Yes No

If **yes**, please specify:

- more choice less choice
 more access less access

Comments:

14. How are the Phases of the BC Benefits program effecting your agency?

(You may check more than one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> decreased financial risk | <input type="checkbox"/> increased financial risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> increased demand for services | <input type="checkbox"/> decreased demand for services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> increased staffing levels | <input type="checkbox"/> decreased staffing levels |
| <input type="checkbox"/> increased number of programs | <input type="checkbox"/> decreased number of programs |

Other _____

Comments:

15. How are the Phases of the BC Benefits program effecting clients?

(You may check more than one)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> more access to programs | <input type="checkbox"/> less access to programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> more choices of programs | <input type="checkbox"/> less choices of programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> more clients finding their own jobs | <input type="checkbox"/> less clients finding their own jobs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> clients on IA for a shorter time | <input type="checkbox"/> clients on IA for a longer time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> clients unemployed for a shorter time | <input type="checkbox"/> clients unemployed for a longer time |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> clients underemployed |

Other: _____

Comments:

16. What do you believe have been the effects of the BC Benefits program on your community?

(You may check more than one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> more people getting help | <input type="checkbox"/> less people getting help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> decreased poverty levels | <input type="checkbox"/> increased poverty levels |
| <input type="checkbox"/> decreased health care costs | <input type="checkbox"/> increased health care costs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> decreased criminal activity | <input type="checkbox"/> increased criminal activity |

Other _____

Comments:

17. In your opinion, should the Phases of the BC Benefits program be eliminated?

- N/A Yes No

Comments:

18. Have the requirements for financial and outcomes reporting effected the amount of time spent on the administration of the programs?

- N/A Yes No

If **yes**, please specify:

- less time required more time required

Comments:

19. Has the requirement (by funders) to attend meetings effected the time spent on the administration of programs?

N/A Yes No

If **yes**, please specify:

less time required more time required

Comments:

20. Is your agency sufficiently compensated for the administration of programs?

N/A Yes No

Comments:

21. What adjustments or plans has your agency made to adapt to program and funding changes?

22. What suggestions can you make to resolve problems associated with program and funding changes?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.