

Supported Employment Program Review

Final Report

February 2025

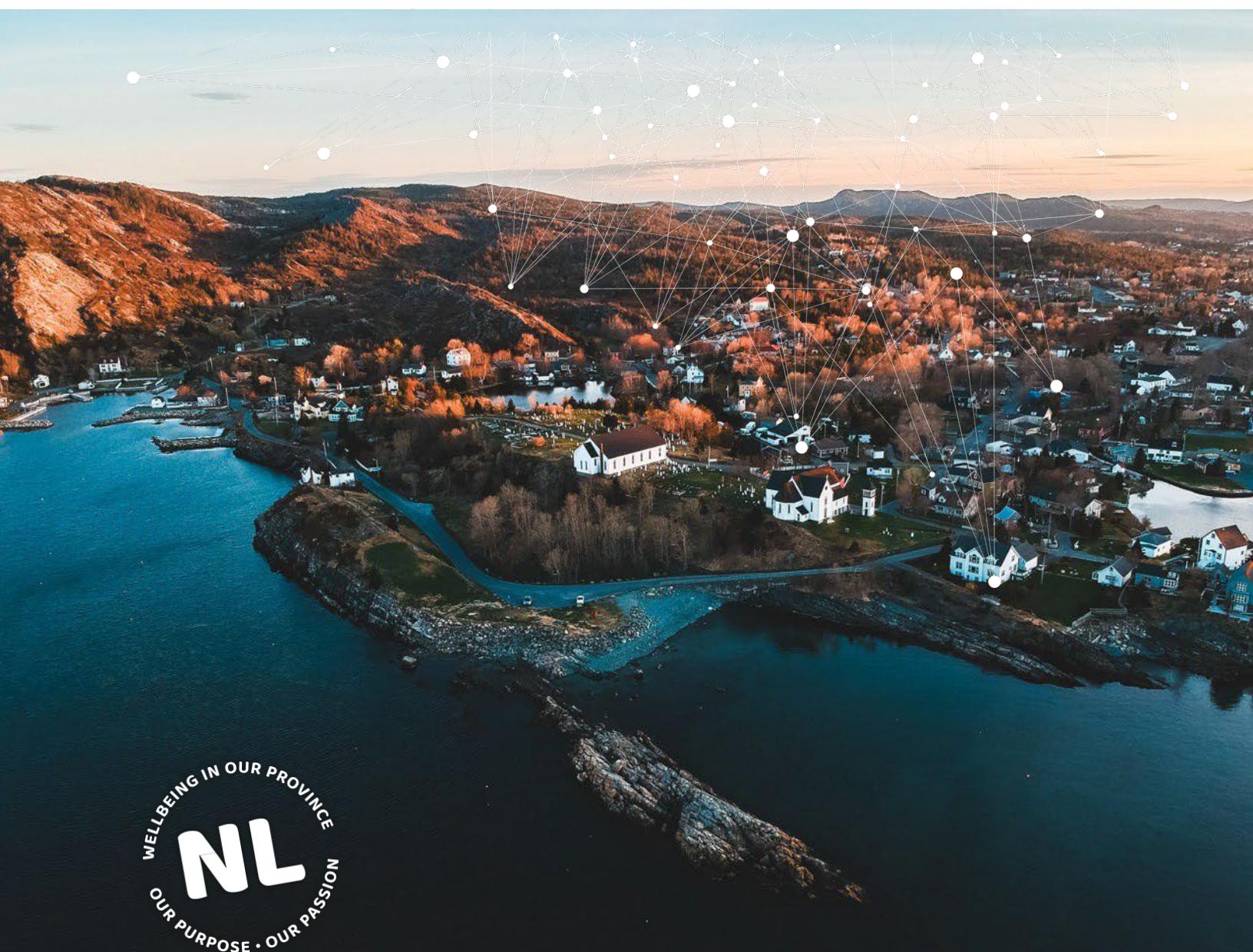


Table of Contents

1.	Executive Summary	2
2.	Introduction.....	6
3.	Background and Context	10
4.	Current State Assessment.....	25
5.	Recommendations.....	58
6.	High-Level Implementation Plan	75
7.	Conclusion	84

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared for the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills (herein referred to as 'IPGS' or 'the Department').

In preparing the content, Deloitte has relied upon materials obtained from IPGS and in the public domain (the "Information") and through interviews with the 18 funded organizations and a sample of Chairs of their Board of Directors. Deloitte has attempted to validate qualitative findings with data analysis where possible.

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1. Executive Summary

Deloitte was engaged to conduct a review of the Supported Employment Program (SEP) and provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness, economics, and efficiency of the program within the current budget. This report provides a current state assessment that identifies key challenges, recommendations to improve the program, and an implementation roadmap. The report is informed by the following: open-source research, including guidelines of other jurisdictions' programs; extensive engagement with agencies, board chairs, parents/guardians, job trainers and subject matter experts; data analysis of a 50% sample of activity reports; and analysis of survey results to job trainers, parents/guardians, and employers.

While the SEP is generally achieving its current mandate to increase the participation of adults and youth with intellectual disabilities in the labour market and support employers to provide natural or reduced supports in the workplace, there are changes that can be made by the Department and agencies alike to improve the success of the program.

Ultimately, it is recommended that IPGS revise the mandate of the program to support eligible participants with developmental disabilities who have the potential to transition to workplace independence over a defined period of time, as assessed based on need and capacity. The Department and the funded service providers ("funded agencies" or "agencies") within the program should implement subsequent changes to the program and services to deliver improved employment outcomes for participants. Better reporting and data collection will allow for improved performance management of agencies and help ensure quality and consistent services across the province.

The following key dimensions frame the current state assessment and ground the recommendations:

- Program mandate and objectives;
- Funding;
- Service delivery;
- Performance management;
- Governance;
- People/workforce; and
- Relationships and collaboration.

1.1 Synopsis

After engagement with key partners and stakeholders, a review of primary and secondary documents and consultations with Subject Matter Experts, the following current state assessment findings were identified:

- Stakeholders stated that the mandate and objectives of the program are clear to them; however, some may be less aware or supportive of the program's mandate to facilitate transitions towards independence.
- Agencies note that they experience a series of funding challenges that include the annual duration of the contracts, gaps in financing between payment periods, lack of administrative capacity, and inconsistent funding across agencies.
- The program's eligibility standard creates inequities across the province, is not inclusive to those with other developmental disabilities (warranting an Autism pilot, for example) and increasingly do not align with evolving diagnosis practices.
- The maturity of assessments varies across agencies with some using tools grounded in good practices and others leveraging only ad-hoc discussions.
- Agencies leverage both job trainer supports and purchased employment for distinct reasons or preferences.
- Job trainers typically assist participants with job-related tasks, provide holistic supports, and function as an intermediary between the participant and the employer.
- Agencies identified that program participants currently do not transition towards independent employment due to gaps in disability-related supports, financial supports, participant skillsets, and employer push-back as primary barriers.
- Quarterly reporting was found to be administrative taxing for agencies, focused on clients served and not aligned to outcomes, and prone to inconsistencies.
- Executive Directors reported that they feel generally well-supported by their boards; however, many boards are having difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteer board members.

- Recruiting appropriately skilled staff and job trainers remains a challenge at the salary levels provided through program funding.
- Relationships and collaboration with local organizations are critical for agencies to fulfill the program mandate and/or provide wrap-around supports to achieve employment outcomes.

These findings informed the below recommendations:

- IPGS should expand program eligibility to include persons with developmental disabilities, as defined by holistic assessment tools.
- IPGS should deem eligible those who align with program objectives.
- IPGS should define and document the new program mandate and identify explicit principles and objectives. These will inform outcomes and metrics for reporting and allow IPGS to tailor eligibility criteria.
- Agencies should clearly document program processes and executive staff responsibilities to meet service standards.
- Agencies should collaborate and develop an inventory of work capability assessment tools to help ensure a robust capability assessment including a transition plan to independence.
- Agencies should work with job trainers and employers to ensure that all applicable parties are aligned to the holistic plan for the participant, including transition to independence.
- Agencies should establish high-level criteria for job trainers and employment counsellors.
- Oversight boards should develop and enforce conflict-of-interest policies to ensure independent governance.
- Agencies should develop and maintain a comprehensive list of supports- and communicate these social supports to participants as needed.
- Agencies should collaborate to reduce duplication and explore the sharing of administrative functions or infrastructure.
- IPGS should establish and monitor service standards for agencies to enhance the quality and consistency of service delivery across the agency network.

- Based on changes to program mandate, objectives, and improved reporting data, IPGS should re-assess the current service delivery arrangements.
- IPGS should streamline the number of funding applications and financial/activity reports and develop guidelines regarding intervention reporting and classification.
- IPGS should advocate for the provision of multi-year service agreements.
- IPGS should develop a transparent methodology of allocating program budgets to agencies and document its flexible and advance payment policies.
- IPGS should develop a framework for agency performance measurement (PMF) and ensure that the agency performance management is informed by direct program stakeholder feedback.
- SENL should implement an appeals process for parents/guardians and employers that disagree with agency decisions to transition participants towards workplace independence.



2. Introduction

Deloitte was engaged to review the SEP, including the School-to-Work Transitions (STWT) Program and the Employment Transitions for Individuals with Autism Pilot (Autism Pilot). This report reflects extensive engagement and information and data review and is intended to contextualize gaps so that recommendations can be well-understood.

2.1 Project Objectives and Scope

The Request for Proposal (RFP) outlined that the objective of the review is to assess performance and improve the effectiveness, economics, & efficiency of the programs within the current budget. Activities defined within the scope includes:

- Design and implement a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan including continued engagement of Departmental Subject Matter Experts (SMEs);
- Complete a current state analysis, supported by metrics, of the current program delivery model;
- Complete an analysis of operational, financial, and human resource structures;
- Synthesize all data into themes, provide a summary of current state, and identify opportunities for improved employment outcomes and operational efficiencies using current program budgets;
- Provide recommendations based on leading evidence and stakeholder feedback with consideration to financial and change management implications;
- Submit a final report which includes a comprehensive gap analysis, supported by metrics, outlining current state and recommendations for innovations;
- Submit a high-level implementation plan which outlines dependencies and risks.

2.2 Project Approach

To conduct the review, Deloitte applied the following approach over the course of 9 weeks.

Table 1: Project Approach Timeline

	Phase 0-1: Initiate & Align	Phase 2: Drafted Current State Assessment	Phase 3: Opportunity Assessment & Recommendations	Phase 4: Final Report & Implementation Plan
Objectives	~1 week	~3 weeks	~3 weeks	~1-2 weeks
	Initiate the project and align on scope, objectives, success criteria and ways of working with IPGS & SMEs	Drafted Current State Assessment of the SEP and gap analysis	Opportunity assessment for improved employment outcomes & operational efficiencies within current budgets and co-designing of Implementation Plan	Finalize the draft comprehensive report and refine in collaboration with IPGS and SMEs
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align on ways of working Submit preliminary data & documentation request to IPGS Conduct project kick-off with IPGS & SMEs Refine the stakeholder engagement plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data & document review Conduct narrative analysis Conduct interviews and focus groups with 18 funded agencies and key Chairs of oversight boards Conduct survey for job trainers and parents/guardians Conduct preliminary literature scan as input to assessments Leverage advisory panel Consolidate insights & findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct gap & opportunity analysis against key dimensions Tailor leading practices regarding functional assessment approaches to IPGS' needs Define & prioritize recommended initiatives with IPGS & SMEs Develop implementation plan with actionable and prioritized recommendations Define risks, mitigations & enablers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report development & feedback Presentation of final deliverable (Milestone #2) to IPGS and invited guests Optional pro-bono session on leading practices

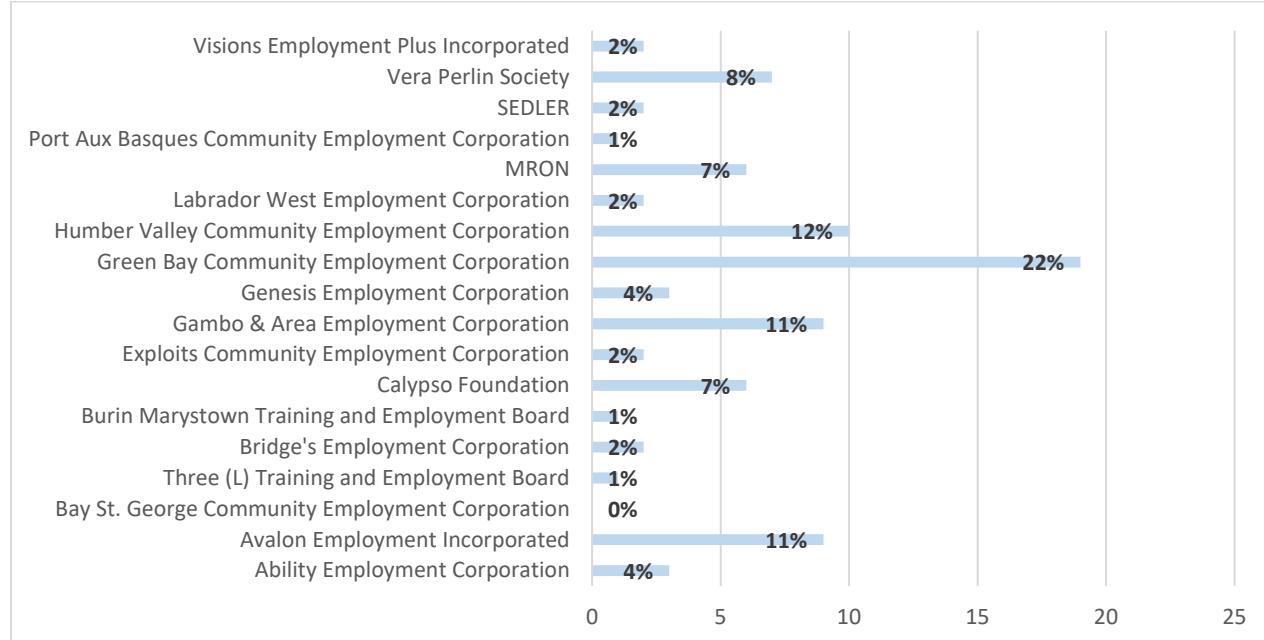
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Finalized Project Workplan ✓ Data and Document Request ✓ Project Management Cadence ✓ Stakeholder Engagement Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mid-Point (Current State Assessment) Report ✓ Preliminary Gaps ✓ Presentation of Draft Current State Assessment (Milestone #1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identified Opportunities for Improvement ✓ Prioritization of Recommendations for Improved Employment Outcomes and Operational Efficiencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Final Report ✓ Presentation of Final Report (Milestone #2) to IPGS & invited guests
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The following five key sources informed the development of this report:

- A review of primary documents provided by IPGS. Examples include but are not limited to: past reviews of the SEP, program guidelines, program budget breakdowns, annual contracts, and a 50% sample of activity reports over two years;
- A review of secondary literature from open sources, including guidelines of similar programs in other jurisdictions;
- Consultations with both IPGS Program SMEs and Deloitte SMEs;
- Engagement with key partners and stakeholders, including:
 - 20 interviews and focus groups with all eighteen funded agencies and key board chairs.
 - A survey designed for employers, of which 85 employers responded.
 - A survey designed for both parents/guardians and job trainers, of which 188 parents/guardians and job trainers responded. Of the 188 respondents, 52% identified as a job trainer and 48% identified as a parent/guardian.

As indicated by the figures below, each agency was represented within the Employer survey except for Bay St. George Community Employment Corporation.

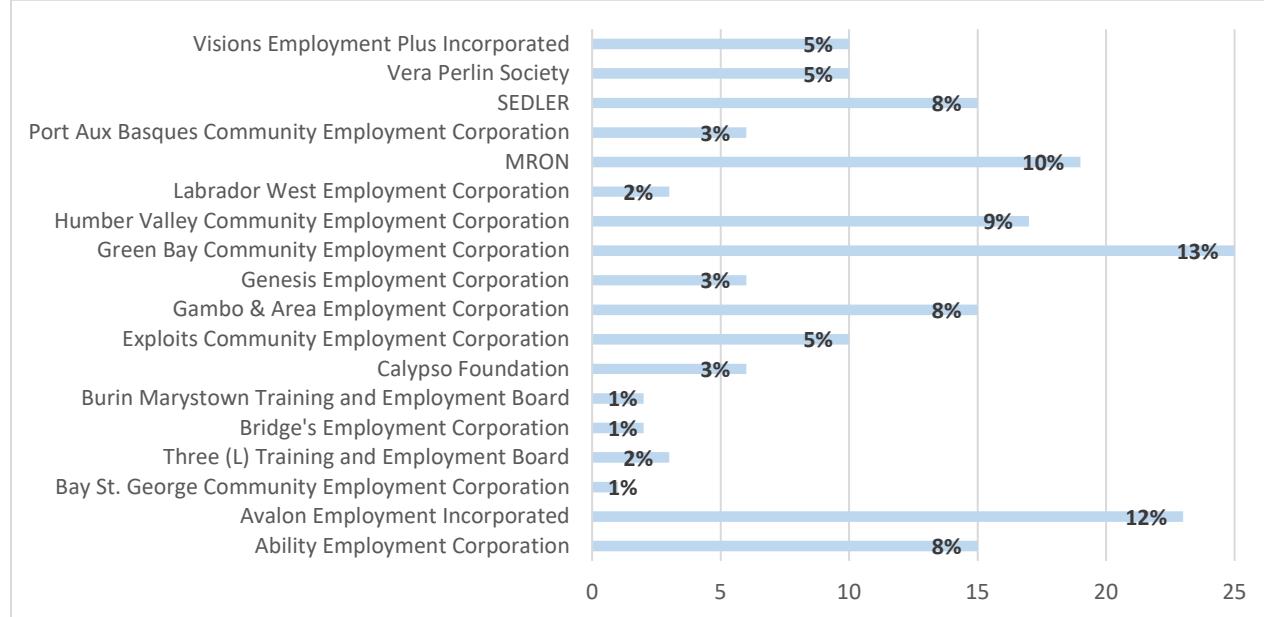
Figure 1: Number of Employer Responses by Funded Agency



Source: SEP Employer Survey

All 18 funded agencies are represented in the survey for job trainers and parents/guardians.

Figure 2: Number of Job Trainer and Parents/Guardians Responses by Funded Agency



Source: SEP Job Trainer and Parents/Guardians Survey

3. Background and Context

The following section provides a snapshot of demographics of persons with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as key drivers for change that are impacting employment services for those with disabilities across Canada. This information is intended to provide necessary background to understand the dynamics of the program in Newfoundland and Labrador. Following this, an overview of the Supported Employment Program provides critical context prior to a more detailed assessment of current state dimensions.

3.1 Newfoundland & Labrador Demographics

According to 2021 Census data, Newfoundland and Labrador's population is approximately 510,550, with about 40% living in urban areas in or around St. John's.¹ The 2022 Survey on Disability conducted by Statistics Canada found that 31.8% of individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador aged 15 and older reported living with at least one disability. This figure has increased by 5.8 percent since 2017, which can be partially attributed to population aging and an increase in mental-health related disabilities among youth and working-age adults.²

Notably, persons with disabilities often face multiple, co-occurring disabilities. In 2022, 37% of persons with disabilities had two or three co-occurring disability types, and 34% had four or more, including intellectual disabilities. The 2022 Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Canada found that persons with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador are twice as likely to be unemployed and face a 24% lower labour force participation rate relative to persons without disabilities.³

The prevalence of developmental disability within Canada is about 1.5 percent among individuals aged 15 and older. This prevalence rate produces an estimated 6,635 persons living with developmental disabilities in Newfoundland.⁴

¹ [Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population \(www.statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www.statcan.gc.ca)

² [Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022 \(www.statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www.statcan.gc.ca)

³ [Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities in 2022: Results from the Labour Force Survey \(www.statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www.statcan.gc.ca)

⁴ [Infographic: New data on disability in Canada, 2022 \(www.statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www.statcan.gc.ca). Developmental disability is a term that refers to life-long disabilities that affect one or both physical and intellectual functioning.

3.2 Change Drivers

There are clear change drivers for employment services and supported employment programs across Canada that create further pressures for the Department, the funded agencies, job trainers, and clients alike.

A push by consumers for digital services and access to goods puts additional pressure on agencies, employers, and employees with intellectual disabilities to build digital literacy and skills:

- COVID-19 accelerated digital transformations across all sectors, requiring agencies, employers, and employees to onboard new digital literacy skills.⁵
- Equally, automation has changed the job market by eliminating particular jobs, increasing demand for others and leading others to require new sets of skills.⁶
- While Canadians as consumers are increasingly requiring digital access to services and goods, employers and employees must adapt to these needs.
- The mismatch of skills in the labour market is exacerbated by the rapidly changing digital skills required of workers.⁷

Those with intellectual disabilities generally have poorer employment outcomes than their non-disabled peers due to lower-paying jobs, lower occupational status and higher unemployment rates and are thereby affected by economic drivers:

- The cost of living is rising, resulting in many who are working minimum wage jobs still unable to appropriately support themselves. 7.6 percent of Canadians are unable to make ends meet despite working. Persons with disabilities and individuals from marginalized groups are over-represented in these figures.⁸

Social change drivers create both pressures and opportunities for those with intellectual disabilities, depending on other socio-ethnic factors.

⁵ [Government trends 2022 \(deloitte.com\)](https://www.deloitte.com/canada/en/capital/2022-government-trends.html)

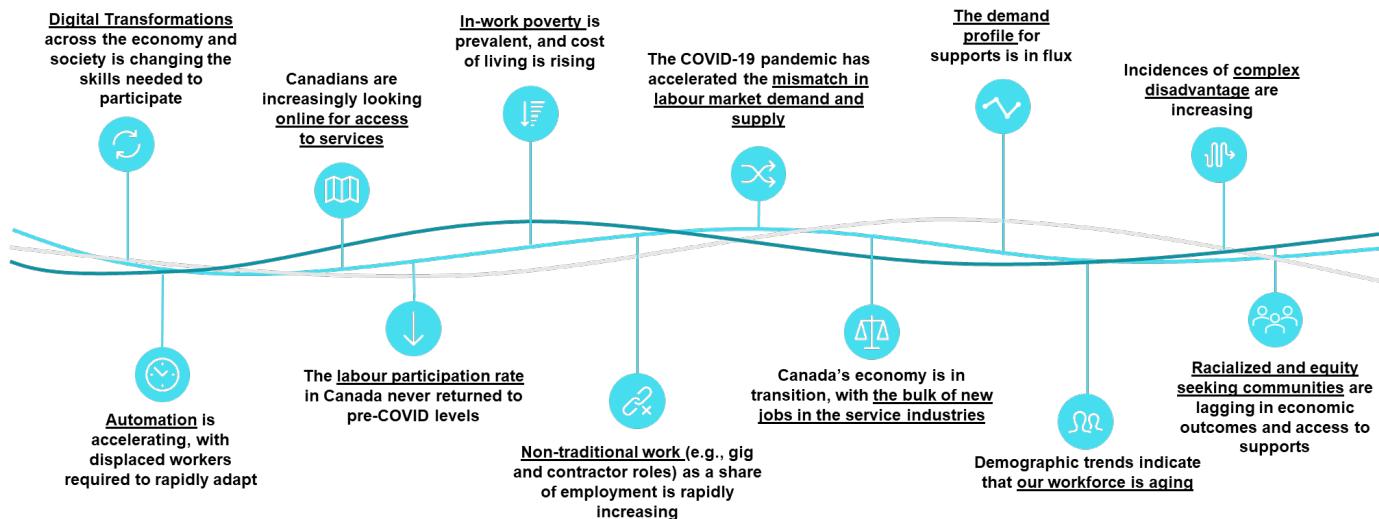
⁶ [Reweaving the social safety net \(deloitte.com\)](https://www.deloitte.com/canada/en/capital/reweaving-social-safety-net.html)

⁷ [CATALYST - CANADA AT 2030 \(deloitte.com\)](https://www.deloitte.com/canada/en/capital/catalyst-canada-2030.html)

⁸ [Infographic: Inequalities in working poor Canadians \(canada.ca\)](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/canada-poor-canadians.html)

- Due to the aging workforce and the impending record of retirements, there is an opportunity for those with disabilities to find employment and thrive in the workforce with the right holistic supports including but not limited to: tailored job training, accommodations, assistive technology, transportation, counselling, orientation and guidance, funding and supports that reduce social barriers to meaningful employment.⁹
- During the pandemic, the prevalence of mental health and other forms of disability leave in the workplace increased, thereby drawing employers' attention to the needs for better supports for all employees.
- Racialized communities and other equity seeking groups continue to lag in employment outcomes and are disproportionately impacted by economic trends and disruptions.¹⁰

Figure 3: **Emerging Change Drivers for Employment Services:**



In addition to the above, the minimum wage in Newfoundland and Labrador will increase by \$0.60 as of April 1, 2024. In accordance with Labour Standards Regulations, this will increase the minimum wage \$15.60 per hour and overtime wage rate to \$23.40. This increase will place more pressure on both the operational and supported employment budgets; agencies will need to increase both operational staff wages and job trainers, for those currently being paid the previous minimum wage.

⁹ [Canada faces record retirements from an aging labour force \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www.statcan.gc.ca)

¹⁰ [EmploymentGaps-Immigrants-PPF-JAN2020-EN.pdf \(fsc-ccf.ca\)](https://fsc-ccf.ca)

3.3 A Provincial Commitment to Individuals with Disabilities

Newfoundland and Labrador have a series of legislations that support inclusion at large, including but not limited to:

- the Adult Protection Act;
- Powers of Attorney Act;
- Buildings Accessibility Act and Regulations;
- Human Rights Act;
- Self-Managed Home Support Services Act;
- Service Animal Act.

The province also manages a series of programs and services for individuals with disabilities, including:

- The Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities;
- Employability Assistance for Persons with Disability;
- Support Trusts;
- Permanent Disability Benefit (Student Aid);
- Income Support;
- Accessible Vehicle Funding and more.

IPGS has a suite of programs and services to assist individuals to become employed. This includes several employment supports specific for persons with disabilities, including:

- Subsidizing access to assistive technology,
- Workplace accommodation assessments;
- Employment counselling.

A comprehensive list of supports available to persons with disabilities across the Newfoundland and Labrador Government can be accessed [here](#).¹¹

¹¹ [Guide-to-Programs-Services-2024.pdf \(gov.nl.ca\)](#)

3.4 Supported Employment Program Overview

The SEP is funded by IPGS with the purpose of increasing the participation of adults and youth with intellectual disabilities in the labour market and support employers to provide natural or reduced supports in the workplace. The objective of the program is to provide the appropriate level of support to increase the individual's independence and transition them off supports when possible. Supports are provided to help ensure the success of the individual in the employment setting. These supports can range from orientation or work analysis to full-time support from a Job Trainer.

The SEP currently provides services to 868 persons with intellectual disabilities (inclusive of the Autism Pilot) through 18 funded agencies across the province at the total cost of \$14.4 million annually. The SEP is delivered by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Program has been historically supported by a combination of Provincial and Federal Government funding through four distinct funding envelopes, which are:

- **Operational funding**, to support organizational costs (e.g., rent) and program delivery salaries for the provision of all activities related to case management *except* for costs directly related to the provision of a job trainer and/or purchased employment. The current annual budget for operational funding is \$4,639,978; this budget has remained relatively steady since 2014-2015, when a 1.5% general increase was provided to all agreements.
- **Supported Employment funding**, to support the salaries of job trainers (or purchased employment). The annual budget for supported employment is \$10 million as of 2023-2024, which increased from \$6.8 million in 2017-2018.
- **STWT funding**, to support the salaries of job trainers (or purchased employment) that are supporting individuals enrolled in high school. The annual budget for STWT is \$250,000.
- Since 2020, a select number of funded agencies began participating in the **Autism Pilot** to develop services and supports for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The Pilot was initially funded by a one-time \$3.5 million investment by the Federal Government. The Pilot has been funded annually from surplus from this initial investment.

A summary of agency budgets and clients served can be found below.

Tables 2 : Overview of budget and clients served by agency.

Agency	Operational	Supported Employment		STWT		Autism Pilot
	Budget	Budget	Clients	Budget	Clients	Clients*
Ability Employment Corp.	\$318,920	\$821,292	52	\$7,973	2	40
Avalon Employment Incorp.	\$635,776	\$561,042	59	N/A	N/A	36
Bay St. George Community Employment Corp.	\$288,433	\$751,33	39	\$29,214	3	N/A
Burin Peninsula Supported Employment Services Corp. (BPSEC)	\$204,010	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Three (L) Training and Employment Board	N/A	\$177,736	10	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bridge's Employment Corp.	N/A	\$179,980	13	N/A	N/A	N/A
Burin Marystow Training & Employment Board	N/A	\$176,618	9	N/A	N/A	N/A
Calypso Foundation	\$245,287	\$72,294	9	\$2,165	1	N/A
Exploits Community Employment Corp.	\$215,585	\$954,749	56	\$15,394	2	28
Gambo & Area Employment Corp.	\$371,255	\$1,906,930	123	\$25,562	8	16
Genesis Employment Corp.	\$229,026	\$295,993	24	\$51,588	6	N/A
Green Bay Community Employment Corp.	\$141,373	\$415,064	30	\$36,679	4	N/A
Humber Valley Community Employment Corp.	\$294,125	\$1,062,582	44	N/A	N/A	9

Source: SEP Contracts and Number of Clients Supported document provided by IPGS

15 | Supported Employment Program Review

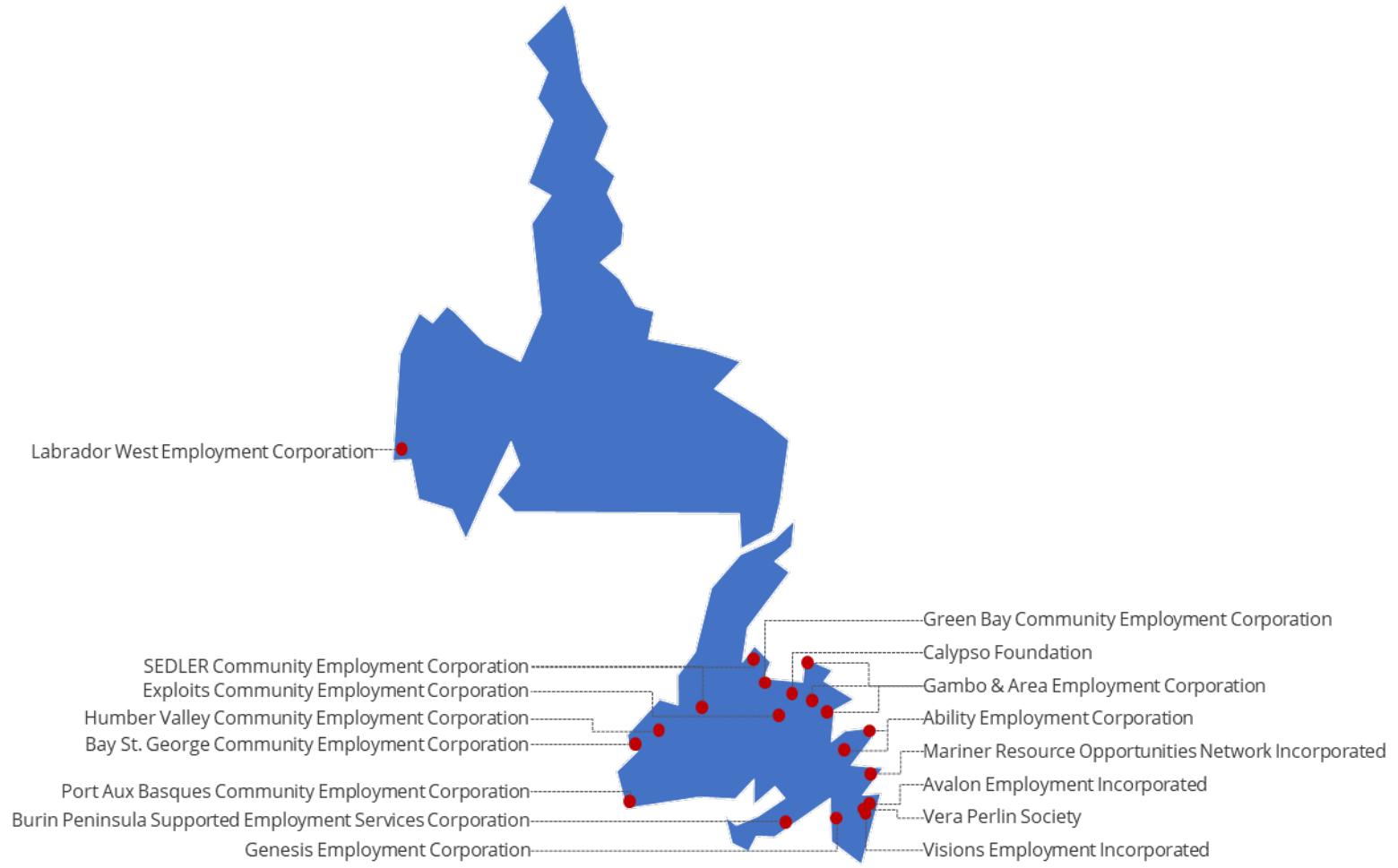
Labrador West Employment Corp.	\$179,090	\$106,471	13	\$2,233	1	15
Mariner Resource Opportunities Network Inc. (MRON)	\$356,468	\$350,838	45	\$44,014	14	6
Port Aux Basques Community Employment Corp.	\$225,776	\$698,276	34	N/A	N/A	14
Supported Employment for Deer Lake and Extended Region Inc. (SEDLER)	\$287,462	\$893,322	39	\$28,393	5	3
Vera Perlin Society	\$201,100	\$308,412	37	N/A	N/A	N/A
Visions Employment Plus Inc.	\$446,292	\$181,571	19	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average	\$289,999	\$550,806	36	\$24,322	5	19
Total	\$4,639,978	\$9,914,503	655	\$243,215	46	167

3.5 Geographic Presence

The 18 funded agencies operate across the province. Three agencies serve the city of St. John's and surrounding communities, whereas the rest of the agencies are located across Newfoundland and Labrador to provide access to the program in smaller towns and rural communities.

Below is a map that visualizes the location of the agencies and their satellite offices.

Figure 4: Location of Funded Agencies and their Satellite Offices



Source: [Locations \(www.senl.ca\)](http://www.senl.ca)

The wide geographic distribution of communities across Newfoundland and Labrador creates challenges in providing equitable access to the program. Multiple agencies operate satellite offices to enhance their geographic presence; however, in certain regions agencies reported that the travel distance between their office and community served can be up to

130km. An agency that serves island communities reported up to a 4-hour return travel time from their office to visit certain regions in their catchment.

Individual agencies serve as many as 48 distinct communities (as defined by 2021 census divisions), with some communities populated by as few as 60 people. The total populations of communities served by agencies ranged from 4,410 to 205,955 individuals. An analysis of the agency's self-reported catchment areas reveals that almost all communities are served by only one agency.

Notably, there is significant overlap and potentially duplication of services between the catchments of Exploits Community Employment Corporation and two other agencies, the Calypso Foundation, and the Green Bay Community Employment Corporation.

- 97% of the Green Bay Community Employment Corporation's catchment population is also serviced by Exploits Community Employment Corporation.
- 61% of the Calypso Foundation's catchment population is also serviced by Exploits Community Employment Corporation.
- 28% of Exploits Community Employment Corporation's catchment population is serviced by either the Calypso Foundation or Green Bay Community Employment Corporation.

While there is duplication of catchment areas (geographies) within St. John's and surrounding communities, there may be specialized services required dependent on locations and clients served. Any specialized services should be well understood before a decision can be made that could incur gaps in service and affect employment outcomes.

The table below summarizes per-agency funding and client figures alongside a profile of relevant service delivery information.

Table 3: acc Agency Funding Summary and Service Delivery Profiles

Agency	Est. Pop. Catchment	Total Funding*	Total # of Clients*		Full-Time Equivalents	Additional Services Provided
			FY2021	YTD		
Ability Employment Corp.	14,861	\$1,148,185	59	54	8	Youth Employment Program; Learning Center
Avalon Employment Incorp.	205,955	\$1,196,818	56	59	9	MentorAbility ; Social Enterprise;
Bay St. George Community Employment Corp.	13,651	\$1,068,980	40	42	4	N/A
BPSEC*	18,114	\$738,344	32	32	2.5	N/A
Calypso Foundation	6,479	\$319,746	11	10	2	Work Oriented Rehabilitation Centre
Exploits Community Employment Corp.	35,537	\$1,185,728	58	58	4	N/A
Gambo & Area Employment Corp.	30,296	\$2,303,747	139	131	6	STEPS for success ; Student transitional planning; SET mentoring

Agency	Est. Pop. Catchment	Total Funding*	Total # of Clients*		Full-Time Equivalents	Additional Services Provided
			FY2021	YTD		
Genesis Employment Corp.	4,410	\$576,607	26	30	3	Student transitional planning
Green Bay Community Employment Corp.	6,278	\$593,116	40	34	1.5	Amplify ; Linkages ; Inclusive Playground; SET mentoring
Humber Valley Community Employment Corp.	27,329	\$1,356,707	43	44	4	N/A
Labrador West Employment Corp.	24,550	\$287,794	14	14	3	N/A
MRON	29,354	\$751,320	53	59	6	N/A
Port Aux Basques Community Employment Corp.	4,990	\$924,052	33	34	3	SET mentoring , basic cooking pilot, caregiver support group
SEDLER	26,106	\$1,209,177	49	44	3	N/A
Vera Perlin Society	205,955	\$509,512	40	37	2.5	Wide range of services provided through broader non-profit
Visions Employment Plus Inc.	201,758	\$627,863	28	19	5.5	Non-IPGS funded services for persons with autism

Agency	Est. Pop. Catchment	Total Funding*	Total # of Clients*		Full-Time Equivalents	Additional Services Provided
			FY2021	YTD		
Average	54,004	\$924,856	40	37	4	
Total	864,062	\$14,797,696	721	701	67	

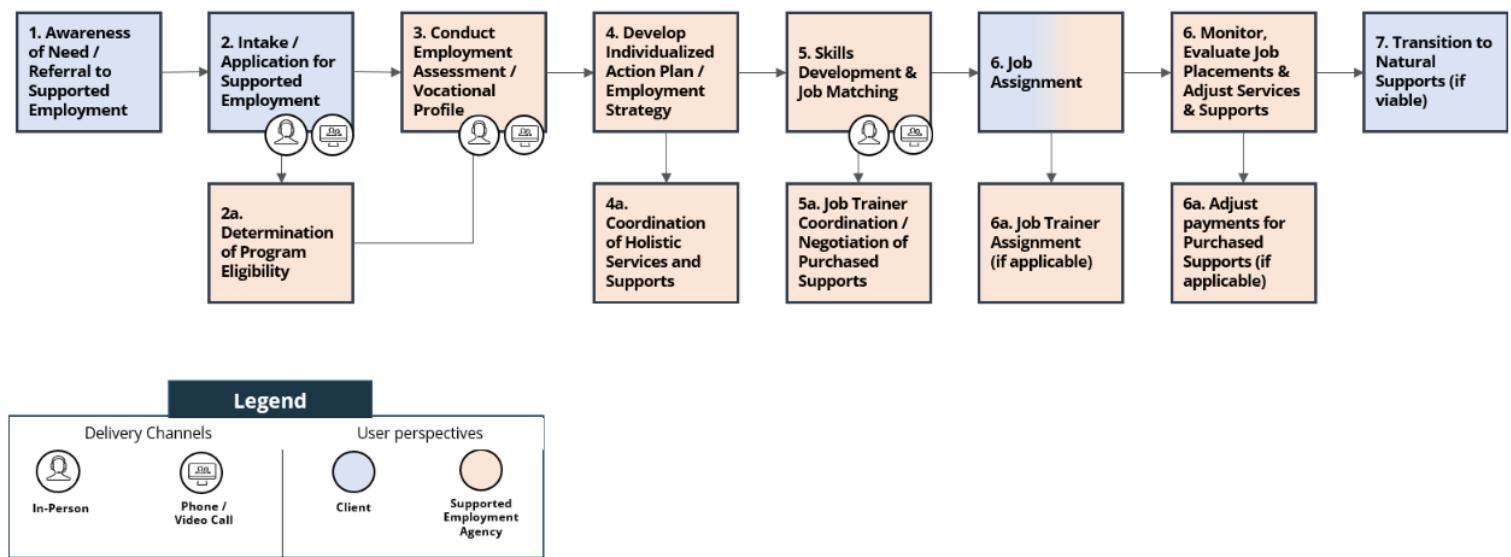
*Funding and client numbers exclude Autism Pilot data; figures for BPSEC sub-unit organizations (Three (L) Training and Employment Board Bridge's Employment Corp, and Burin Marystown Training & Employment Board) are consolidated to facilitate comparisons across agencies.

Sources: SED Contracts and Number of Clients Supported document provided by IDCC and Agency Self-Reported Figures

3.6 Program Administration

A client process flow of Support Employment Program services was developed per departmental information and discussion with SMEs.

Figure 5: Preliminary Supported Employment Program Process Workflow



Program eligibility guidelines are standardized across the province and governed by IPGS. To be eligible for the program, participants must provide written documentation of a diagnosis of a development disability from an approved professional (registered psychologist, physician, or social worker). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition states that individuals with intellectual disabilities are required to have an IQ of less than 70 to be diagnosed with an intellectual disability.

Once a client is determined eligible, agencies assess program participants to determine level of supports needed and identify potential job placements in which the participant will be successful.

Following assessment, agencies participate in several activities to prepare their participants for successful job placements. These activities may include:

- Resume building and job interview skills development;
- Guidance regarding job search and providing labour market information;
- Employment counselling;

- Individualized action plan and employment strategy development; and
- Case management support.

Agencies are responsible for securing employment for program participants by matching them with suitable employment opportunities based on their location, capabilities, and preferences. Agencies may also work with local employers to develop a customized role for the program participant's job placement.

Job trainers are matched with program participants prior to their job placement to prepare them for employment, and job trainer supports are provided to the participant according to their individualized employment plan (note: individualized employment plans are distinct to the needs of each participant). An example of supports that are provided by a job trainer once the participant has started work includes:

- Guidance and direction on the employer's expectation and workplace standards;
- One-on-one, on-site training and support, including orientation to workplace health and safety as required;
- General orientation to the workplace and assistance in understanding the culture of each individual workplace, (e.g., lunchroom etiquette, the social environment, and activities, etc.);
- Identifying, anticipating, and resolving issues as they arise during employment;
- Working with the participant and the employer to identify and make use of internal/external training and career development opportunities that align with the objectives and goals of their supported employment action plan;
- Helping build the participant's work capacity, support better access to workplace benefits, achieving higher employment income, increased social interaction with co-workers and improved integration within the work setting.

Purchased support is an arrangement used by agencies when an employer is willing to have an existing staff member provide required support to the participant instead of using a job trainer. To facilitate this support arrangement, agencies will negotiate a purchased support agreement with the employer, stipulating an amount to be paid to the employer for every hour worked by the program

participant. This amount (which is usually approximately half of the participants hourly wage), is used to compensate the employer for providing disability-related supports to the program participant. Wage top-up for the employee who is providing the supports or used by the employer to compensate for lost productivity of the employee in their own job duties while providing supports.

Agencies are responsible for continually monitoring job placements and adjusting the level of supports they provide to participants with the intention to free up resources for new job placements.

Each funded agency within the SEP is governed by its own volunteer board of directors. The board of directors operates independently of IPGS, although their ability to enact policy changes are constrained within program contractual parameters. Agencies apply to IPGS on an annual basis for each source of funding (Operational, Supported Employment, STWT, Autism Pilot), and are required to provide quarterly activity and financial reports for each one-year contract.



4. Current State Assessment

The following section provides an assessment of the SEP's current state. Challenges and gaps identified in assessing key dimensions of the program: mandate, funding, services, performance management, governance, workforce, and relationships, inform the recommendations and the implementation plan.

4.1 Program Mandate & Objectives

The SEP's official program mandate is to increase the participation of adults with intellectual disabilities in the labour market and support employers towards natural supports in the workplace.

Stakeholders interviewed noted that there may be confusion among employers and parents/guardians regarding the mandate of the program. According to a survey of these stakeholders, they self-assess to have a strong understanding of the program mandate:

- **For Employers:** 92% indicated that they are clear or very clear on the program mandate.
- **For Parents/Guardians and Job Trainers:** 91% indicated that they are clear or very clear on the program mandate.

Despite these results, interviews with agencies revealed that some employers and parents/guardians are less supportive of the program's mandate to transition program participants towards independence (see [4.3. Service Delivery](#) to learn more).

Despite their stated mandate to provide purely employment-related supports, agencies identified a need to provide wrap-around services beyond the mandate of the program to achieve employment outcomes. For example, an agency identified that a lack of accessible transportation affected clients' ability to commute to work independently. To address this, some agencies reported that their job trainers support clients with their transportation.

Another agency, located in a jurisdiction with more services available, provides a list of local resources on their website which includes a link to accessible vehicle funding provided by the government, such as wheelchair accessible services, accessible buses, and local taxi services.

Key Finding:

- Stakeholders identified that the mandate and objectives of the program are clear to them; however, some may be less supportive of the program's mandate to facilitate transitions towards independence.

4.2 Funding

Agencies consistently reported concerns regarding their funding levels and funding schedules across the four envelopes previously mentioned, with some agencies supplementing provincial funding through additional sources. An analysis of program contracts revealed funding disparities between agencies and clients served.

4.2.0.1 Operational Funding

Through Newfoundland and Labrador's Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA), IPGS receives federal funding to support the provision of Employment Assistance Services (EAS) to all unemployed individuals within Newfoundland and Labrador who are legally entitled to work in Canada.¹² Agencies that participate in the SEP apply to IPGS for EAS funding to support operational costs associated with the delivery of programming.

During interviews with agency EDs, inconsistent funding was highlighted as a concern by those that felt that they were unfairly compensated relative to other funded agencies. Funding disparities can be explained, in part, by operational contract agreements negotiated between agencies and the federal government at the time of devolution.

4.2.0.2 Supported Employment and School-to-Work Transition Funding

Funding for the provision of job trainers as part of the SEP and STWT are cost shared between the Canada – Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Development Agreement and Labour Market Development Agreement. Agencies must apply to IPGS to receive funding for each program. Funding levels are informed by agency projections regarding the expected number of participants for the upcoming year and costs associated with providing the intensity of support required by each participant. Funding allocations are not standardized across agency on a per-client basis, nor are cost projections calibrated based on a set of common indicators regarding support intensity.

Funding is not driven by historical performance relative to client outcomes (see [4.4 Performance Management](#) to learn more). If an agency's client volumes do not match expected numbers, or an agency has budget remaining at the end of the fiscal year, IPGS

¹² [Employment Assistance Services: Program Guidelines \(www.gov.nl.ca\)](#)

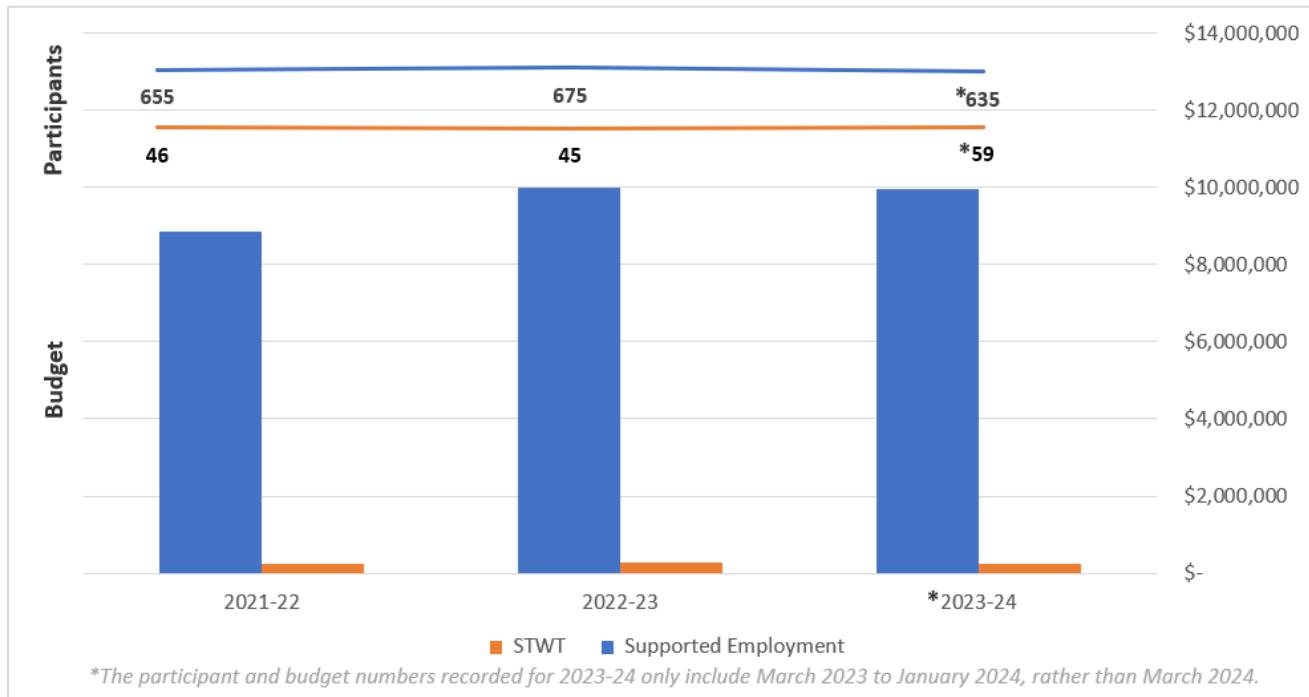
reported that they will reduce that agency's budget for the next year. IPGS reported that in cases where the sum of agency budget projections exceeds total program funding, they have reduced each agency's budget allocations by a flat percentage to remain within program budget.

According to Executive Directors, agencies do not currently have the ability to hire additional job trainers and accommodate new clients within funding allocations. As more participants transition to independence with independence as the primary program objective, new participants can be admitted and served within the program and moved through. IPGS noted that less than 10 per cent of the overall budget can support new participants annually. Agency budgets are amended on a month-by-month basis to support agencies that have maximized their budget but are experiencing demand to hire new job trainers and/or enter purchased support agreements. Agencies reported being able to apply for additional funding in such cases, with some noting that their requests were not always fulfilled. On average, agencies accept two to three new clients annually.

Furthermore, many agencies reported that the wage rate afforded to job trainers under current funding levels makes it difficult to attract and retain high quality job trainers. Agencies are expected to keep track of their client waitlist and report on waitlist figures on a quarterly basis; however, this reporting appears to be recorded inconsistently across agencies (see [4.4 Performance Management](#) to learn more). The actual number of clients who can not access the program, therefore, can not be accurately ascertained.

The figure below shows the year over year budgets and participants supported by the Supported Employment and STWT programs. STWT funding has remained stagnant, whereas participant numbers have grown nearly 30% in the last three years. The Supported Employment budget increased by 12.9% from fiscal year 2021 to 2022, with participant numbers remaining stable year over year.

Figure 6: Year over Year Supported Employment and STWT Budget and Participants



Source: SEP Contracts and Number of Client Supported document provided by IPGS

4.2.0.3 Employment Transitions for Individuals with Autism Pilot

At its inception in 2020, funding for the Autism Pilot was provided by IPGS through the LMDA's Labour Market Partnership Program.¹³ Agencies that participated in the Pilot received \$8,000 per financially supported participant for the fiscal year alongside operational funding. IPGS shared that the Pilot is currently funded on surplus funding from an initial government investment of \$3.5 million.

4.2.1 Funding Schedule

Funding for all four programs associated with Supported Employment is approved on an annual basis through single-year contracts. Payments are scheduled throughout the contract term, subject to the submission of quarterly activity and financial reports. Payments are provided quarterly; however, the proportion of the annual contract value provided at each payment date vary across agency and program and are defined in each program contract. IPGS noted that they provide flexible payment scheduling for organizations that experience seasonality in client demand.

¹³ Labour Market Partnerships (www.gov.nl.ca)

Although IPGS noted that they are willing to provide advance payments to cover unforeseen budget shortfalls in between payment and/or contract periods, some agencies appeared to be unaware of this flexibility and reported that gaps in financing between payment and/or contract periods hindered their operational fluidity throughout the year.

Agencies interviewed identified multiple concerns regarding the single year contract terms for each program. All 18 agencies noted that applying for each individual program on a yearly basis creates administrative burden for their staff. Uncertainty regarding the renewal of yearly contracts affects their ability to engage in long-term planning and hampers the recruitment and retention of job coaches and administrative staff. Some agencies identified that they are only able to fund new clients through remaining budget surplus; therefore, they reported being unable to take on new clients until the end of the fiscal year, when they could confirm that they would have available funds. Finally, agency representatives also reported feeling 'disparaged' by the need to apply for funding every year given their longstanding history of delivering the program.

Many agencies and job trainers surveyed expressed that multi-year contract funding would enable them to engage in better long-term planning and provide the financial security necessary to retain their employees and job trainers.

4.2.2 Additional Funding Sources

Agencies reported different methods of supplementing their program budgets beyond IPGS funding, such as social enterprises and charitable organizations. The Vera Perlin Society's Supported Employment Program is supported by its broader charitable organization, which fundraises to provide additional administrative salaries to its employees and shares administrative and operational supports to limit costs. Other organizations have operated social enterprises to support administrative salaries and pay for wraparound supports (e.g., transportation funding) not covered under the supported employment mandate.

Agencies have also highlighted that they receive funding from external resources such as Ready, Willing, and Able (RWA). This organization is dedicated to increase the labour force participation of people with an intellectual disability or on the autism spectrum.¹⁴ RWA was cited as a source of additional funding for multiple agencies, especially with clients that did not fit the program eligibility requirements. The Island Furniture Association was also cited

¹⁴ [Who We Are \(www.readywillingable.ca\)](http://www.readywillingable.ca)

by multiple agencies as a non-profit organization that funded clients going to work for their furniture retail stores across Newfoundland.

Agencies reported receiving IPGS funding to deliver the Assisting My Potential – Labour Initiative for Youth (AMPLIFY) program, which offers 25 hours of career and personal development learning opportunities for youth who face barriers towards employment. Some agencies also participated in the Linkages Program, which enabled community organizations to offer 26-week work placements for youth.

Finally, IPGS provides additional sources of funding for disability-related supports that are currently underutilized by agencies, and it is recommended for agencies to become more aware of these supports (see [Recommendation 7.2: Source and/or Share a List of Holistic Supports for Persons with Disabilities](#)). As indicated by the Program SMEs, these funding sources include:

- The Work-Related Supports for Persons with Disabilities Program, which provides workplace accommodations, adaptations, assistive technology devices, and technical equipment up to a maximum of \$5,000 to assist individuals with seeking, obtaining, or maintaining employment.¹⁵ Individuals can be directed to apply for this benefit by agencies.
- EmpowerNL, which provides a province-wide assessment service for persons with disabilities to help determine which adaptive technologies may best meet their needs.¹⁶ The organization also provides services to businesses to help them become more accessible and inclusive towards persons with disabilities.¹⁷

Agencies that reported not exploring other funding sources cited constraints within their administrative capacity and a lack of direction regarding how to access and develop additional sources of funding.

Key Findings:

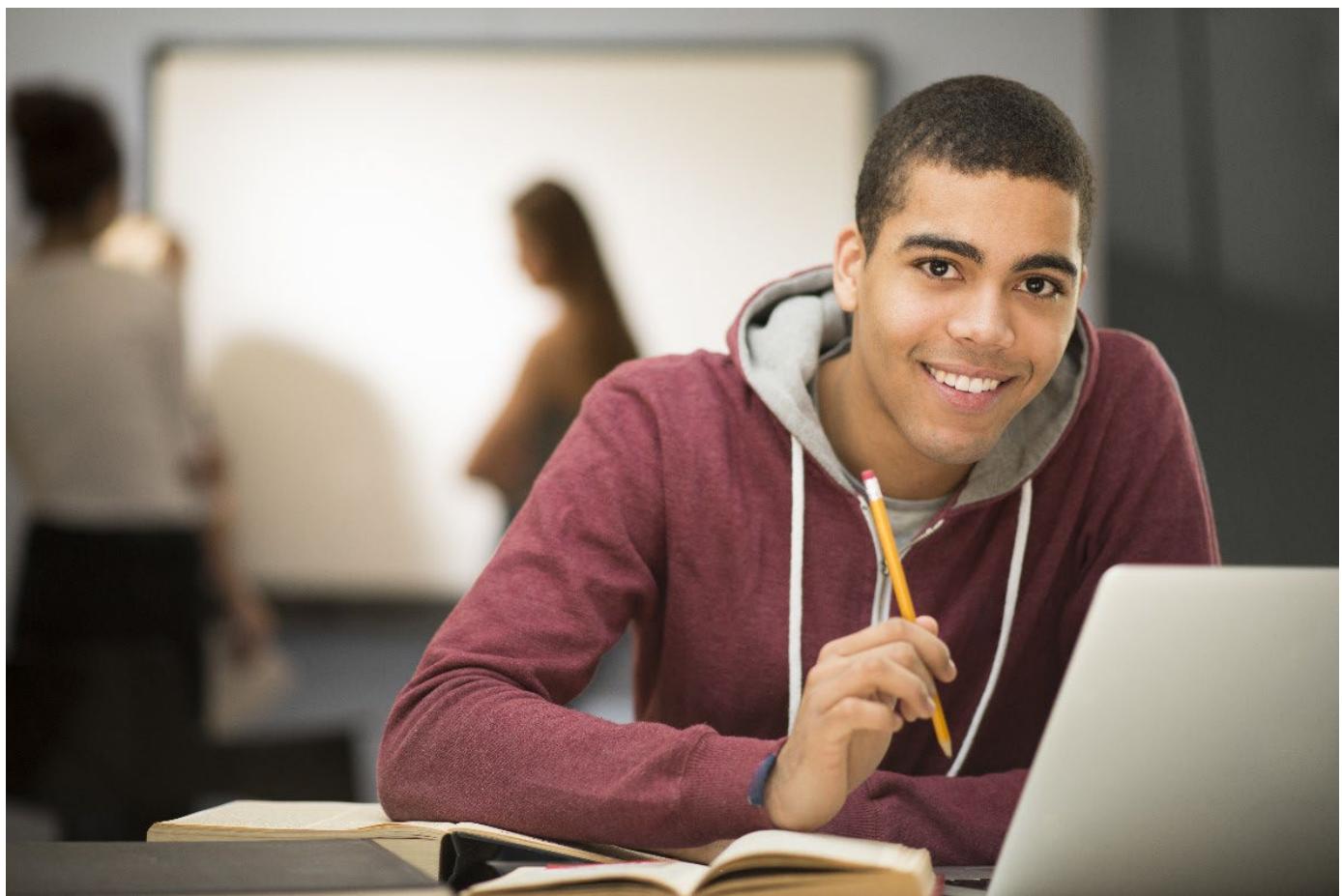
- The one-year contracting structure of the program is a challenge for agencies as it creates administrative burden and makes planning difficult.

¹⁵ [Work-Related Supports for Persons with Disabilities \(www.gov.nl.ca\)](#)

¹⁶ [Adaptive Technology Assessments \(www.gov.nl.ca\)](#)

¹⁷ [Employer Support Services \(www.empowernl.ca\)](#)

- Agencies have identified that gaps in financing between payment periods can create operational challenges in delivering services.
- While some agencies supplement their program budget with revenue from social enterprises and funding from charitable organizations, others report a lack of administrative capacity and/or knowledge to access and leverage these sources of financing.
- Inconsistent funding across agencies due to a history of negotiation with the Federal Government affects services, compensation, and morale.



4.3 Service Delivery

Employers, job trainers and parents/guardians identified the following opportunities for improvement within the 273 survey responses:

- **For Employers:** more flexible seasonal hours throughout the year for participants; more support from the agencies for parents/guardians; increased employer awareness of the program within the community; and additional training opportunities for their employees.
- **For Job Trainers and Parents/Guardians:** more communication, monitoring and scheduling to ensure co-workers are educated on working with individuals with intellectual disabilities; life-skill training for their child; and more social activities to create connections.

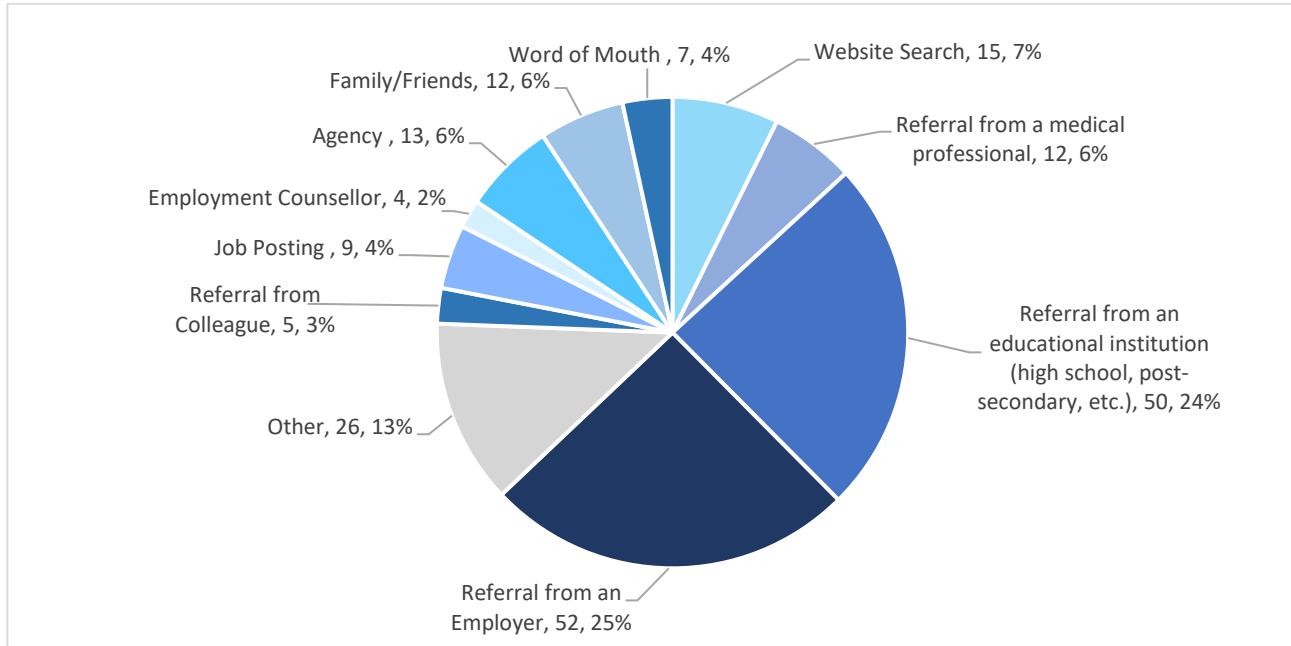
In addition, the surveys also highlighted what is successful about this program:

- **For Employers:** allowing the participant who would otherwise be barred to engage in meaningful employment; financial supports enabling employers to contribute to the program; and being able to see participants transition into confident and independent employees.
- **For Job Trainers and Parents/Guardians:** helping their child obtain employment thereby encouraging their child to become both confident and independent; and providing a sense of inclusiveness within the community.

4.3.1 Program Awareness

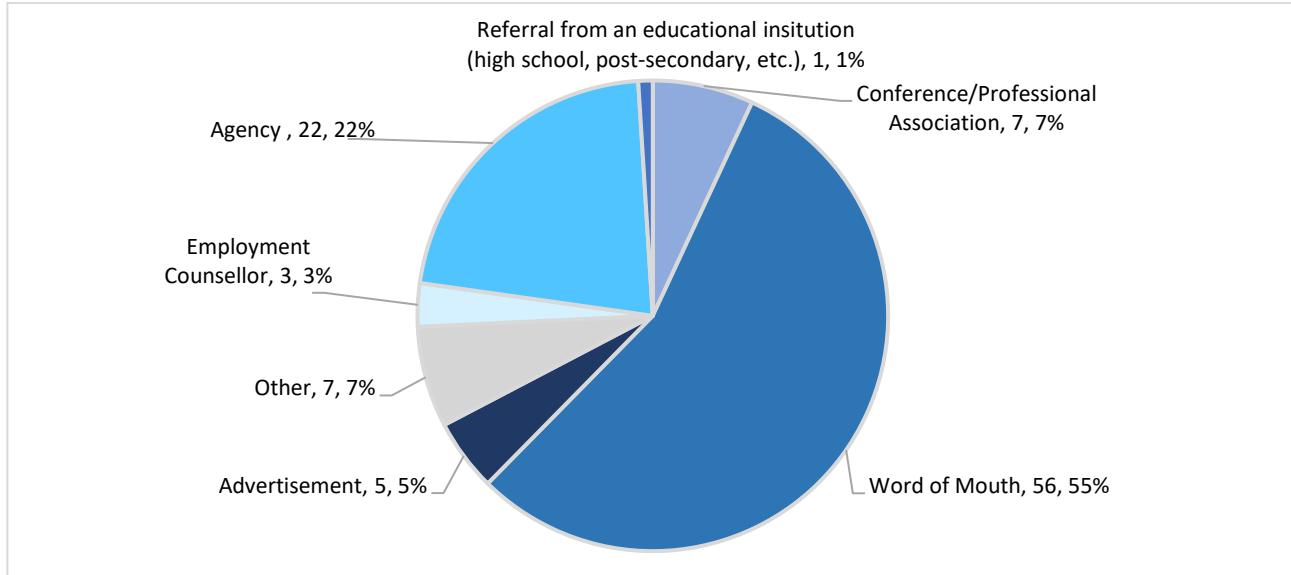
Program participants can self-apply for the program or be referred by schools or other community partnerships and local medical professionals. Other tools agencies have leveraged are websites, newsletters and recruiting at in-person and virtual community events. The figure below visualizes the various means through which individuals become aware of the program.

Figure 7: Job Trainer and Parents/Guardians Program Awareness



Source: SEP Job Trainer and Parents/Guardians Survey

Figure 8: Employer Program Awareness



Source: SEP Employer Survey

As indicated above, when program stakeholders were asked about how they became aware of the program:

- **For Job Trainers and Parents/Guardians:** 49% indicated they became aware of the program due to a referral from either an educational institution (24%) or from an employer (25%).

- **For Employers:** 55% confirmed they became of aware of the program by word of mouth within the community.

Although agencies are not cited as the primary source of information for program participants and employers, their partnerships with schools and community-based awareness campaigns or events influence referrals and word of mouth awareness. According to survey results, the agencies also become the primary source of program information for those engaging with the program: 55% of parents/guardians and job trainers and 49% of employers indicated that employment agencies were their main source of information regarding the program on an on-going basis.

4.3.2 Program Intake (Eligibility)

Agencies have identified multiple challenges associated with the program's diagnosis requirement for eligibility. Firstly, agencies operating in rural communities have noted that potential participants have difficulties obtaining the necessary diagnoses for program eligibility due to the lack of approved professionals in their communities. One agency suggested that the definition of "approved professional" should be expanded to include nurse practitioners to reduce barriers for program participants.

Evolving diagnosis practices and language used by referral partners have also created misalignments with the Supported Employment eligibility guidelines. Many educational institutions are no longer utilizing IQ tests or diagnosing individuals with an "intellectual disability" to classify individuals who otherwise would be eligible for supported employment; therefore, some agencies reported that they communicate directly with guidance counsellors to coordinate the language needed in reports to support the participant in their eligibility for the program. In some cases where the agency has not developed a relationship with the educational referrer, agencies reported being unable to service potential program participants.

Many agencies expressed that they would like to see program eligibility guidelines revised to match the approach of diagnosing disabilities by educational institutions to resolve misalignments around participant eligibility. When parents/guardians were prompted to comment on possible opportunities for improvements about the program,

"The program can be improved to be all inclusive for people with disabilities that require a job coach."

Parent/Guardian



Employment Service Organizations in Australia accept standardized, holistic diagnosis tools such as the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale and WHO Disability Assessment Schedule as well as traditional IQ tests when determining client eligibility for intellectual disability-serving programs and supports.

Source: [Types of disability evidence \(www.ndis.gov.au\)](http://www.ndis.gov.au)

parent/guardians validated that they would like the program to be inclusive for all people with disabilities. Agencies contact IPGS to receive support on handling instances where participants do not as clearly align with eligibility requirements which causes additional administrative requirements for the department.

Key Findings:

- The program's eligibility standard creates inequities across the province, particularly for those living in rural areas who have less access to approved professionals for diagnoses.
- The eligibility criteria increasingly do not align with evolving diagnosis practices.
- IPGS can consider accepting other forms of disability diagnosis beyond the IQ standard.



4.3.3 Program Assessment

Agencies interviewed rely on either a standardized questionnaire or participate in an informal conversation with the program participant to facilitate their program assessment. Through the assessment, agencies hope to be able to develop a vocational profile of the participant to enable them to identify job placements in which the participant will be successful. Examples include understanding the chores that the participant is responsible for at home, jobs that they are interested in, and any goals that the participant would like to achieve. In reviewing a sample of assessment tools by the supported employment agencies, one agency shared three questionnaires: one assessment questionnaire to be completed by the service provider, another assessment questionnaire to be completed at home by the client and/or parent/guardian, and a third for eligibility and other tombstone data. These assessment questionnaires include: 1) employment specific functional assessment such as employment history 2) a take home questionnaire with questions about preferred communication style and physical abilities. A parent, guardian, or social worker typically accompanies the program participant, if available, to provide relevant context and information for the program assessment process.

In addition, agencies often review pre-existing reports and case notes from social workers, guidance counsellors, and medical professionals to understand more about the program participant. Some agencies reported engaging a psychologist to provide an independent psychoeducational assessment of the client, while others noted that this only occurred in exceptional situations due to the associated cost.

Some Executive Directors (ED) have their clients participate in supervised volunteering at local non-profits within their community or have them work within their own social enterprises to understand more about their vocational capabilities and aptitude before matching them to a job and an employer.

Agencies were confident in their individual assessment processes during interviews as they perceived a direct correlation between the assessment and successful job placements for program participants. The maturity of assessment varies across agencies, with some using tools grounded in good practices while others using ad-hoc questionnaires or discussions to facilitate their assessment. Other provinces, such as Ontario, developed proprietary



Employment Service Organizations in Sweden apply a holistic and needs-based assessment; this enables the agencies to provide tailored supports for each individual's sets of needs, ensure referral pathways/services are best suited to drive outcomes and can stream service offerings to appropriately allocate levels of support.

Source: [Subcontracting in public employment services \(www.researchportal.port.ac.uk\)](http://www.researchportal.port.ac.uk)

tools to holistically assess needs and determine appropriate services (see [Recommendation 3: Refine Work Capability Assessments](#)).¹⁸

Some agencies report a difficulty in assessing needs and abilities of participants due to the varying lack of detail in participant reports. In addition, some agencies highlighted experiences where job placements were unsuccessful because parents/guardians or social workers were unwilling to share pertinent participant details during program assessment. Developing trusting relationships with participants, as well as the parents/guardians of participants, was reported as essential to a successful program assessment. To make a client more comfortable, agencies have reported using virtual meeting tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Facebook Messenger. Most agencies and especially those located in rural areas, however, expressed that they limit their virtual systems during the assessment process due to a lack of- or perceived lack of- digital maturity or access to digital services amongst clients and parents/guardians.

speed of trust, so if we don't have trust from our families and trust from our clients, we're not getting anywhere."

Funded Agency

Key Finding:

- The maturity of assessments varies across agencies with some using tools grounded in good practices and others use ad-hoc discussions; there is an opportunity to provide agencies with support to improve their needs assessments.

¹⁸ [Common Assessment for employment related needs \(gov.on.ca\)](#)

4.3.4 Employment Counselling

Many agencies shared that they provide supported employment counselling services outside of the SEP. Agencies also partner with a variety of organizations to deliver additional training and skills development programs to participants (see [4.7 Relationships & Collaboration](#) to learn more). For example, agencies have indicated that they offer online banking services alongside training sessions tailored to empower clients towards achieving greater independence and avoid potential for digital fraud.

Through these initiatives, clients gain essential skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively in the digital realm, fostering greater autonomy and financial literacy. An ED highlighted that through this service a client was able to purchase their own house, vehicle, and other living expenses as they included it in their tailored supported employment plan. Agencies have noted that they also provide these services to individuals that may not qualify for job trainer funding by also leveraging partnerships or other in-house programs.

Parents/guardians noted that reoccurring and scheduled meetings with employment counsellors have been very helpful. In addition, when parents were inquired about other disability-related supports job trainers provide, respondents highlighted:

- Computer use supports and training;
- Literacy, mathematical and budgeting skills;
- Organizational and time management competencies;
- Both short-term and long-term goal setting;
- Social supports in dealing with challenging situations and work cues by practicing these skills with role playing;
- Personal care and other life skills such as meal preparation and hygiene.

Similarly, employers have indicated that employment counsellor follow up appointments and ongoing non-employment related everyday life training and supports has been very helpful. One employer also highlighted that they aid their employee with financial literacy supports such as budgeting.



Avalon Employment Inc. provides a service outside of the Supported Employment Program called MentorAbility, through which job seekers with disabilities across Canada are matched with mentors to explore different career pathways and opportunities in their field of interest.

Source: [MentorAbility \(www.avolonemploy.com\)](http://MentorAbility (www.avolonemploy.com))

4.3.5 Job Matching and Development

Agencies have expressed that the economic landscape and minimum wage hikes have imposed constraints on job trainers thereby reducing capacity and number of hours available for job matching and client supports, especially in rural areas. To be successful, EDs of these funded agencies have confirmed that establishing positive relationships with local businesses proves instrumental in facilitating successful job placements (see [4.7 Relationships & Collaboration](#) to learn more).

Some agencies located in rural areas identified that addressing stigmas of employers has been an ongoing challenge when looking to develop employment opportunities for their clients. To mitigate this, funded agencies have developed and conducted social and informative events, including lunches and tailored training sessions. Agencies suggest that attendance to these events are due to reinforced partnerships and successful program participation by clients. To address challenges related to finding employers, some agencies operate social enterprises that hire program participants with supported employment. Agencies operating these social enterprises reported using any revenue generated by the enterprise to support employee wages, which were slightly above minimum wage.

Survey results validated that:

- 56% of employers have hired **one employee**;
- 18% of employers have hired **two employees**; and
- 25% of employers have hired **more than two employees** through this program.

Within the job trainer and parents/guardians surveys, parents/guardians were asked to confirm what resources/tools have been provided to their child through the program. 30% of parents/guardians confirmed that their child received an individualized action plan and employment strategies, which involves employment counselling and job matching activities. Of these respondents, 90% confirmed this resource was helpful or very helpful for their child/person. When parents/guardians were prompted to comment on possible opportunities for improvements about the program, parent/guardians confirmed that they



Belgium-Flanders leverages digital tools to match clients with job vacancies, using real-time data inputs from clients on job preferences, and from employers based on vacancy descriptions. Clients can adjust weightings and priorities for job vacancies to further tailor their search.

Source: [Summary Report: The VDAB's Innovation Lab \(www.op.europa.eu\)](#)

would like more options for employment opportunities and roles within their community for their child.

4.3.6 Supported Employment

Supported Employment is provided through: (1) financial supports for job trainers hired by an agency or purchased support; and (2) non-financial supports of orientation and work analysis.

4.3.6.1 Job Trainer Supports

39% of parents/guardians of program participants reported that a job trainer accompanied and supported their child to support them in their job responsibilities. Over 4/5 of parents/guardians and employers indicated that the support of a job trainer was helpful or very helpful in assisting individuals transition towards independence.

When parents/guardians were prompted to comment on possible opportunities for improvements about the program, parent/guardians reported that they would like scheduled and reoccurring communication with job coaches about their child's performance and more onsite feedback.

According to job trainers, the two most useful services that they provide the participant are the following activities listed below. Despite this capability being an important part of their job, only 15% report that they can provide this service to current clients reasons as they are not equipped to deal with the complexity of the client nor do they fully understand the workplace and capability needs further validating the importance of appropriate intake, capability assessment and planning:

- Identifying, anticipating, and resolving issues as they arise during employment.
- Helping build the participant's work capacity, support better access to workplace benefits, achieving higher employment income, increased social interaction with co-workers and improved integration within the work setting.

Other disability-related supports job trainers highlighted that they typically provide to participants are job shadowing, assisting the client with the task at hand, encouragement/emotional supports and everyday life supports (e.g., financial literacy and nutrition). All these supports were rated helpful or very helpful resources by the job trainers program participants.

"[My child] does not respond well to verbal direction but needs the modelling which her job coach provides after her supervisors gives her duties for the day."

Job Trainer

4.3.6.2 Purchased Employment Supports

Agencies report that purchased employment can be half as expensive as job trainer support, which can make it a desirable support option when deemed suitable for the individual and employer. Several agencies have noticed a trend towards personalized supported arrangement rather than a co-worker model under an assumption that it is less effort or pressure on the employer.

Survey results identify the prevalence and perceived effectiveness of purchased support:

- **For Parents/Guardians:** 19% confirmed that purchased support was provided to their child and 83% of parents/guardians identified that it was helpful or very helpful for their child.
- **For Employers:** 30% stated that they received purchased support through the program and 90% indicated that it was helpful or very helpful.

When employers were surveyed about the disability-related supports that they provide the employee to assist them to become independent in the workplace, employers responded with the below resources:

- Provide additional coaching, onboarding and literacy supports such as articulating clear expectations, routines, and additional guidance to aid participants to remain focused and fully understand tasks (e.g., providing pictures that show each step on how to complete the task, checklists, and longer orientation timeframes).
- Develop a buddy system to aid program participants when needed for each employee.
- Modifying tasks and job descriptions to ensure the participants can complete the task fully on their own despite their disability to ensure participants feel comfortable and supported (e.g., daily morning meetings to discuss daily tasks to be completed).
- Providing physical workplace modifications and equipment to complete the task (e.g., earpieces to help lower noises onsite).
- Allowing work hour versatility such as more frequent breaks throughout the workday to avoid overwhelming the employee.

Many of the employers surveyed also confirmed that they conducted the following to support SEP participants: seminars for all employees to understand the program and working with their new colleague; reoccurring quarterly meetings with the participants to discuss future opportunities; transportation for participants to get to work; and more job coaching opportunities and life skills supports for participants.

Key Findings:

- Job trainers typically assist participants with job-related tasks, provide holistic supports, and act as an intermediary between the participant and the employer.
- As part of purchased support, employers modify tasks and provide flexible hours to assist participants and provide training seminars to enhance workplace integration.
- Agencies leverage both job trainer supports and purchased employment for different cases as purchased employment is more affordable and job trainers require less responsibility from the employer.

4.3.7 Job Placement Monitoring & Transitions Towards Independence

Agencies have a responsibility according to the program mandate to monitor and adjust the level of supports that they provide to free up resources for new job placements.

Agencies reported engaging in employment site visits to evaluate job placements and assess whether participants are ready to have their level of supports reduced. The assessment process typically involves gathering feedback from employers, job trainers, caregivers, and participants. Employers reported that these on-site visits were often very helpful in supporting individuals transition towards independence. The frequency of these assessments varied from one to three months, with agencies citing a lack of transportation budget and limited staff availability as barriers to engaging in more on-site visits.

Although agencies are not always able to conduct on-site visits, many employers reported that agency staff is available in-person, by phone and/or email, sometimes 24/7, to be contacted for support and to provide updates on their client's placement.

Trusting relationships with a job trainer and/or purchased support and a strong home support system were consistently identified by agencies as the most important contributing factors for participants to successfully transition towards partial or full independence. Particular agencies reported that they "never close a case file" for participants that achieve independent employment and are always available to provide support as requested.

Agencies identified the following as barriers to transition to independence:

- Pushback from employers when attempting to reduce the level of supports provided to their participants. In cases where businesses refused to employ a participant at lower levels of support, the prospect of locating an alternative job placement was particularly difficult for agencies in rural communities.

- Pushback from both parents and guardians when attempting to transition participants towards independence supports. Agencies found it difficult to navigate these conflicts, even when they were confident that the client could achieve a greater degree of independence in their job placements.
- Individuals assessed to have a more severe intellectual disability, such as those with lower working memory, problem-solving capabilities, reading comprehension, and numeracy skillsets, were often unable to transition towards independence. Funded agencies often expressed that independent employment is not a realistic goal for a vast majority of their current participant base, expressing that they expect that many of their clients require lifelong supports to maintain successful job placements.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of employers surveyed confirmed that they faced challenges in supporting employees to transition towards independent employment. These challenges include:

- Lack of literacy skillsets and productivity, such as an inability to focus on tasks at hand or to complete all tasks within the job description and difficulty identifying when tasks need to be completed;
- Consistent coaching and supervision requirements causing time and capacity constraints;
- Work placement duration is not long enough to have the participant be fully independent;
- Parents/guardian interference;
- Onsite environment concerns such as loud sounds;
- Lack of transportation availability within the province.

"The program allows persons with challenges to get the much-needed job experience they need to make the next step into living an independent lifestyle."

Job Trainer

Of these employers, however, 52% confirmed they were able to overcome these challenges identified above and were able to do so by: assigning specific tasks away from busy onsite areas, consistent communication/onsite supports, and providing extensive training so that the employee understands their duties.

When surveyed about the challenges their child/person faces during transition to independent employment, parent/guardians responded with: a lack of disability-related supports to facilitate transition; a lack of employer willingness to have the child/person work independently; lack of transportation supports; and barriers faced due to the extensiveness of their intellectual disability.

Job trainers confirmed the following challenges that they typically experience while transitioning participants towards independence:

- 32% confirmed a participant's ability to complete assigned tasks can be a blocker to independence;
- 17% validated a lack of integration into workplace culture and/or stigma challenges;
- 15% identified behavioral issues;
- 12% identified a lack of financial supports, such as emergency child care, transportation, work clothing, safety shoes, assistive devices, adaptive technology;
- 9% identified a lack of mentorship or peer support by colleagues.

Of the job trainers that responded to the survey, 12% identified a lack of work, consistency of completion of tasks and sick day job trainer coverage/replacements as other challenges or blockers.

When employers were surveyed about the types of disability-related supports that they provide the employee to assist them to become independent in the workplace, employers responded with the below resources:

- Provide additional coaching, onboarding and literacy supports such as articulating clear expectations, routines, and additional guidance to aid participants to remain focused and fully understand tasks (e.g., providing pictures that show each step on how to complete the task, checklists, and longer orientation timeframes);
- Develop a buddy system with another employee;
- Modifying tasks and job descriptions to ensure that the participants can complete the task fully on their own (e.g., daily morning meetings to discuss tasks to be completed);
- Providing physical workplace modifications and equipment to complete the task (e.g., earpieces to help with extensive noise onsite);
- Allowing work hour versatility, such as more frequent breaks throughout the workday, to avoid overwhelming the employee.

In addition, when parents/guardians were surveyed for additional tools or resources that would support their child to achieve independence, parents/guardians listed:

- More communication and scheduled meetings with parents/guardians and job coaches;
- Reduced claw back of income support / prescription drug benefits;

- Employment experience which induces more confidence in the workplace;
- Socials events or activities to provide the participant with opportunities to meet others within the program;
 - While these services could be provided in a wrap-around program approach, it the SEP objective is ultimately employment with referrals to other social supports.
- More life-skill supports such as cooking and cleaning.

When job trainers were surveyed to describe additional tools or resources that support employees to achieve independence, job trainers identified: allowing the employee to independently complete the task if they can do so; more sponsored events and engagements with program participants; client transportation supports; and sick day coverage.

Of those that identified as a job trainer within the survey, 74% confirmed that they support one employee with an intellectual disability. Of the employees that have been supported within the last two years:

- 47% of job trainers confirmed that one employee transitioned towards partial employment;
- 20% of job trainers validated that one employee transitioned towards full independence;
- 78% confirmed that no employees have transitioned towards full independence.

As the number of clients that successfully towards independence are not currently tracked via activity reports, we are currently unable to validate these reported figures.

Key Findings:

- Most program participants currently do not transition towards independent employment.
- Employers, job trainers, and parents/guardians report gaps in disability-related supports, financial supports, and participant skillsets as primary barriers towards independent employment.
- Agencies note a difficulty transitioning clients to independence due to employer push-back for fear of reduced supports impacting the quality of work, parent/guardian push-back for fear of reduced outcomes for their child and- in some cases - an inability to reduce supports at all due to the participant's case complexity.



4.4 Performance Management

Recognizing that there is a lack of reporting to outcomes, there are also minimal metrics identified in contracts as a baseline for performance management. IPGS has identified a need to better calibrate funding to client experience and outcomes, so there is much to learn from other jurisdictions who have begun to implement formalized performance management frameworks to guide service providers and enable program managers to plan, monitor, review progress and manage contracts towards outcomes and service quality.

4.4.1 Reporting Process

All organizations that deliver labour market programs in Newfoundland and Labrador must register with the Labour Market Program Support System (LaMPSS). LaMPSS is a self-serve online tool that provides agencies with the ability to apply for funding for labour market programs and submit required financial and activity reports online through provided templates. Agencies are responsible for submitting quarterly activity and financial reports to IPGS through LaMPSS for each funded program they participate in. Program reporting requirements are linked to federal funding reporting requirements, as stipulated by Employment Assistance Services and Labour Market Partnership program guidelines.¹⁹

Financial reports must be approved by the board of directors and include the actual costs for each eligible expense incurred in the reporting period. In addition, agencies must complete a year-end audit by an external auditor, to be submitted no later than 90 days after the end of the government's fiscal year.

Case management and client outcome data is stored by agencies in the Accountability and Resource Management System (ARMS), a web-based case management and labour force database system. To complete the activity reports, agencies must pull out data from the ARMS system and input them into LaMPSS, which causes some administrative inefficiency. Insights regarding these reporting systems include:



Denmark provides access to a publicly available employment services database with outcomes data across programs and municipalities, providing a system-wide view of performance for citizens and providers. Information is updated on a monthly basis.

Source: jobindsats.dk (www.star.dk)

¹⁹ [Labour Market Partnerships Program Guidelines \(www.gov.nl.ca\)](http://www.gov.nl.ca)

- Agencies that participate in all funded programs must develop activity and financial reports for four separate funding contracts; therefore, some have reported that these processes can be cumbersome and a drain on already-limited capacity.
- Some agencies have noted that ARMS and LaMPSS are cumbersome, making it difficult to complete reports and train new employees on how to navigate these programs. In addition, EDs have noted that the program data needs to match which causes additional duplication of efforts.
- All agencies can access training and support for both systems; training for LaMPSS is made available through IPGS and training through ARMS is available through the licence agreement.
- IPGS has reported difficulties managing the reports from agencies noting that resolving reporting errors on behalf of agencies is also a source of administrative burden.

4.4.2 Reporting Outcomes

Program contracts list a series of “expected results” and “expected participants” for agencies. These figures are set by the agencies themselves and are part of their budget projections for the fiscal year. Expected results vary across agency contracts from specific targets (e.g., “Conduct Client Assessment for a minimum of 55 clients”) to broad goals (e.g., “Promote inclusion and educate on inclusive employment to the local labour market to create new employment opportunities”). Expected results are limited to targets pertaining to service volume targets rather than client outcomes.

According to program contracts, activity reports must include:

- Total number of clients served;
- Total number of continuing clients;
- Total number of new clients;
- Total number of clients employed with supports;
- Total number of clients employed without supports.

An analysis of a 50% sample of all activity reports submitted over a two-year period reveal that the quality of activity reporting varies across agencies. Activity reporting was inconsistent relative to requirements stipulated in agency program contracts. Due to errors in reporting by some agencies, IPGS identified that they must consistently request revisions to submissions to ensure that client data in ARMs and LaMPSS are aligned. These

inconsistencies are likely driven by the unstructured nature of the activity report template, which is primarily comprised of an open text “update/status” field.

Operational contracts also require the quarterly submission of a Detailed Intervention Report (DIR), which outlines the number of services provided by the agencies within the time frame as they pertain to case management and supported employment activities. Agencies are required to classify services provided according to an intervention code. An analysis of DIRs revealed substantial inconsistencies regarding the level of detail with respect to the range of interventions listed across agency reports. Given these inconsistencies, it is unlikely that agencies are classifying their interventions in a consistent way.

The provision of job trainers and/or purchased employment are reported on both operational contract DIRs and program activity reports, leading to a duplication of effort for agencies. In addition, agencies are required to indicate whether supports are provided to EI-eligible or non-EI-eligible clients, to facilitate assignment of funding to either the LMDA or WDA funding sources.

Other than comparing actual client volumes to expected targets, IPGS does not conduct any other performance monitoring of agencies according to client outcomes. Program reporting lacks key performance metrics or baseline data to facilitate the assessment of agency performance over time or in comparison. Altogether, these factors make it challenging to conduct a meaningful assessment of agency performance.

Activity Reporting for the Autism Pilot captures a higher level of data relative to other programs. Additional data captured in quarterly summary reports, includes data that tracks the number of program participants at each phase of employment, interactions with participants, and client outcomes. Notably, summary reports are structured according to a pre-set list of parameters, compared to the unstructured nature of other program activity reports. Avalon Employment worked with ARMs in consultation with IPGS to establish the pre-set list of parameters included in the reports to facilitate program reporting. The analysis of the Autism Pilot reports also revealed some inconsistencies in intervention reporting (i.e., classification of interventions) across agencies, validating findings reported in IPGS’s Fall 2022 evaluation of the Autism Pilot. Nonetheless, the structured nature of the Autism Pilot reports facilitated more uniform reporting according to program parameters, providing an opportunity to integrate these practices across the rest of the SEP.

Key Findings:

- Reporting is required for up to four funding streams on a quarterly basis per agency, thereby requiring administrative capacity for all reports.
- Reporting is focused on clients served and not aligned to outcomes, expected results or other key performance metrics; therefore, IPGS should consider reporting to KPOs and outcomes.
- Activity reporting and intervention classification is prone to inconsistencies and error across agencies, likely due to the unstructured format of the reporting.



4.5 Governance

This section provides an overview of the governance and oversight practices and structures of the SEP, focusing on the governance model board structure and board operations.

4.5.1 Governance Model

Each board operates as oversight to a single agency except for the Burin Peninsula Supported Employment Services Corporation (BPSESC), which serves as an umbrella oversight for three funded agencies specific to supported employment: Three (L) Training and Employment Board, Bridge's Employment Corporation and Burin Marystow Training and Employment Board. BPSESC's board of directors is comprised of two representatives from each of the subsidiary agencies' board of directors. This board is in addition to three distinct boards for each of the funded agencies in regard to SEP. These levels of governance provide oversight to small teams ranging from one to three employees.

Board sizes range from 5 to 12 members and was found that boards are typically composed of representatives of key program stakeholder groups, such as:

- Parents/guardians of program participants;
- Local business representatives (e.g., employers, members of local chamber of commerce);
- Education partners (e.g., guidance counsellors, teachers);
- Government representatives;
- Health and social service providers (e.g., social workers, doctors, psychologists, job counsellors);
- RCMP/correctional officers.

For agencies that provide services across multiple communities, and span large geographic areas, regional representation was identified as an important factor for the composition of their boards.

While some boards establish subcommittees and/or functional positions (e.g., treasurer, community liaison) to divide their responsibilities, others delegate responsibilities on an ad-hoc basis. Legal, financial, accounting, and human resource capabilities were identified as especially valuable for a well-functioning board, with some agencies noting that gaps in these capabilities created challenges for the board to effectively support their agencies.

Some agencies identified that the lack of availability and capacity of board members was a challenge for them. This challenge was especially prevalent for agencies operating in rural communities where few volunteers tend to sit on multiple boards. In addition, the

volunteer nature of the board creates difficulties associated with recruiting new board members resulting often in an ability to reach quorum. These challenges are not unusual or unique to other non-profit board of directors within Newfoundland and Labrador and across Canada, as many struggle to recruit and retain appropriate resources for good governance. Recommendations in this report do not focus heavily on improving program governance, as these challenges are difficult for the province to control and are relatively low impact compared to other key gaps identified. Generally, EDs reported feeling well supported by their board and able to receive ad-hoc support in between the regular meeting cadence as needed.

Key Findings:

- Executive Directors reported that they feel generally well-supported by their boards; however, similarly to other organizations across Canada, many boards are having difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteer board members.
- A particular irregularity was identified, in which, a regional board and three local boards both govern three small agencies creating unnecessary levels of governance.



4.6 People / Workforce

During the interviews, recruitment and retention were highlighted as a common challenge across all agencies. It should be noted that these challenges are not unique to the SEP, and organizations and agencies across the human and social services sector face similar recruitment and retention challenges due to current labour market conditions.

4.6.1 Recruitment & Retention

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff and job trainers presents ongoing challenges within the funded agencies, especially as minimum wage is expected to increase within the province (see [3.2 Change Drivers](#) to learn more).

In addition, almost all agencies have expressed that the recruitment of job trainers and/or staff remains challenging due to low wages and a lack of benefits.

This was also commonly highlighted by job coaches and parents/guardians within the survey. This difficulty is particularly pronounced for staffing satellite offices in rural areas. One agency noted that they were unable to hire an Autism facilitator to support their Pilot program, due to a lack of qualified candidates in their area interested in the position. To address these issues, agencies conduct staff training and education initiatives to try to keep up with evolving workplace expectations and employer requirements. Backfilling positions has been deemed equally challenging among EDs due to specific role requirements and lower salaries compared to private industry and government positions. Some EDs also expressed concern over disparities in wages offered to administrative and executive staff wages across agencies. An analysis of operational funding contracts revealed that ED salaries ranged from \$46,418 to \$64,480 across agencies.

Despite these challenges, many demonstrated strong retention rates, fostering stability and familiarity with participants and the ability to provide consistent support for eligible participants. During the funded agency interviews, it was found that the majority of EDs and staff have between 15 to 40 years of experience with supported employment services. Several EDs expressed that positive culture within the agency has contributed to long-term staff retention, although capacity constraints persist as EDs manage supported employment alongside other responsibilities particularly for those agencies in rural areas.

"It is so frustrating to have an individual who wants to work and is capable of doing many different jobs with the support this program provides but the lack of job coaches hinders placements."

Parent/Guardian

Key Finding:

- Agencies are typically supported by a dedicated and tenured workforce; however, recruiting appropriately skilled staff and job trainers remains a challenge at the salary levels provided through program funding.



4.7 Relationships & Collaboration

Throughout stakeholder engagement, strong community relationships and collaboration was identified as a key factor for successful job placements and for providing participants with wraparound resources to support their holistic wellbeing. The following key relationships were identified:

- With local employers, to raise awareness about the SEP and create job opportunities for program participants. Many EDs or their board members reported sitting on their community chamber of commerce, hosting events with the local Community Business Development Corporation, and participating in local career fairs to raise program awareness and strengthen their relationships with local businesses. Other agencies have co-located their satellite offices within town offices and economic development buildings to facilitate collaboration.
- With key actors within the local education systems, such as guidance counsellors, special education teachers, and administration, to facilitate STWT supports and assist post-graduation referrals to the core SEP. Being able to have phone conversations with guidance counsellors have also been cited as important for resolving ambiguities in program eligibility stemming from educational assessments. EDs or their board members report sitting on their local school council to advocate for the SEP and maintain their relationships within the education system.
- With social service providers, such as community health practitioners, physical disability supports, family resource centres, housing coalitions, food banks, and mental health supports, to support their participants in achieving holistic wellbeing to enable a successful job placement recognizing the varying and often multiple barriers that a program participant may face.
- With the RCMP, to provide community safety and cyber safety training.
- With literacy organizations to conduct educational sessions, including digital literacy, numeracy, and financial literacy. For example, agencies have partnered with ABC Literacy where program participants can attend in-person and provided access to ABC Literacy's online learning portal for at-home delivery of their adult literacy program catalogue.
- With Western Health and the local Lions Club, for life skills training.
- With Local Community Youth Network organizations, for socialization opportunities.

“The agency is woven into the fabric of our town and the surrounding area.”

Funded Agency

- With Supported Employment Newfoundland and Labrador (SENL), an informal network for funded agencies to encourage collaboration.

Agencies that operate in more rural areas report not being able to access the same network of social supports that are available in Newfoundland and Labrador's urban centres; therefore, some agencies have applied for funding from organizations like the Red Cross for funding to plan cooperative housing units for individuals with disabilities. Others report relying on internal capabilities to address social barriers faced by their clients, such as having job trainers give their clients a ride to their place of employment to address transportation, when possible. An analysis of programs and services available for persons with disabilities provided by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador reveals that no transportation supports currently exist for persons with disability seeking employment.²⁰

Finally, agencies reported that some capable participants refused to work increased hours due to concerns regarding the claw back of their income support and drug prescription benefits. Since September 2023, individuals moving into the workforce from income support are eligible for a variety of benefits under the employment stability program, including:

- Receiving both employment earnings and income support for the first 60 days of working. After the first 60 days, individuals may also qualify for income support as an earnings supplement and/or earned income supplement. Individuals qualifying for earned income supplements will continue to keep 100% prescription drug coverage.
- Receiving employment continuation bonuses for periods of uninterrupted employment.²¹

In total, this program provides supports to encourage individuals that can work to transition from income support to the workforce. Agencies should effectively communicate the employment stability plan to program participants to address barriers for individuals receiving income support (see [Recommendation 1.1: Define and Document Program Mandate](#) to learn more).

²⁰ [Guide-to-Programs-Services-2022.pdf \(gov.nl.ca\)](#)

²¹ [Enhanced-Earnings-Exemptions-and-Overlap-1.pdf \(gov.nl.ca\)](#)

Key Findings:

- Relationships and collaboration with local organizations, schools and social service providers are critical for agencies to fulfill the program mandate and/or provide wrap-around supports to achieve employment outcomes.
- Agencies in rural areas identified additional difficulty to address social barriers to employment.
- Concerns regarding benefit claw backs for individuals transitioning from income support to work have been recently mitigated by the employment stability plan.



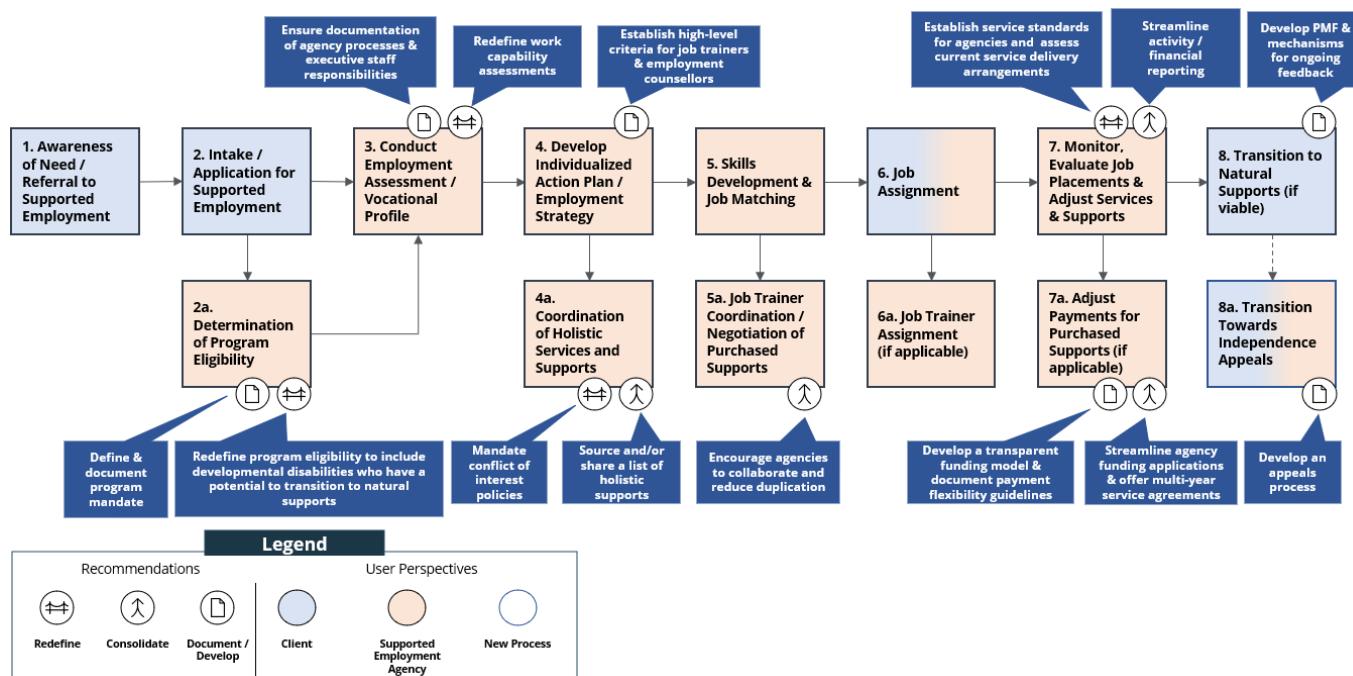
5. Recommendations

5.1 Introduction to Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed by the current state assessment, discussions with Deloitte SMEs, IPGS program SMEs, and a jurisdictional scan of national and global good practices of employment services disability-related supports.

The preliminary process flow, shown below, summarizes all recommendations into the following visual:

Figure 9: Preliminary Supported Employment Program Process Workflow



Altogether, the recommendations look to expand the mandate of the program to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities, while introducing a set of guidelines, policies and processes to support agencies in facilitating participant transitions towards independence. Widening the mandate will increase the overall volume of individuals that are eligible for SEP. In tandem, we recommend measures that will facilitate a higher volume of participants transitioning towards independence, to ensure that participant demand does not exceed the capacity of the program.

These recommendations look to drive independent employment outcomes for program participants, unlock administrative efficiencies, and provide IPGS with enhanced insights into the performance of its agency network. While providing an appropriate degree of flexibility to agencies, the recommendations look to drive consistency and provide

guidelines for agencies when necessary to ensure that the program delivers high quality services across Newfoundland and Labrador.

When reviewing the recommendations below, it is important to highlight that IPGS holds final discretion regarding the implementation of all recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Redefine Program Eligibility to include Developmental Disabilities

IPGS is recommended to expand program eligibility to include persons with developmental disabilities, as defined by holistic assessment tools.

Agencies reported that current program eligibility requirements restrict program access to persons with development disabilities who would greatly benefit from supported employment. Employment service organizations in leading jurisdictions accept holistic diagnosis tools to determine eligibility for disability-serving programs and supports. For example, Australia accepts diagnoses of developmental disability as defined by the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale and WHO Disability Assessment Schedule, alongside traditional IQ tests, to facilitate access to their disability-related supports.²² IPGS should, therefore, expand program eligibility requirements to include diagnoses of developmental disability in which potential participants' adaptive behaviour ability (i.e. the ability to demonstrate personal independence and social management) is assessed by an approved professional. This would remove an individual's IQ level as a sole determinant of eligibility and shift towards a more contemporary approach of assisting people with a disability seek employment and independence.

Expanding program eligibility to developmental disabilities will also seek to include individuals with Autism into the program. As IPGS intakes new participants with Autism to the program, the Department can phase out the Autism Pilot as current participants move to independence.

Adoption and expertise with any new tool that seeks to understand capability and independence may vary across Newfoundland and Labrador; therefore, it is recommended that agencies identify which tools are most used by community practitioners to inform the program's eligibility requirements. Through this reach-out to community practitioners, agencies should also promote the use of digital diagnoses (e.g., through videoconferencing)

²² [Types of disability evidence | NDIS](#)

to help increase access to approved professionals in rural regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As a standalone recommendation, this decision to expand program eligibility may strain the program's limited budget and result in increased waitlists for program participants. In affirming the SEP's mandate towards facilitating transitions towards workplace independence, it is recommended that IPGS limit program eligibility towards participants that are assessed to have the potential to transition towards independence (see [Recommendation 3: Refine Work Capability Assessments](#) to learn more).

[Recommendation 1.1: Define and Document Program Mandate](#)

It is recommended that IPGS define and document the new program mandate and identify explicit principles and objectives. Agencies are then recommended to communicate the new mandate to program participants, stakeholders, and communities within their catchment areas.

In alignment with suggested changes to program eligibility, IPGS will need to clearly define and document its program mandate. For example, Ontario's Supported Employment Program Guidelines serve as a comprehensive framework for their program, clarifying service delivery principles, program goals, and objectives.²³ By clearly articulating the principles and goals, the guidelines facilitate alignment of efforts, promote accountability, and maximize the impact of the program across the province.

When defining the SEP mandate, it is recommended IPGS identify and prioritize principles that underpin the program. The program is currently guided by two key objectives:

- Developing meaningful employment opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities;
- Facilitating transitions towards workplace independence.

Establishing a program mandate would require IPGS to clearly define key terms within the mandate (e.g., "meaningful employment") and consider the appropriateness of the two key objectives. As many program participants currently are not transitioned towards independent employment, IPGS should revise that objective within the new mandate by implementing program process gates within the eligibility and assessment steps of the program. These gates would ensure that new program participants have the potential to meet both program objectives. For example, the revised program objective could be to:

²³ [Supported Employment \(gov.on.ca\)](#)

- Develop meaningful employment opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities, who are assessed to have the potential of transitioning towards workplace independence with program support.

The following recommendations will also provide opportunities for IPGS to strengthen program delivery standards to ensure that agencies facilitate transitions towards independence within a defined period of time (see [Recommendation 3: Refine Work Capability Assessments](#) and [Recommendation 4: Establish and Monitor Service Standards for Agencies](#) to learn more).

A defined mandate will enable IPGS to measure program success and align operational decisions accordingly. A critical success factor for implementing this recommendation is an effective communication strategy to ensure that key program participants and stakeholders (agencies, parents/guardians, employers, and community partners) are informed of changes to the program mandate and expectations of service delivery. IPGS should provide agencies with clear information so that they can share the new mandate and expectations with all participants and stakeholders.



Recommendation 2: Streamline Funding Applications

IPGS should streamline the number of funding applications within the program by consolidating existing program contracts (Operational, Supported Employment STWT, Autism Pilot) into a single contract.

The program's current requirements that agencies apply for each individual stream of program funding was identified as a source of administrative burden for both agencies and IPGS. The following characteristics of program contracts provide IPGS opportunities to streamline the application process:

- The Supported Employment and STWT contracts are identical in function, providing funding for the provision of purchased and/or job trainer support, for two different participant demographics;
- Operational contracts exclusively support activities that facilitate the supported employment and STWT programs.

IPGS can create efficiencies in program administration by consolidating funding to a singular all-encompassing application.

Recommendation 2.1: Streamline and Restructure Activity/Financial Reporting Across Program Contracts

In alignment with the prior recommendation, it is recommended for IPGS to consolidate financial and activity documentation into a singular set of reports.

In creating a consolidated report template, IPGS should look to emulate information covered in the activity summaries that are currently completed by agencies participating in the Autism Pilot. Specifically, it is recommended for IPGS to look to ensure that agencies are tracking client outcomes data and other measures identified by [Recommendation 6: Develop a Performance Management Framework](#) within their activity reports. To resolve inconsistencies in activity reporting across agencies, IPGS is encouraged to work with ARMs to develop structured forms for agencies to complete with the information required to facilitate performance management.

Recommendation 2.2: Develop and Monitor Guidelines around Intervention Reporting and Classification

IPGS should develop guidelines regarding intervention reporting and classification and monitor agency compliance towards these standards to ensure uniform and consistent reporting.

Intervention reports show inconsistencies in intervention classification and reporting across agencies. Notably, gaps were identified regarding agency reporting on client waitlists. In alignment with [Recommendation 4: Establish and Monitor Service Standards for Agencies](#), IPGS should look to develop guidelines around intervention reporting and classification. This would include:

- Providing a clear definition of each intervention activity classification;
- Eliminating redundancies in activity classifications;
- Mandating that all agencies are consistently reporting on client waitlists.

It is recommended that IPGS to monitor adherence to these guidelines through periodic reviews of agency activity reports, to ensure that agencies are reporting on interventions according to program guidelines. Altogether, these measures will help ensure that agencies are reporting on services provided to program participants in a uniform and consistent manner. Recognizing that inconsistent reporting through ARMs may be driven by a lack of digital maturity across agencies, IPGS should include mandatory ARMs training as part of any change management strategy with regards to new reporting guidelines and requirements.



Recommendation 3: Refine Work Capability Assessments

It is recommended for agencies to collaborate to develop an inventory of work capability assessment tools that they are able to leverage to conduct assessments and determine participants' independence timelines.

Interviews with agencies revealed that the maturity of work assessments varied from ad-hoc conversations to questionnaire and/or interview tools grounded in good practices. Multiple jurisdictions have developed credible tools to assess the likelihood of long-term employment as well as the capability of the participant; Ontario, Australia, the United Kingdom, and others have developed proprietary tools to holistically assess needs and determine appropriate services based on their client's assessed risk of long-term unemployment.²⁴ ²⁵ ²⁶ Common practices across these holistic assessment tools provide an understanding of a participant's:

- Work experience, educational background, and qualifications;
- Job preferences, interests, and aspirations.
- Functional skills and strengths, with an emphasis on understanding the participant's capacity to build relationships, learn new skills, work in group-settings or independently, and follow instructions;

It is recommended for agencies to align upon a series of credible assessment tools from which all agencies could leverage across the program. Examples of assessment tools that agencies could adopt include the:

- Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI);²⁷
- Inventory for Client and Agency Planning (ICAP).²⁸

Consistency of assessment across the program will support the projection of reliable timelines for participant transitions towards independence. Additionally, this consistency will help ensure that supports are provided to participants across the program in proportion to need. In alignment with changes to the SEP mandate, (see [Recommendation](#)

²⁴ [Common Assessment for employment related needs \(gov.on.ca\)](#)

²⁵ [Job Seeker Assessment Framework - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government \(dewr.gov.au\)](#)

²⁶ [Work Capability Assessment | Disability Rights UK](#)

²⁷ [Job Seeker Classification Instrument Guidelines V1.4 \(dss.gov.au\)](#)

²⁸ [Inventory for Client and Agency Planning \(ICAP\) Assessment | Maximus](#)

[1.1: Define and Document Program Mandate](#) to learn more), agencies should leverage these work assessments to project an expected timeline for a participant's transition towards independence.

Finally, some jurisdictions use digital tools that leverage insights from their work assessments to support job matching and development activities. For example, the Thrive Career Wellness Platform is an AI-enabled software currently used by select service providers in Ontario to support job matching by leveraging participant information provided by their capability assessments.²⁹ In the future, it is recommended that agencies adopt similar technology to further enhance their capabilities towards workplace assessment and job matching.

As survey respondents and SMEs noted, placements that train in preparation for work are especially helpful for participants. Training in preparation for work should focus on enhancing soft skills (e.g., turning up to work on time; learning how to follow instructions; managing feedback; working with peers; working independently; and work stamina). This training should ultimately be considered at assessment and support the transition to independence.

[Recommendation 3.1: Develop an Appeals Process for Transitions Towards Independence](#)

It is recommended that SENL implement an appeals process for parents/guardians and employers that disagree with agency decisions to transition participants towards workplace independence.

At times, agencies identified that pushback from employers and parents/guardians was a barrier for participant transitions to workplace independence. SENL should implement and conduct an appeals process on behalf of the agency providing the service to advance transparency and mitigate concerns and blockers. Agencies are to be responsible for informing employers and parents/guardians of the appeals process as part of expectations-setting prior to a job placement. This recommendation would:

- Facilitate an evidence-based assessment of decisions to transition participants towards independence;
- Create a mechanism of feedback for employers and parents;
- Help mitigate agency concerns when transitioning participants towards workplace independence.

²⁹ [Job Search and Tracking Tools \(thrivemycareer.com\)](http://thrivemycareer.com)

Recommendation 4: Establish and Monitor Service Standards for Agencies

IPGS should establish and monitor service standards for agencies to enhance the quality and consistency of service delivery across the agency network.

IPGS should establish a set of service standards to reinforce quality and consistent program delivery across agencies and act as requirements to be fulfilled by agencies to confirm their fitness for program delivery. Service standards help to define what participants can expect from the program and how the program should be delivered by the agency. Standards can include indicators of service quality, a set of required activities, or specify an acceptable time-period for certain service activities.³⁰ Examples of preliminary service standards that IPGS should look to implement include:

- Requiring agencies to conduct one on-site check-in and re-assessment of workplace transition timelines with participants in job placements per quarter;
- Requiring agencies to set expectations with employers and parents regarding transitions towards independence prior to job placement (see [Recommendation 3: Refine Work Capability Assessments](#) to learn more);
- Establishing a maximum number of acceptable errors in activity and financial reporting per period.
- Agencies leverage existing digital tools, such as Job Bank, when applicable to match participants to appropriate employers

Processes to monitor compliance with service standards can be established. For example, in the United Kingdom dedicated Performance Compliance Officers to conduct regular reviews to monitor provider performance against service standards.³¹ IPGS could explore the establishment of dedicated staff towards monitoring service standard compliance if capacity exists in the future. As a more immediately viable method of compliance monitoring, IPGS could conduct periodic surveys of program stakeholders (see [Recommendation 6: Develop a Performance Management Framework](#) to learn more).

³⁰ [Service standards - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

³¹ [Restart Scheme provider guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Recommendation 4.1: Ensure Documentation of Agency Processes and Executive Staff Responsibilities.

It is recommended that agencies document program processes and executive staff responsibilities which will help identify gaps in service delivery across the province.

It is recommended that agencies document agency processes and staff responsibilities. Documentation would clearly outline staff responsibilities according to the mandate of SEP and list key processes and services involved to support a typical user journey (e.g., intake, assessment, job matching, and monitoring of work placements). IPGS could leverage these materials to identify gaps in service delivery across agencies and ensure a minimum level of service quality for the program. Documented processes and responsibilities would serve as a valuable source of onboarding materials for new staff to support continuity in service. This would help to address agencies' concerns regarding succession planning and executive transitions.



Recommendation 5: Develop a Transparent Funding Model

It is recommended that IPGS develop a transparent methodology of allocating program budgets to agencies. This methodology can be driven by a standardized funding logic for participants served with the option to include performance-based payments.

Agencies identified perceived disparities in the distribution of program funding to agencies as a pain point during interviews. To address these issues, other jurisdictions have established and standardized a clear methodology of funding their service providers. Jurisdictions typically provide their service providers with a base payment for each client served. However, to ensure that funding is allocated according to client need, additional funding is allocated according to the client's assessed distance from the labour market (i.e., the complexity of the case). For example, Ontario's funding model provides funding to service providers based on the number of clients served and their assessed distance from the labour market.³² IPGS should fund agencies based on a standardized base amount per participant served. Additional funding can be provided based on the projected intensity of each participant's service needs, and the participant's expected timeline towards workplace independence.

In addition to funding according to client volumes and need, many jurisdictions have implemented performance-based payments based on client outcomes achieved by their service providers. For example, Sweden provides performance-based payments for employment outcomes achieved by their service providers. Outcome payments vary depending on the client's assessed distance from the labour market prior to receiving employment services.³³ This calibration of payments is important to ensure that agencies remain incentivized to support clients with high service needs. IPGS should look to implement a performance-based envelope within the program funding model to incentivize agency innovation towards service delivery and quality.

IPGS can introduce changes to the funding model gradually to mitigate any disruptions to service delivery operations. For example, IPGS can limit annual funding changes from 5% to 10%, which will provide time for organizations to effectively adjust to the new funding model.

³²[Paying for results: Contracting out employment services through outcome-based payment schemes in OECD countries](#)

³³ Ibid

Recommendation 5.1: Offer Multi-year Service Agreements

It is recommended that IPGS advocate for the provision of multi-year service agreements for agencies.

The single year contracting period for agency service agreements was consistently identified as a pain point by agencies. While it is recognized that the decision is being considered by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador at large, IPGS should advocate for the provision of multi-year service agreements. To maintain budgetary flexibility for the Provincial government, IPGS can include language within program contracts indicating that agency funding levels beyond the current fiscal year are subject to changes in overall program budget.

Multi-year service agreements have been implemented in many jurisdictions and are considered optimal for the sustained nature of client care in Supported Employment.³⁴ Multi-year service agreements would also create stability for agencies, enable them to engage in long-term planning regarding resource allocation and reduce administrative burden for IPGS.

Recommendation 5.2: Document Payment Flexibility Guidelines

IPGS should document and communicate its flexible and advance payment policies.

IPGS currently offers flexible payment schedules to accommodate agency needs regarding seasonality, as well as advance payments to agencies to mitigate any gaps in financing. Interviews with agencies, however, revealed some lack of awareness regarding these current payment processes. To formalize these efforts, IPGS should establish clear guidelines for how payments can be structured or advanced to accommodate agency needs as part of the transparent funding model and define them within program contracts. IPGS can also establish expected time frames regarding the processing of payments to agencies to reduce any uncertainty for agencies.

³⁴ [Paying for results: Contracting out employment services through outcome-based payment schemes in OECD countries](#)

Recommendation 6: Develop a Performance Management Framework

It is recommended that IPGS develop a framework for agency performance measurement (PMF) and define baselines to better understand the success of its agency network.

IPGS should look to establish an evidence-based and systematic approach of performance measurement that accurately assesses the effectiveness of its agency network. This approach can be informed by a set of clear performance criteria and metrics aligned with strategic priorities and a refined program mandate (see [Recommendation 1.1: Define and Document Program Mandate](#) to learn more). A performance management framework should assess agencies and the broader program according to the following questions:

1. What impact do agencies have on program participants?
2. How effective are agencies at delivering services?

To provide a clear picture of what success looks like for the program, a performance management framework is comprised of a set of desired outcomes. According to leading practices, outcomes should align with the strategic priorities of the program. Examples of relevant outcomes for SEP can include client volumes, client outcomes, service efficacy, service quality, employer support.

As part of the framework, outcomes are mapped against specific, measurable, and achievable metrics. For example, Australia's Provider Performance Management Framework is categorized according to five outcomes areas with each area assessed by metrics.³⁵ Shown below is an illustrative performance management framework for the program, with outcomes mapped to metrics:

³⁵ [Request for Proposal for the New Employment Services Model 2022 - Employment Services Tenders](#)

Figure 10: **Illustrative Performance Management Framework**

Agency Outcomes	Client Volumes	Client Outcomes	Efficacy	Service Quality	Employer Support
Supporting metrics mapped to outcomes	# of clients that receive purchased supports	# of clients that achieve employment	Cost per outcome	% program participants satisfied with services	% of employers satisfied with services
	# of clients that receive job trainer supports	# of clients that transition to partial / full workplace independence	Cost per client served	% of clients who re-enter employment services	% of jobseekers hired and retained by employers over time
	# of clients that receive case management interventions	# of clients that maintain employment after 6, 12, 24 months			% of employers who felt their skill needs were met through job placements
	# of clients per specialized populations (e.g., disability type)	# of clients who improved employability / job skills			
		# of clients with reduced reliance on income support			
					% of employers aware of the program

Overall, the insights gleaned from this performance management data could serve as an important input for future decisions regarding agency evaluation, network composition and program funding.

Recommendation 6.1: Create Mechanisms to Enable Ongoing Feedback for Program Stakeholders

To ensure that agency performance management is informed by direct program stakeholder feedback, IPGS should administer periodic surveys to parents/guardians and employers.

While most of the metrics above can be gathered through agency activity reporting, IPGS should create mechanisms to enable direct feedback for program stakeholders. In the United Kingdom, for example, client satisfaction is an integral part of performance measurement; employment service providers for multi-barriered clients are required to achieve high overall client satisfaction scores to remain eligible to deliver services.³⁶ IPGS should look to administer periodic surveys to employers and parents/guardians of program participants inquiring about their satisfaction with the services provided by agencies. Developing these processes will ensure that agencies are able to continuously enhance their services through direct feedback from program stakeholders.

³⁶ [Restart Scheme provider guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Recommendation 7: Assess Current Service Delivery Arrangements

Based on changes to program mandate, objectives, and improved reporting data, IPGS should assess the current service delivery arrangements to understand whether they are optimal to deliver enhanced employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities and appropriately transition participants to workplace independence.

After defining and communicating the new mandate and objectives, current service delivery arrangements should be examined to better understand as to whether agencies are delivering services that meet the refined objectives and new service standards. This assessment will leverage new reporting data per the performance management framework and inform future decisions regarding the structure of the agency network across the province.

Recommendation 7.1: Increase Agency Collaboration to Reduce Duplication

It is recommended that agencies collaborate to reduce duplication and explore the sharing of administrative functions or infrastructure to create efficiencies, meet objectives, and deliver quality services.

Administrative maturity and capacity vary widely across the program's agency network; notably, some agency executive directors are responsible for administrative functions alongside program delivery. To unlock economies of scale and leverage agencies with mature administrative functions, it is recommended that agencies explore sharing administrative functions such as payroll, bookkeeping, and tax filing. This recommendation would free up capacity for executive directors in smaller agencies, enabling them to fully focus on delivering services and advancing client outcomes.

It is also recommended for agencies to further explore partnerships or collaboration amongst themselves to reduce duplication or amalgamate the following:

- Infrastructure (e.g., storefront operations, office spaces);
- Resources (e.g., job trainers);
- Service offerings (e.g., participant programming / training);
- Governance bodies (e.g., board of directors).

As an option to incentivize these partnerships, IPGS could re-distribute savings from these efficiencies, when applicable, to agencies.

Recommendation 7.2: Source and/or Share a List of Holistic Supports for Persons with Disabilities

It is recommended that agencies through SENL develop and maintain a comprehensive list of supports (provincial and local) to inform referrals and help ensure that their participant's holistic needs are met.

Both agency interviews and stakeholder surveys revealed that program participants often face barriers to employment outside of the scope of the program. Particularly, some agencies in rural areas reported that they were unaware of holistic supports for some of the challenges facing their participants, including mental health and/or transportation supports. To address these challenges, IPGS can share the [Guide to Program and Services for Individuals and Families](#) with agencies to ensure they are aware of all government-funded supports available.³⁷ Agencies should complement this resource with local non-profit community resources and partnerships to help support participants' holistic needs to drive employment outcomes.

Recommendation 7.3: Mandate Conflict-of-Interest Policies

It is recommended that agency boards develop and enforce conflict-of-interest policies to ensure independent governance and that IPGS require copies of conflict-of-interest policies be provided as part of the funding application process.

In alignment with not-for-profit governance good practices, agency board of directors should be independent of day-to-day agency operations in order to avoid biased decisions amongst board members and appropriate oversight.³⁸ Agencies identified that parents often volunteered to participate as a board of director; however, parents of current program participants may have a real or perceived conflict of interest when making decisions that could impact outcomes for their child. It is recommended that agency boards implement conflict-of-interest policies for their members.

When implementing the conflict-of-interest policy, agencies should consider the following:

- Require those with a conflict to disclose the conflict or potential conflict, including guidelines on what types of circumstances constitute a conflict-of-interest.

³⁷ [Guide-to-Programs-Services-2024.pdf \(gov.nl.ca\)](#)

³⁸ [Conflicts of Interest | National Council of Nonprofits](#)

- Prohibit board members from voting or participating in discussion on any matter in which a conflict exists, including consequences for failing to abide by this policy.

Recommendation 7.4: Establish High-Level Criteria for Job Trainers and Employment Counsellors to Inform Agencies' Hiring Practices

It is recommended that agencies through SENL establish high-level criteria for job trainers and employment counsellors to inform agencies' hiring practices.

During interviews, agencies revealed that there are varying standards for qualifications for job trainers and employment counsellors. In alignment with non-profit best practices, front-line roles that are working directly with the participants should require appropriate credentials and experience to deliver quality services to those with disabilities and/or be trained accordingly. SENL or a consortium of agencies should identify important key criteria for all agencies in the network to meet when hiring and onboarding job trainers and employment counsellors in accordance with the new program mandate so that participants receive quality and consistent services across the province that drive employment outcomes.



6. High-Level Implementation Plan

A preliminary high-level implementation roadmap on the following page reflects the recommendations and potential timeline. When the province transitions from the review into implementation, these milestones suggestions are subject to change.



Figure 11: High-Level Implementation Plan

Opportunity Theme	Short-Term Design for the Future: Quick Wins & High Priority				Medium-Term Advance with Patience				Long-Term Consider Last & Continued Development	
	Year 1 0-3 months	3-6 months	6-9 months	9-12 months	Year 2 0-3 months	3-6 months	6-9 months	9-12 months	Year 3 0-6 months	6-12 months
Program Mandate and Objectives		A1 *Define and document program mandate								
		A2 *Redefine program eligibility to include developmental disabilities								
Funding	B4 *Document payment flexibility guidelines		B3 *Streamline funding applications		B2 *Develop transparent funding model				B1 *Offer multi - year service agreements	
Service Delivery			C1 *Refine work capability assessments		C2 *Establish and monitor service standards for agencies.		C3 Develop an appeals process for transitions towards independence		C4 *Assess current service delivery arrangements	
Performance Management	D4 *Streamline & restructure activity/ financial reporting across contracts		D2 *Develop and monitor guidelines around intervention reporting and classification				D3 *Create mechanisms to enable ongoing feedback for program stakeholders			
	D1 *Develop a performance management framework									
Governance	E1 *Mandate conflict -of-interest policies									
People / Workforce	F1 Mandate documentation of agency processes and executive staff responsibilities.		F2 Establish high -level criteria for job trainers and employment counsellors to inform agencies' hiring practices							
Relationships & Collaboration		G2 Increase agency collaborate to reduce duplication		G1 Source and/or share a list of holistic supports for persons with disabilities						

*Recommendations that IPGS is responsible for as indicated in the Implementation Plan Breakdown below.

6.1 Implementation Plan Breakdown

Based on the above high-level implementation roadmap, the following pages provide preliminary responsibilities for implementation, key activities, dependencies, unintentional impacts, and preliminary mitigation. This implementation plan breakdown is subject to change upon the province's decision to implement recommendations.



Table 4: Implementation Plan Breakdown

	ID	Opportunity	Responsible for Implementation	Timeline	Key Activities	Dependencies	Unintentional Impacts	Mitigations
Program Mandate & Objectives	A1	Define and document program mandate.	IPGS	Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redefining the mandate will entail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying key principles that guide program decisions; Defining program objectives and goals. Agencies to socialize these changes with agencies, employers, job trainers and parents/guardians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to clients in the program that are no longer eligible. Increase waitlists for the program. Strain program's limited budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate to agencies that ineligible clients can be referred to social supports.
	A2	Redefine program eligibility to include developmental disabilities.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand program eligibility to persons with developmental disabilities. Eligibility approval should consider the adaptive functioning assessment of development disability and whether the individual has the potential to transition to independent employment. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase waitlists for the program. Strain program's limited budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate to agencies that the increase in eligibility is to be inclusive of all those with developmental disabilities but must be aligned to the newly defined mandate.

Funding	<p>B1 Offer multi-year service agreements.</p>	<p>IPGS</p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for approval from Government of Newfoundland & Labrador (GNL) at large. • Implement multi-year service agreements (e.g., 2-3 years) for the funded agencies. • Implement performance-based measures for agency funding to ensure adherence to service standards and agency accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1 • B2 • Approval from GNL at large. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retendering of funded agencies. • Buy-in from agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialize the adherence to the new standards is to ensure transparency. • Communicate that this will allow agencies to conduct long-term planning and mitigate annual administrative burden.
	<p>B2 Develop a transparent funding model.</p>	<p>IPGS</p>	<p>Medium-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a transparent methodology of allocating budgets to agencies driven by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Adherence to service standards / performance metrics; ◦ Standardized logic for participants served; ◦ Expected intensity of service provided to each participant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B3 • C2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readjustments to the current budget allocation. • Possible instability in service delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the process of budget allocation to agencies. • Gradually implement the funding model (e.g., limit annual funding changes due to the revised model from 5 to 10%, which will provide time for organizations to effectively adjust without causing clients to lose supports.
	<p>B3 Streamline funding applications.</p>	<p>IPGS</p>	<p>Short / Medium-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate program funding envelopes into one all-encompassing application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew agencies' contracts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate to agencies that this will allow them to mitigate annual administrative burden.
	<p>B4 Document payment flexibility guidelines.</p>	<p>IPGS</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear guidelines for how payments are structured to accommodate agency needs. • Define guidelines within program contracts. • Communicate the policy to agencies via email and/or upcoming SENL conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish completion standards regarding payments to agencies relative to reporting dates. 				
Service Delivery	IPGS	Short / Medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies to collaborate to develop an inventory of approved work capability assessment tools. IPGS to ensure that agencies leverage assessments to project an expected timeline for transitions towards independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy-in from agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialize the importance of work capability assessments with regards to supporting refined program mandate. 	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a set of service standards to facilitate quality & consistent program delivery across agencies. Explore mechanisms of monitoring service standards, such as surveys to program participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1 C1 D4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy-in from agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate that this will provide more transparency for employers and potentially lead to an increase in employer participation. 	
	Funded Agencies	Medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an appeals process for parents and employers who disagree with an agency's decision to transition a program participant towards independence which will be conducted by SENL. Agencies to inform parents/guardians and employers of this process prior to job placement and when the participant is evaluated as being able to transition towards independence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1 C1 C2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy-in from agencies; Buy-in from SENL; Influx of employers & parent/guardians wanting to participate in the appeals process when transitioning ineligible participants to social supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialize to agencies that this will provide confidence in parent/guardians and employers when child/person transitions to independence and potentially increase participant. Implement this recommendation for any net new child/person and employers (e.g., from this date). 	

Performance Management	<p>C4 Assess current service delivery arrangements.</p> <p>D1 Develop a performance management framework.</p> <p>D2 Develop and monitor guidelines around intervention reporting and classification.</p>	IPGS	<p>Long-term</p> <p>Short-term</p> <p>Short / Medium-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage reporting data to assess whether agencies are delivering services that meet the refined objectives and new service standards. • Evaluate overlapping service delivery catchment areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1 • A2 • C2 • D1 • D2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an evidence-based and systematic performance measurement approach that accurately assesses the effectiveness of its funded agencies. • Establish a framework that sets clear performance criteria and metrics aligned with strategic priorities, and an approach for collecting the necessary data inputs to perform the assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1 • C2 • D4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy-in from agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialize the importance of being able to clearly track performance to provide GNL a clear picture of the impact the program is providing to the community.
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and monitor standards around intervention reporting and classification to ensure that agencies are reporting on services provided to program participants in a uniform and consistent manner. • Implement mandatory ARMs training as part of any change management strategy with regards to new reporting standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D1 • D4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy-in from agencies. • Influx of inquiries about who is eligible to be added to the waitlist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate the importance to keep waitlist and how this will provide further clarity when reporting to the Federal government about the popularity of the program. • Communicate expectations and/or guidelines on eligibility requirements to be added to the waitlist for the agencies to follow.

<p>D3 Create mechanisms to enable ongoing feedback for program stakeholders.</p> <p>D4 Streamline and restructure activity / financial reporting across program contracts.</p>	<p>IPGS</p>	<p>Medium/ Long-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish mechanisms to enable ongoing feedback for program stakeholders to ensure that the perspective of key program stakeholders are integrated into agency performance measurement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates IPGS capacity constraints while implementing other recommendations to both maintain & implement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement this recommendation last due to IPGS capacity and leverage as feedback from stakeholders on the newly implemented changes.
	<p>IPGS</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate activity reports encompassing requirements that are currently distributed across the 2-4 contracts agencies. Develop structured forms for agencies to complete with the information required by the service standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in inquiries from agencies about how to complete the contract and input targets for the different funding envelops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance and/or a resource to the agencies on how to complete the contract.
	<p>E1 Develop conflict-of-interest policies.</p>	<p>Funded Agencies</p>	<p>Short-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies to develop conflict-of-interest policies documentation across all agency boards. Ensure to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A requirement with those with a conflict to disclose the conflict/potential conflict; Prohibit board members from voting or participating in discussion on any matter in which a conflict exists. Socialize conflict-of-interest policies documentation with the agencies and include policies within the agencies' contracts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members choose to leave the board. Agencies unable to make quorum. Unable to find replacements for board members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate the importance to prohibit board members from voting or participating in discussion on any matter in which a conflict exists to agencies. Encourage agencies to leverage social networks and partnerships to find new board members.

People / Workforce	<p>F1 Ensure documentation of agency processes and executive staff responsibilities.</p>	<p>Funded Agencies</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies to document existing processes and executive staff roles and responsibilities which entails a clear outline of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ED job responsibilities according to the mandate; List key processes and services involved to support a typical user journey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy-in from agencies. Buy-in from board members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate the importance to of having these processes documented for new hires and for those replacing ED before they leave the agency.
	<p>F2 Establish high-level criteria for job trainers and employment counsellors to inform agencies' hiring practices.</p>	<p>Funded Agencies</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a standardized set of qualifications for job trainers and employment counsellors. Align with those required to deliver the program according to mandate. Ensure that resources proposed align with qualification standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy-in from SENL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialize with SENL the importance to standardize criteria to ensure every participant in the program receives the same level of service across the province.
Relationships & Collaboration	<p>G1 Source and/or share a list of holistic supports for persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Funded Agencies</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and share a list of holistic supports commonly needed by participants to facilitate referral when necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy-in from SENL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialize the importance for agencies to share these resources to ensure a smooth transition as the program mandate and eligibility shifts.
	<p>G2 Agency collaboration to reduce duplication.</p>	<p>Funded Agencies</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies to collaborate to reduce duplicative services. Agencies to explore the sharing of administrative functions and/or infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy-in from SENL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialize the importance for agencies to share resources to find efficiencies and create less admin/operational burden.

7. Conclusion

This final report identifies insights gleaned from document review, data analysis, jurisdictional research, and extensive stakeholder engagement. Leveraging leading practices and tailoring them to the needs of IPGS and the context of Newfoundland and Labrador, a comprehensive set of recommendations and an implementation plan has been developed to improve the SEP.

The recommendations listed in the document will encourage quality services that drive employment outcomes for participants with developmental disabilities and will work within the boundaries of the current budget.

