

*Strategic
Initiatives
Evaluation*



NB
Job Corps

New Brunswick



Human Resources
Development Canada

Développement des
ressources humaines Canada



Government of
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NEW BRUNSWICK JOB CORPS

Process Evaluation

Final Report

**Evaluation and Data Development
Strategic Policy
Human Resources Development Canada**

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NB Job Corps is a joint federal-provincial Strategic Initiative being funded and managed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and the New Brunswick Departments of Advanced Education and Labour (DAEL) and Human Resources Development New Brunswick (HRDNB).

This report is one in a series of evaluation reports on NB Job Corps. Future reports will include a number of interim Impact reports, an interim Cost Benefit/Effectiveness and Policy report and a final Summative Evaluation report to be completed one year after the termination of NB Job Corps.

This evaluation study was conducted by Baseline Market Research under the direction of the Evaluation Committee comprised of representatives from the three partners.

The evaluation team would like to thank all those who contributed to the study, especially officials in both the federal and provincial governments who gave of their time and experience to assist the evaluation team.

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Executive Summary

New Brunswick Job Corps (NB Job Corps) is a joint federal-provincial/territorial initiative funded and managed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), the New Brunswick Department of Advanced Education and Labour (DAEL) and Human Resource Development New Brunswick (HRDNB).

NB Job Corps is one of a number of Strategic Initiatives - joint federal-provincial/territorial partnerships - that will contribute to the renewal and revitalization of Canada's social security system.

Program costs, up to \$80 million, are to be shared equally between federal and provincial governments for the five-year agreement. NB Job Corps is designed to accommodate 1,000 participants at any given time.

NB Job Corps is a voluntary program designed to provide older workers, aged 50 to 65 years, with the opportunity to free themselves from passive support and to contribute to the development of their community. Individuals may participate for up to five years or until such time as income security programs are modified. The first work placements commenced in May, 1994.

NB Job Corps provides income support in the form of a guaranteed annual income of approximately \$12,000. Participants receive \$46 for each day they are at work with a host organization in the six-month active period. Income provided during the six-month inactive period is based on a prorated amount which reflects total income earned during the active period.

The process evaluation, completed by Baseline Market Research Ltd., is an examination of the administration, management and operations of NB Job Corps, including participant and host selection, orientation and monitoring.

Current Program Status

As of September, 1995:

- a total of 568 applications for projects have been submitted to DAEL;

- 337 host projects have been approved; 231 host projects, most of which met program criteria, did not receive placements due to a lack of available funds; the projects which did not meet the established criteria were rejected;
- 998 participants are currently assigned to placements with project hosts; and
- over the course of program operations (May, 1994 - September, 1995) a total of 1,119 participants have entered NB Job Corps and 121 participants have exited the program.

Summary of Findings

The information developed through this process evaluation confirms the following:

- NB Job Corps is a program which, to date, is being managed in a reasonably efficient manner;
- the program is effective in meeting the needs of both participants and employers;
- the placements provided offer, in many instances, a meaningful work experience;
- the work accomplished is contributing to improvements in the overall quality of the environment and to improvements in the overall quality of life for participants;
- overall, approved projects are in compliance with the selection criteria; however, there is a need to ensure that all project files contain a signed statement by the host employer certifying that participants do not displace other employees; there is also a need to confirm that no workers are, in fact, being displaced by participants;
- the project is providing employment to the designated target group; there is a need to confirm the eligibility of only one participant and to review the stated entry criteria; and
- the potential demand for participants and projects exceeds the available resources.

Information developed for the process evaluation confirmed the need for the following changes which could improve the operation of NB Job Corps:

- the payroll system is unnecessarily cumbersome and should be streamlined;

- the administrative system should be reviewed in order to eliminate the collection of non-essential information from participants and to ensure the availability of relevant information for the summative evaluation;
- a formal budget document should be prepared by the Management Committee and shared with administrators in the three partner agencies;
- whenever possible, there should be a closer match between the physical demands of the work placement and the physical abilities of the participant; and
- both participants and hosts expressed a need for a central contact person to whom questions can be addressed; as well, more coordinated communication is required between the partner agencies.

Points for Consideration

One of the primary purposes of a process evaluation is to provide feedback to management concerning the ways in which the program could be enhanced or improved. The evaluators do see the need for improvements and encourage management's consideration of the points which follow.

◆ Payroll System

As noted, the payroll system is unnecessarily complex. There should be one agency/department which is responsible for the complete payroll function. Within this agency/department, one person should also be designated as the key contact point for all payroll inquiries.

While it is recognized that any errors in payroll must be corrected and that the payroll must be precise, the guiding principle must ensure that all participants receive their payroll cheques on the date due.

◆ Information System

There is a need to revise the information system for NB Job Corps in order to accommodate the following:

- a unique identifier should be supplied for each host organization; this will facilitate both general program reviews and future evaluation activities;

- if the same contract number for a project cannot be maintained over the duration of a project, the number assigned should be consistent from year-to-year, with a revision only in the alpha assignment;
- the request for completed applications from returning participants should be eliminated; additional information collected should pertain only to employment in the inactive period and the information required for documentation of household income; and
- a systematic approach should be developed for the client inventory, including a quarterly report to the Operations Working Group on the number of clients in the inventory in each area and the date of initial application; it is recognized that this may have to involve a separate data base system.

◆ Financial Reporting

Auditors and evaluators will need to have access to clear and concise financial reports. In order to accommodate future demands for information, Baseline suggests the following:

- a formal budget document should be prepared to report planned and actual program expenditures and projected revenues; this document should be used as the basis for reporting to the Operations Working Group and Management Committee on a quarterly basis;
- a supplemental document should be prepared which contains the procedures for determining the calculations for the amount of deferred revenue and in-kind contributions for the provincial departments; and
- there should be a formal process and format for reporting in-kind contributions required from private sector hosts; the information from private sector hosts should be submitted annually, within 30-45 days of the fiscal year-end.

◆ Communications

While the evidence suggests that communications within NB Job Corps are better than what the evaluators have observed in several other programs, improvement could be made. A simple solution would be an extension of the initiative of HRDNB's conference call: link staff from *all* partner agencies on an annual basis or when, and if, any major program changes occur.

◆ Project Hosts

Overall, aside from minor problems with communications, the project hosts are satisfied with NB Job Corps; however, some other points should be considered:

- to address the expressed concerns of participants, all work sites for participants should be certified for compliance with existing regulations of the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission; reports on work site visits by the Commission should be maintained in the project files and, at a minimum, an annual inspection should be requested, *at a time when participants are in the workplace*;
- there is a need for consideration of a common standard for equipment provided by the program; currently, some hosts cover the costs while others do not; it is suggested that the program return to its original requirement for project hosts and that future adaptation not be made to accommodate the requests of specific hosts, regardless of the number of placements a host may provide; in making this point, it is noted that the costs for some of the original safety equipment for social assistance recipients was covered by HRDNB; this appears to be a cost which is more appropriately covered by hosts;
- it is anticipated that many of the participants' concerns about travel to work sites would be eliminated if one of the major employers (NB Power) could receive their notification of placements at least three weeks prior to the project start dates; this notification should include the name and location of residence of participants assigned; NB Power has indicated that they would be able to make the required adjustments to achieve a better match between work sites and residences if this information were available within this time period; and
- as noted, hosts should file an annual form providing documentation of expenditures; this form should be provided prior to the end of each fiscal year; submission of that form should be required within 30-45 days of the program's fiscal year end.

◆ Participants

Given the low program exit rate (11%), it is obvious that the participants selected match the type of work available; however, improvements can be made:

- the income requirements for participation should be reviewed; there are currently no provisions which relate the income criteria to the number of people in the household; in these times of fiscal restraint and cost containment, it is assumed that a program which could prove to be considerably more expensive than alternative forms of passive assistance would have a low probability of

continuation; such could be the case with NB Job Corps if the majority of participants reside in single-person households;

- while many participants expressed concern about the level of income support provided through NB Job Corps, given the limited resources available and the demand for more positions, consideration of any increases other than those incorporated in the program budget would appear to be inappropriate;
- while it is not recommended that work be adapted to individual needs, more consideration should be given to the physical abilities of the applicants, both when making referrals and placements; some of the work is very demanding and those referred to placements have to be able to meet the standards set; and
- a few staff have suggested that work in the active period should be redesigned to accommodate the needs of those who may not be able to work full-time for 26-weeks; it is urged that such adjustments not be made; NB Job Corps works well, in large part, because of its simplicity; if individual adjustments are allowed, the program will become more complex, more varied and it will lose one of its key strengths; to support this point, it is suggested that future programs will differentiate between potential participants who are able to work and those who are not; NB Job Corps is a test of those who are able to work.

Management Response

Introduction

NB Job Corps is one of a number of Strategic Initiatives - joint federal-provincial/territorial partnerships - that will contribute to the renewal and revitalization of Canada's social security system. As a Strategic Initiative, programs such as NB Job Corps undergo a comprehensive evaluation to provide feedback to social policy developers. The evaluation process in this case is comprised of three components: Baseline Data Collection, Process Evaluation and Summative Evaluation. The Baseline Data Collection was completed prior to undertaking the Process Evaluation. The Summative Evaluation, which will provide a comprehensive assessment of program outcomes, is not expected until the final year of the current Agreement. The Process Evaluation Final Report was delivered to the Federal and New Brunswick Governments in November 1995.

The Process Evaluation involves the examination of the actual management and operation of the program in comparison to its planned operation. It describes the activities and processes as they occurred from the initial set-up through to the program activities under way in September, 1995. It is intended to provide feedback to administrators while the program is in progress. This section summarizes management's response to the recommendations brought forth by this evaluation.

Recommendations/Responses

The Process Evaluation consisted of an examination of the processes involved in the administration, management and operations of NB Job Corps, including host and participant selection, orientation and monitoring. Management is very pleased with the strong positive results and constructive feedback provided as a result of the evaluation. These results are indicative of the positive feedback federal and provincial officials have been receiving from program hosts and participants during various job site visits.

While the report is very positive, a number of areas have been highlighted for consideration in order to enhance or improve the program. As a result, management has provided the following responses to these recommendations:

1) Payroll System

- a) “As noted, the payroll system is unnecessarily complex. There should be one agency/department which is responsible for the complete payroll function. Within this agency/department, one person should also be designated as the key contact point for all payroll inquiries.”

Response ➔ *The partners agree that the payroll system is administratively complex. Discussions will be undertaken immediately at the NB Job Corps Operations Committee level in an effort to identify possible alternatives which would simplify the current process. In addition, the Department of Advanced Education and Labour’s (DAEL) Employment Programs area is currently undergoing a reengineering exercise which focuses primarily on its wage subsidy programs. Since a component of this exercise will be directed at payroll implications, DAEL has agreed to share any findings which could assist in simplifying the NB Job Corps payroll process with the program’s Operations Committee. It is important to note that the complexity of the current system has had no impact on participants receiving their remuneration in a timely manner. In addition, given that changes to the present system would be invisible to both participants and hosts, and that the current federal/provincial agreement expires in 1996/97, financial implications will have to be strongly considered prior to proceeding with any modifications to the current payroll system. In the meantime however, partners will discuss the possibility of assigning one person to act as key contact for all payroll inquiries.*

- b) “While it is recognized that any errors in payroll must be corrected and that the payroll must be precise, the guiding principle must ensure that all participants receive their payroll cheques on the date due.”

Response ➔ *Management certainly agrees with this recommendation. As stated previously, the current payroll system aims at ensuring that all participants receive payment of program benefits in a timely and effective manner. Any modifications made to the current system would continue to support this guiding principle.*

2) Information System

- a) “a unique identifier should be supplied for each host organization; this will facilitate both general program reviews and future evaluation exercises.”

Response ➔ *DAEL will ensure that at least the numeric component of contract numbers assigned to projects in the current fiscal year remains consistent throughout the project's duration. Discussions will also be undertaken within DAEL to consider the implications of modifying the contract number of those projects which have previously been assigned two distinctive numbers.*

- b) "if the same contract number for a project cannot be maintained over the duration of a project, the number assigned should be consistent from year-to-year, with a revision only in the alpha assignment."

Response ➔ *Discussions will be undertaken within DAEL to determine the possibility of maintaining a project host's contract number throughout the duration of the program. However, as previously stated, DAEL can and will, at the very least ensure that the numeric component of the contract number assigned to a project host remains consistent throughout the project's duration.*

- c) "the request for completed applications from returning participants should be eliminated; additional information collected should pertain only to employment in the inactive period and the information required for documentation of household income."

Response ➔ *Discussions pertaining to this issue have already been undertaken amongst NB Job Corps partners. It is recognized that not all the information is required on applications completed by returning participants. The process of returning participants to the active phase will be reviewed and streamlined to ensure that only essential information is collected in 1996 and future years.*

- d) "a systematic approach should be developed for the client inventory, including a quarterly report to the Operations Working Group on the number of clients in the inventory in each area and the date of initial application; it is recognized that this may have to involve a separate data base system."

Response ➔ *Client inventory systems currently in place in local Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Human Resources Development-NB (HRDNB) offices have responded well to placement demands. At this time, all available positions have been filled and the overall program exit rate remains impressively low. Given this scenario, partners do not see the need to incur additional financial and human resource expenses associated with the development of a separate data base system to keep track of clients who continue to apply for NB Job Corps.*

3) Financial Reporting

- a) “a formal budget document should be prepared to report planned and actual program expenditures and projected revenues; this document should be used as the basis for reporting to the Operations Working Group and Management Committee on a quarterly basis.”

Response ➔ *Although a document reporting planned and actual program expenditures and projected revenues has not been requested on a regular basis, management feels there is merit in this recommendation. This will ensure constant and timely availability of the information. DAEL will assume responsibility for preparing and presenting the document to both committees on a quarterly basis.*

- b) “a supplemental document should be prepared which contains the procedures for determining the sources, and calculations for the amount of diverted funds and in-kind contributions for the provincial departments.”

Response ➔ *Management agrees with this recommendation. The document will be prepared by DAEL and presented on a quarterly basis to the Operations and Management Committees as an annex to the actual program expenditure and projected revenues document.*

- c) “there should be a formal process and format for reporting in-kind contributions required from private sector hosts; the information from private sector hosts should be submitted annually, within 30-45 days of the fiscal year-end.”

Response ➔ *The partners agree that a structured process of this nature would ensure the timely reporting of mandatory information on the part of private sector hosts. Given DAEL is primarily responsible for the administration of the program and is the primary contact point for project hosts, it will assume responsibility for establishing the process and format for reporting in-kind contributions. DAEL will endeavour to have the formal process in place for the current fiscal year (1995-96).*

4) Communications

- a) “While the evidence suggests that communications with NB Job Corps are better than what the evaluators have observed in several other programs, improvement could be made. A simple solution would be an extension of the initiative of HRDNC’s conference call: link staff from all partner agencies on an annual basis or when, and if, any major program changes occur.”

Response ➔ *Given past experiences with similar initiatives, partners have been conscious of the need for effective and timely communication. It is agreed that program information should be delivered simultaneously to all partners. Efforts will continue to be made at all levels to further ensure the accurate and steady flow of information. In addition, suggested improvements such as an extension of HRDNB's conference call initiative will be encouraged by all partners.*

5) Project Hosts

- a) “to address the expressed concerns of participants, all work sites for participants should be certified for compliance with existing regulations of the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission; reports on work site visits by the Commission should be maintained in the project files and, at a minimum, an annual inspection should be requested, at a time when participants are in the workplace.”

Response ➔ *It is recognized by all partners that job safety is essential to any work placement. Partners will immediately undertake discussions with Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission representatives to ensure all project work sites have been certified for compliance with current regulations. The partners will also seek the Commission's commitment to ensuring consistency of inspections for all workplaces and will request confirmation of completed visits.*

- b) “there is a need for consideration of a common standard for equipment provided by the program; currently, some hosts cover the costs while others do not; it is suggested that the program return to its original requirement for project hosts and that future adaptation not be made to accommodate the requests of specific hosts, regardless of the number of placements a host may provide; in making this point, it is noted that the costs for some of the original safety equipment for social assistance recipients was covered by HRDNB; this appears to be a cost which is more appropriately covered by hosts.”

Response ➔ *It is agreed by the partners that all project hosts participating in NB Job Corps are responsible for providing participants with the safety equipment required to undertake the work. In fact, the participation agreement currently signed by employer hosts clearly states that they agree to provide all materials and supplies needed for the work being done by NB Job Corps participants including any specialized clothing and/or equipment that is deemed necessary for the work being done. Discussions will be undertaken at the Operations Committee level to review the recommendation for consideration of a common standard for equipment amongst all project hosts.*

- c) “it is anticipated that many of the participants’ concerns about travel to work sites would be eliminated if one of the major employers (NB Power) could receive their notification of placements at least three weeks prior to the project start dates; this notification should include the name and location of residence of participants assigned; NB Power has indicated that they would be able to make the required adjustments to achieve a better match between work sites and residences if this information were available within this time period.”

Response ➔ *NB Job Corps has been designed to provide one thousand unemployed older adults with guaranteed work placements for a period of three to five years. Once matched to a host organization, individuals are expected to remain with the initial placement for the duration of the program. At this time, all positions have been filled and given the program’s low participant exit rate, seldom are new placements made. As a result, employers such as NB Power now have set work crews for the duration of their projects and therefore should no longer be confronted with travel concerns. However, as a precautionary measure in the event several of the participants assigned to a project should chose not to return to NB Job Corps, designated HRDC and HRDNC offices will confirm the return of participants with project hosts at least three weeks prior to the project start dates.*

- d) “as noted, hosts should file an annual form providing documentation of expenditures; this form should be provided prior to the end of each fiscal year; submission of that form should be required within 30-45 days of the program’s fiscal year end.”

Response ➔ *As reflected in the response to recommendation “c” of the Financial Reporting section, the partners are committed to the establishment of a standard process which will ensure the timely reporting of host contributions to NB Job Corps. The development of a standard form for required documentation of expenditures will be an integral part of this exercise. As noted previously, DAEL will assume responsibility for this exercise and will endeavour to have the standard process in place for the current fiscal year (1995-96).*

6) Participants

- a) “the income requirements for participation should be reviewed; there are currently no provisions which relate the income criteria to the number of people in the household; in these times of fiscal restraint and cost containment, it is assumed that a program which could prove to be considerably more expensive than alternative forms of passive assistance would have a low probability of continuation; such could be the case with NB Job Corps if the majority of participants reside in single-person households.”

Response ➔ *Management agrees there is merit in considering a provision which would relate the income criteria to the number of people in the household for future initiatives. However as it relates to the current program, partners agree that it would not be acceptable to determine the eligibility of future participants based on a different set of criteria. Nevertheless, it must be noted that HRDC and HRDNB offices normally consider clients most in need as well as potential cost savings prior to filling vacant positions.*

- b) “while many participants expressed concern about the level of income support provided through NB Job Corps, given the limited resources available and the demand for more positions, consideration of any increases other than those incorporated in the program budget would appear to be inappropriate.”

Response ➔ *Management fully agrees with this recommendation. Placement demands from both HRDC and HRDNB offices exceed resources currently available under NB Job Corps. Any future funding earmarked for NB Job Corps would undoubtedly be committed to providing the current income support for additional placements.*

- c) “while it is not recommended that work be adapted to individual needs, more consideration should be given to the physical abilities of the applicants, both when making referrals and placements; some of the work is very demanding and those referred to placements have to be able to meet the standards set.”

Response ➔ *The partners agree with this observation and fully recognize that the key to successful placements is ensuring that participants get matched to jobs for which their health, interests and abilities are best suited. Each potential participant is interviewed by HRDC or HRDNB staff, prior to being matched with an employer host, to discuss previous work experiences, current work interests and potential physical limitations in an on-going effort to ensure the best possible matches. In many cases, potential participants may even go as far as suggesting an employer hosts with which they would like to work. In addition to this extensive screening, a program policy established under NB Job Corps provides participants with the option of requesting a transfer to another employer host should they feel the work they are asked to perform be to demanding. A strong indication of the partners’ success in this area has been the program’s extremely low exit rate and the few requests received for job transfers.*

- d) “some staff have suggested that work in the active period should be redesigned to accommodate the needs of those who may not be able to work full-time for 26-weeks; it is urged that such adjustments not be made; NB Job Corps works well, in large part, because of its simplicity; if individual adjustments are allowed, the program will become more complex, more varied and it will lose one of its key strengths; to support

this point, it is suggested that future programs will differentiate between potential participants who are able to work and those who are not; NB Job Corps is a test of those who are able to work.”

Response ➔ *Management agrees with this recommendation and has no intention of modifying the current format of NB Job Corps.*

Conclusion

The partners are very pleased with the overall Process Evaluation Report. Its results have demonstrated that both levels of government have been able to take what had previously been learned in other Federal-Provincial initiatives and successfully apply it to NB Job Corps. The simplicity of NB Job Corps has certainly been the key in meeting many of the program's operational requirements. Any changes or modifications made to the program as a result of the Process Evaluation will continue to reflect the program's current austerity.

Chapter

Introduction

1

Baseline Market Research Ltd. (*Baseline*) was retained by Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) to complete the process evaluation for New Brunswick Job Corps (NB Job Corps). This report presents the findings from the various research activities required for that evaluation.

NB Job Corps is one of a number of Strategic Initiatives - joint federal-provincial/territorial partnerships - that will contribute to the renewal and revitalization of Canada's social security system.

NB Job Corps is funded and managed by HRDC, the New Brunswick Department of Advanced Education and Labour (DAEL) and Human Resource Development New Brunswick (HRDNB). It is expected that NB Job Corps will have an allocation of up to \$80 million over a five-year period.

This report presents findings from the process evaluation which examined the management and operation of NB Job Corps. The evaluation examined all aspects of the program from the initial set-up through to the program activities under way in September, 1995. At a later date it is expected that a summative evaluation will provide a comprehensive assessment of program outcomes.

This process evaluation was designed to document the operation of NB Job Corps and to achieve two objectives:

- to document how the program was implemented in order to assist others who may be considering the development of similar approaches in other areas; and
- to provide feedback to partner-agencies which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the program in order to ensure efficient and effective program delivery.

It is noted that five separate reports detailing the findings from each stage of this process evaluation have been previously submitted to HRDC. These reports are included as appendices to this narrative. Given the previously submitted documentation, this report

will draw on key findings from all the reports in order to address each point in the evaluation framework.

While it is recognized that NB Job Corps is, technically, a federal-provincial/ territorial project, in this narrative, *Baseline* uses the term "program" in reference to NB Job Corps. A review of published literature uses both "program" and "project" for NB Job Corps. The use of the term "program" reduces potential confusion between the NB Job Corps "project" and host organization work "projects" funded under NB Job Corps.

The sections which follow provide a description of NB Job Corps, an overview of the evaluation approach and the evaluation of the findings.

2.1 The Concept

The concept of NB Job Corps originated in internal discussions with key ministers and management staff within various departments of the provincial government. In those initial stages, it was recognized that thousands of workers in various industries in the province had been displaced from the workforce as a result of mechanization, resource depletion, computerization and economic and structural change. At the same time, the originators of the NB Job Corps concept recognized that many of the displaced workers were older and, because of a lack of previous education and training, were unable to benefit from the type of training required to meet the demands of the new economy.

Concurrent with the development of the NB Job Corps concept, HRDC was undergoing a process of review and renewal, the desired end result of which would be the revitalization of Canada's social security system. One of the early approaches developed by HRDC was the Strategic Initiative Program, designed to create federal-provincial/territorial partnership approaches to test new options for reform.

The concept of NB Job Corps fit within the framework of a Strategic Initiative in that the concept presented by the province addressed two key policy objectives of the reform process:

- to enable working age adults who are at risk of long-term dependency to contribute to their maximum potential as productive members of society; and
- to ensure that persons who experience barriers to employment and full participation in community living, such as older, displaced workers, can achieve equality, independence and full participation.

Through a series of negotiations between federal and provincial officials, NB Job Corps became one of the first approaches funded under the Strategic Initiative Program. A description of NB Job Corps is presented the sections which follow.

2.2 Program Design

NB Job Corps is, as noted, one of a number of Strategic Initiatives - joint federal-provincial/territorial partnerships - that will contribute to the renewal and revitalization of Canada's social security system.

Program costs, up to \$80 million, are to be shared equally between federal and provincial governments for the five-year agreement. Currently, there is a Contribution Agreement which specifies a five-year period for program operation covering fiscal years (FY) 1994/95 - 1998/99. Operation over the full period is subject to evaluation outcomes and approval of funding by Canada's Treasury Board.

NB Job Corps is a voluntary program designed to provide older workers, aged 50 to 65 years, with the opportunity to free themselves from passive support and to contribute to the development of their community.

The rationale for the program stems from the recognition that older workers face many difficulties in re-entering the workforce, namely their age, lack of mobility and the need for extensive retraining required to meet the needs of the new economy. For these workers (including long-term social assistance (SA) recipients, recipients/ exhaustees of unemployment insurance (UI) and displaced workers) there exists the danger that a cycle of dependency on public assistance will be created. Many have been displaced, carrying with them transferable skills that would enable them to remain as productive members of society. By working with non-profit, private and public sector hosts, it is hoped that these individuals will benefit in a number of ways from actively contributing to the community.

2.3 NB Job Corps Objectives

The objectives of NB Job Corps frame the measurable aspects of the program. The stated objectives are as follows:

- to provide a positive influence on the economic activities of the province through projects which enhance the environment and support community activities, and whose implementation serves to decrease short- and medium-term demands on social support services, while providing an avenue for incremental work not accomplished by other workers;
- to improve the general physical environment of communities, and to assist in the development of infrastructure projects which would not otherwise be possible in the absence of the program;

- ☐ to enhance the quality of life of individuals who have been deemed most in need, but unable to find work or take part in retraining, by providing the opportunity to contribute actively in socially beneficial work; enhancing quality of life refers to improvements to self-esteem, self-worth, feelings of contributing to society, health status, financial self-determination and general life satisfaction; and
- ☐ to stimulate and engender a sense of belonging and contribution to the community, resulting in the potential for longer-term labour force or voluntary activity, community involvement and personal well-being of participants and family members.

2.4 NB Job Corps Project Structure

"NB Job Corps is an initiative of Canada and New Brunswick designed to test an 'active' income support program that provides a guaranteed annual income to older, unemployed workers who volunteer for community service placements" (NB Job Corps Contribution Agreement, p.1).

The program is managed by a joint federal and provincial Management Committee and is funded under a special agreement between HRDC, HRDNC and DAEL. In addition to the Management Committee, different areas of responsibility have been assigned to various committees/working groups.

The Operations Working Group/Committee is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the day-to-day operations of NB Job Corps among the partner agencies. This Committee has maintained a schedule of bi-weekly meetings throughout the operation of the program. The Committee is made up of representatives from each of the three partner agencies.

The following sub-committees were also established at the onset of program activities: Evaluation, Finance and Communications. These sub-committees have met on an as-needed basis over the course of the program and report to the Operations Working Group as-needed. As of September, 1995, sub-committees were meeting on an as-needed basis.

During the start-up stages, the following working groups were established: Systems, Legislative Change, Guidelines and Selection/Recruitment. The level of activity for these working groups decreased as their objectives were accomplished. As of September, 1995, none of these working groups were operational.

All committees and sub-groups had representation from each of the partner agencies.

2.5 Participants

In order to be eligible for NB Job Corps participants must meet the following criteria:

- be at least 50 years of age;
- document that their family unit income was under \$20,000 during the previous calendar year;
- be a social assistance recipient, an unemployment insurance benefits recipient/exhaustee and/or be permanently displaced from the workforce;
- be among those for whom retraining is not a realistic goal; and
- have low educational attainment.

Each participant receives financial support in the form of a guaranteed annual income of approximately \$12,000. Participants receive \$46 for each day they are at work during a six month period (active period) with a host organization. For the remaining six months, during which the participant is not at work (inactive period), they receive a prorated amount that reflects the total income provided during the active period divided by 13 pay periods. Other characteristics of remuneration are as follows:

- the project activity during the 26-week active period is not UI insurable;
- monthly income is not affected by other employment income earned by the participant or any other member of the family unit;
- UI benefits claimed by the participant while in the program reduce NB Job Corps benefits dollar for dollar; other members of the family unit may earn up to \$8,000 in UI in any one year; however, any amount above \$8,000 is deducted from the NB Job Corps benefits dollar for dollar; and
- Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions are deducted from the participant's cheque at source and the NB Job Corps project contributes an equal amount; these contributions are made twelve months per year and are credited towards the participant's CPP entitlement; if the NB Job Corps participant is in receipt of their CPP entitlement, further deductions are not made.

Participants have access to a health plan provided by Blue Cross; coverage is cost-shared with the participant, while the additional cost of an extended benefits package is the sole responsibility of the participant.

Program participation is limited to one person per family unit. In FY 94/95, a total of 1,077 individuals who met eligibility criteria were provided with work placements. As of

September 8, 1995, the program had an total of 998 participants with two vacancies to be filled. In the period from inception to September, 1995, a total of 121 people who joined the program had exited; work placements were refilled as exits occurred.

Individuals may participate for up to five years or until such time as income security programs are modified.

Through a baseline data collection project, interviews have been completed with a total of 904 participants. The information collected has resulted in the development of a socio-demographic and attitudinal profile. The data files for participants, maintained by DAEL, contain information on income and work history for all participants.

2.6 Comparison Group

In order to meet the demands for program evaluation, a comparison group has been selected for the FY 94/95 participants. This group consists of 680 people. The comparison group was drawn from a random selection of SA and UI recipients with the following characteristics:

- at least 50 years of age;
- with a total income for the family unit under \$20,000 during 1993;
- who were recipients of social assistance (57%), and/or unemployment insurance benefits or an exhaustee of benefits and/or permanently displaced workers (43%);
- for whom retraining was not a realistic goal; and
- who, in general, have low educational attainment.

All persons within the comparison group have completed a telephone interview resulting in the development of socio-demographic, attitudinal and employment profiles.

Preliminary analysis of the baseline data for the comparison group was completed in the first stage of this evaluation. More detailed analysis is anticipated. In later analysis, there will have to be adjustments (data weighting) to accommodate two significant variations between participant and comparison groups: the comparison group has a higher percentage of females than the participant group; and the comparison group has a higher percentage of anglophones than the participant group.

2.7 Host Organizations

NB Job Corps participants work in various projects sponsored by host organizations. The following criteria were established for host organizations:

- a host must be a private sector business, a municipality, a non-profit organization, or a provincial government department/agency;
- hosts must be able to provide a safe and constructive work environment;
- hosts must demonstrate that projects:
 - consist of incremental tasks;
 - are not already funded by other job creation or training programs;
 - will be for a 26-week duration;
 - could not be done within the sponsor's existing budget structure; and
- hosts must be willing to cover all overhead costs associated with the projects.

"The type of activity likely to be undertaken will include - but not be restricted to - silviculture, fish habitat enhancement, upgrading of tourist facilities, as well as projects of an environmental nature" (*Administrative Guidelines*, June, 1995, p.2).

Along with the program requirements, as presented, and as with all federal-provincial/territorial initiatives, an overall plan for the evaluation of NB Job Corps was mandated. The approach developed by the Evaluation Committee is presented in the sections which follow.

<h1>Chapter</h1>	
<h2>The Process Evaluation</h2>	<h1>3</h1>

The overall evaluation of NB Job Corps has been designed to be a multi-faceted approach. The initial phase, a baseline data collection project with participants and comparison group members was completed in FY 94/95. Plans are in place for the collection of information on replacement participants as required.

The evaluation summarized in this report involved an examination of the processes involved in the administration, management and operations of the program, including host and participant selection, orientation and monitoring.

A summative evaluation, which will deal with a broad range of impacts and effects, ranging from psychometric measures such as attitudes/motivations, self-esteem and personal development/satisfaction to post-program employability and dependency on income support, is planned to begin in FY 96/97.

3.1 Evaluation Issues

The process evaluation was intended to provide a wide range of information, focusing on the administration, management and operations of NB Job Corps, to facilitate program adjustment and modification.

Because NB Job Corps is a test/pilot project, the evaluators assumed that the program would require changes and adjustments over the course of the evaluation in order to meet the stated objectives. Evaluators have, where appropriate, documented the changes which have taken place. The evaluators have also assumed, and structured their findings accordingly, that information generated through this process evaluation will contribute to further program adjustments and improvements.

Table 1 provides a summary of the questions, indicators and data sources which framed this process evaluation. The issues were developed as a part of the overall approach prepared by the NB Job Corps Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee reviewed all work associated with this process evaluation and received initial copies of all reports prepared by *Baseline*.

Table 1
Evaluation Questions, Indicators and Data Sources

Questions	Indicators	Data Sources
A. Partnership		
1. What is the organizational structure of NB Job Corps? i) What is the division of authority? ii) What are the funding arrangements? iii) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the structure? iv) Is the joint federal-provincial/territorial approach the most efficient means of administering this type of program?	Description of NB Job Corps structure and management Opinion of the partner department staff	Administrative guidelines Key informant interviews
B. Operations		
2. What criteria do NB Job Corps staff use for approving hosts? i) How do criteria compare with community needs? ii) What expectations does management have of individual projects? iii) What expectations do hosts have? iv) Are opportunities provided which are consistent with participant needs?	Description and rationale for project eligibility criteria Community needs assessments	Administrative guidelines Key informant interviews Community key informant interviews Survey of project hosts
3. By what means are applicants recruited and selected? i) Is the program accessible to all members of the target group? ii) Are there variations in the selection process: across the province and between referring agencies? iii) Are the joint recruitment and selection processes successful in terms of local joint committee cooperation?	Description of selection and recruitment process Joint committee planning, ongoing communication, objectives of partners (any conflicts)	Administrative guidelines Key informant interviews
4. Do any operational constraints exist that impinge on the ability of the program to achieve its objectives? i) What changes could be made to improve operations?	Operational issues	Key informant interviews
5. What is the take-up of basic and extended health benefits offered through NB Job Corps? i) What factors influence the decision to join/not join the health care plan	Health plan take-up Quantified and substantiated views of participants	Review of administrative data Survey of participants
C. Hosts		
6. What is the profile of the project hosts in terms of sector/industry, jobs provided, description of project activity, motivations to become involved in NB Job Corps, integration of participants in the organization, past and intended future involvement with other employment initiatives and other factors defined in preliminary evaluation activities? i) What are the incentives for being a NB Job Corps host?	Descriptions of host organizations Descriptions of projects Quantified and substantiated views on the merits of the initiative	Review of project proposals Survey of project hosts Case studies On-going monitoring
7. Has NB Job Corps met expectations? i) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the NB Job Corps? ii) What changes can be made to improve NB Job Corps?	Descriptions of projects	Survey of project hosts Case studies On-going monitoring
D. Participants		
8. What is the profile of participants in NB Job Corps including such elements as transferrable skills, years employed, number of jobs held, longest job held, industry, volunteer work experience, health status, psychometric profile, demographics (age, gender, education, household composition, area of residence) and other characteristics identified in early stages of the evaluation? i) How does this profile differ from the general target group? ii) What are the incentives for volunteering in NB Job Corps?	Profile of participants and non-participants	Administrative data
9. Has NB job Corps met expectations? i) What are the strengths and weaknesses of NB Job Corps? ii) What changes could be made to improve the program?	Quantified and substantiated views on the merits of the initiatives Discontinuity rates	Survey of participants On-going monitoring Exit surveys

In addition to the questions delineated in Table 1, the process evaluation addressed the points which follow.

- Applications for participation are received on an on-going basis and information sessions are provided as necessary. Intake is dynamic and dependent on a number of factors.
- Participant selection and matching are on-going, with placements occurring in the spring and fall of each year.
- The baseline survey data was available to the consultant; however, in order to develop the employment profile of participants, it was necessary to link survey data to data files maintained by DAEL. As well, the data collection process is on-going as participants are added to NB Job Corps.
- The literacy level of some participants was expected to be low and research methodologies took this factor into account.

A summary of the evaluation approach developed by *Baseline* is presented in the section which follows.

3.2 Summary of the Evaluation Approach

Baseline has prepared a complete summary of the methodological approach employed for this evaluation (see Appendix A). This Methodology Report was developed at the onset of the evaluation and was revised upon completion of the evaluation activities in order to reflect the actual sequence and dates for all activities and submissions.

Baseline's approach to this process evaluation was based on four fundamental issues:

- that there was a need for positive, constructive and timely feedback on the administrative implementation of the first stages of NB Job Corps;
- that the focus of this evaluation and the program was/is three-fold based on the operations, the hosts/projects and the participants;
- that the differing perspectives of the target groups (key informants, project sponsors and participants) required somewhat different approaches in terms of the data collection methodologies and in the design of data collection instruments; and
- while this is a process evaluation, information generated through this evaluation will be used in the summative evaluation and thus had to be developed accordingly.

In order to complete this process evaluation, *Baseline* completed six specific tasks:

- prepared and presented a comprehensive work plan;
- developed a research design, methods and instruments;
- implemented the work plan;
- compiled and analyzed data to address the evaluation questions;
- presented findings to the Evaluation Committee; and
- prepared this final report.

As noted, the ways in which *Baseline* completed these tasks are presented in the Methodology Report; however, it is important to summarize the research activities which provided the information and insight required for this evaluation. *Baseline*:

- reviewed all administrative data for the program including the initial proposal, financial material, minutes of all meetings, administrative guidelines, and project and participant files;
- completed 26 interviews with key informants including program managers, staff and project hosts;
- completed a comprehensive telephone survey of 200 project hosts;
- completed a comprehensive telephone survey (tracking survey) of 401 participants which included 34 program exits;
- conducted 11 case studies in which senior research staff visited 12 different project sites, interviewed host supervisors and assessed the type of work being done by participants; and
- reviewed baseline data and analyzed additional data supplied by DAEL in order to develop the employment profile of participants.

Upon completion of these activities, *Baseline* prepared detailed reports for the Evaluation Committee. These reports are contained in the appendices:

- Report # 1: Methodology Report
- Report # 2: Summary of Key Informant Interviews;
- Report # 3: Survey of Project Hosts;
- Report # 4: Case Studies; and
- Report # 5: Survey of Participants.

The approaches taken in this evaluation were designed to provide both quantitative and qualitative data - data on which a reasonable assessment of program operations could be based. The evaluation findings are presented in the sections which follow.

As approved by the Evaluation Committee upon acceptance of *Baseline's* proposal, the findings from the process evaluation of NB Job Corps are presented through a narrative format which addresses each of the evaluation issues in the order presented in Table 1.

4.1 The Partnership Arrangement

The four questions which follow were to be addressed in relation to the partnership arrangement for NB Job Corps:

- what is the division of authority;
- what are the funding arrangements;
- what are the strengths and weaknesses of the structure; and
- is the joint federal-provincial/territorial approach the most efficient means of administering this type of program?

The data sources required to address these questions included the review of administrative material and interviews with key informants, project hosts and program participants.

4.1.1 Division of Authority

Overall responsibility for NB Job Corps rests with the Management Committee which consists of senior officials from HRDC, DAEL and HRDNB.

Operational responsibility rests with the three partner agencies, each of which has designated a staff person as the key contact for NB Job Corps. Each designated staff person also serves on the Operations Working Group.

Within the three partner agencies, at the operations level:

- DAEL has primary responsibility for the administration of the program, including record and file maintenance, final payroll processing (in conjunction with the Office of the Comptroller), project approval and monitoring; DAEL is the primary contact point for project hosts;

- HRDC is responsible for the certification and selection of project participants, referral of participants and approval of final placements, collection of profile information, maintenance of its participant inventory and, through the Annuities Division, is responsible for initial processing of the participant payroll; and
- HRDNB is responsible for the recruitment and certification of participants, collection of profile information, maintenance of its participant inventory, referrals and final placement with approved project hosts.

According to key informants and project hosts, the division of authority, overall, is working well; however, there is some overlap in relation to project hosts. For example, a point of confusion is the role played by HRDNB/HRDC and DAEL in contacts with hosts. While DAEL has primary responsibility, the two front-line service agencies are also responsible for referrals and notification to project hosts as to the date of project start-ups and the dates when participants are to return to their placements. There have been a few delayed project start-ups and a few situations in which participants reported for work without the host receiving prior notification of the start date. Staff of HRDC and HRDNB expressed concern about their roles in relation to host notification, suggesting that this should be the responsibility of DAEL.

The payroll system also poses some problems. Payroll sheets for all participants are submitted to the Bathurst office of the Annuities Division of HRDC. This office prepares the regular payroll (issued on Province of New Brunswick cheques) and then submits the completed payroll to DAEL which must review and confirm the accuracy of the information before the cheques are issued by the Office of the Comptroller.

There is wide-spread agreement that this system is more complex than it needs to be. Several alternatives were suggested:

- private sector hosts would prefer to pay participants directly and submit a claim for reimbursement to DAEL, an approach which would not be appropriate for those hosts with limited cash flow (such as the non-profit sector);
- the payroll system could be administered within the Office of the Comptroller since it is similar to, and would fit within, the system for payment of casual employees;
- an organization such as NB Power could administer the payroll through the system it used to pay participants in another work program, New Brunswick Works; however, if this were the case it would have to be clear that NB Power was simply an administrative partner, not the employer of record for the 1,000 participants because of the potential impact on NB Power's established rates for Workers' Compensation; or

- the payroll could be administered by any one of the partners, with *only one* partner responsible for payroll.

Both participants and project hosts would prefer to see one designated person or agency/department to which all inquiries could be directed.

The following could lead to improvements in the way in which authority is divided among partner agencies:

- DAEL could assume full responsibility for all contact with hosts concerning the projects while HRDC/HRDNB staff would be in contact with hosts only in relation to referrals and final placements; and
- the payroll function could be managed within one of the partner agencies and, within that agency, one or two people would be responsible for all inquiries related to payroll.

4.1.2 Funding Arrangements

The process evaluators' task is to explain the funding arrangements. In order to meet this requirement, *Baseline* requested copies of specific financial agreements and operating budgets.

The primary financial document for NB Job Corps is the NB Job Corps Contribution Agreement (undated) signed by the federal and provincial ministers. Among other conditions, the Contribution Agreement specifies:

- that the maximum amount of contribution of the federal government will be an amount "not to exceed (a) 67% of eligible costs of the Initiative and (b) \$40 million; and
- that "in order to achieve a sharing of the costs of the Initiative on a 50-50 basis, the Province, in addition to paying the other 33% of eligible costs, shall be responsible for the costs associated with the provision of training to participants and for all overhead costs associated with the activities undertaken by participants during their participation on NB Job Corps; the province will contribute towards these costs in the form of monetary and in-kind contribution and the parties agrees that the value of the Province's monetary and in-kind contribution towards these costs will be \$3.3 million in FY 94/95 and \$4.25 million in each subsequent fiscal year during the Initiative period."

The Contribution Agreement also specifies that ... "Canada's obligation to contribute toward the eligible costs of the Initiative in fiscal years 1997-98 and 1998-99 is conditional upon:

- (a) a positive outcome of the evaluation of the Initiative; and
- (b) obtaining approval of Canada's Treasury Board to fund the Initiative in fiscal years 1997/98 and 1998/99.

Baseline reviewed available budget projections contained in the initial negotiating document and in the internal budget document prepared in January, 1994. Other than these documents, no current or formalized budget documents were provided to the evaluators.

The evaluators were provided with a description of the provincial in-kind contributions for NB Job Corps, the actual expenditures for FY 94/95 and projected expenditures (overall) through FY 96/97. This information was provided by DAEL. It is noted that the amount of in-kind contributions is inconsistent with the Contribution Agreement in that it allocates a total of \$20.3 million equally over the five fiscal years.

Using the sources available, *Baseline* prepared the information which is contained in Table 2.

Table 3 presents a comparison of projected to actual costs for FY 94/95.

The *Administrative Guidelines* (June/95, p.4), specify conditions for private sector employers related to program finances. "Where participants are undertaking activities with private sector hosts which will result in improvements to private property and/or will lead to increased productivity or profits for the hosts, each private sector project will be expected to make cash or in-kind contributions at least equivalent to the total of income support paid to participants plus the employer's share of Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Workers' Compensation Benefits (WCB). In-kind contributions represent costs to the hosts that would not have been incurred if the participants were not in place. Excluding the cost of supervision, this would represent a contribution of \$190 per participant, per week. All contributions, other than supervision, must be supported by receipts. Should a host's contribution fall short of the minimum amount of \$190 per participant per week, the host will be required to make a cash contribution to the NB Job Corps project to cover the shortfall."

**Table 2
Program Budget
(01/94)**

Cost Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Participant Wages	\$9,000,000	\$11,800,000	\$11,800,000	\$11,800,000	\$11,800,000	\$56,200,000
Overhead Costs	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	1,000,000
Provincial in-Kind Contributions	4,060,000	4,060,000	4,060,000	4,060,000	4,060,000	\$20,300,000
Total Project Cost	\$13,260,000	\$16,060,000	\$16,060,000	\$16,060,000	\$16,060,000	\$77,500,000

**Table 3
Projected - Actual Budget Comparison, FY 94/95
Cash Expenditures**

Expense Items	Planned	Actual
Participant Wages (including benefits)	\$9,000,000	\$8,562,452
Overhead Costs	200,000	--
Provincial In-kind	\$4,060,000	2,911,234
Total	\$13,260,000	\$11,473,686
Revenue Items		
Federal Cash Contributions	\$6,090,000	\$5,736,843
Provincial Cash Contributions	3,110,000	2,825,609
In-kind Contributions	4,060,000	2,911,234
Total to date (9/95)	\$13,260,000	\$11,473,686

To date, the estimated amount of contributions to be generated from the private sector, if any, has not been provided. As well, it is the evaluators' understanding that any required documentation has not yet been requested from private sector hosts. As soon as the information is available, estimates can be developed and the information reviewed. Later stages of the evaluation process will have to address the methods for assessing the contributions required.

A review of the financial material provided and information in these tables provides the basis for the following observations:

- the participant-related budget projections approximate the actual program expenditures, given a first year project start-up;
- if the assumptions of constant payments to participants and 1,000 participants per year remain in place, there is no reason to expect expenditures to exceed projections; however,
- increases in the provincial contribution are highly probable for HRDNB: given the characteristics of the participant group, the amount of SA payments diverted may be below projected levels; it was originally assumed that SA participants would have received payments in the range of \$8-9,000 annually; the reality may reflect a lower annual payment, on average (perhaps in the range of \$4-5,000 for participants not responsible for others in their households); if this proves to be the case, HRDNB will be responsible for contributions in excess of the amount normally paid in passive support benefits and NB Job Corps could prove to be a fairly expensive alternative to passive assistance payments;
- there is a need to finalize the documentation for all in-kind or cash contributions from the private sectors; *Baseline* was advised that DAEL is in the process of developing the forms for documentation of in-kind contributions from the private sector hosts; however, DAEL does not expect to request documentation until the end of the second fiscal year (FY 95/96); *Baseline* has also been advised that the in-kind costs associated with the program and referenced in budget documents have been defined in an inter-agency memo which will be available to future evaluators; and
- incremental costs, referenced in some budget documents, need to be clarified.

In addition to these points, the evaluators note that it will be essential to have readily accessible financial documentation in order to complete a cost benefit analysis of the program and to complete a summative evaluation.

Baseline recognizes that program expenditures are following projections; however, contributions from HRDNB may be higher than expected and up-to-date budgets and

documentation are required; therefore, *Baseline* urges consideration of the following activities:

- a formal budget document should be prepared to report planned and actual program expenditures and projected revenues; this document should be used as the basis for reporting to the Operations Working Group and Management Committee on a quarterly basis;
- a supplemental document should be prepared which contains the procedures for determining the sources, and calculations for the amount of monetary revenue and in-kind contributions for the provincial departments; and
- there should be a formal process and format for reporting in-kind contributions required from private sector hosts; the information from private sector hosts should be submitted annually, within 30-45 days of the fiscal year-end.

4.1.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of the NB Job Corps Organizational Structure

In order to assess strengths and weaknesses of the organization structure for NB Job Corps, *Baseline* explored the operation of the program with staff at all levels. Additional information was obtained from hosts and participants.

Within the two participant-oriented service agencies, HRDC and HRDNB, the patterns are essentially similar and consistent with the division of authority for the two agencies/partners (noting the overlap of responsibilities related to project hosts presented in Section 4.1.1). Each agency has a central office coordinator serving on the Operations Working Group. Each of those people also serves as the key contact point and information source for field staff involved in direct service to clients.

The major strength of NB Job Corps, from a structural perspective, is that the program is simple, clear and direct. The availability of administrative guidelines at the start of the program enhanced the clarity of the program and operations for staff in field offices.

A second strength is based on the fact that many staff involved with NB Job Corps, have worked together on many other job creation programs. HRDC and HRDNB have extensive experience in the placement of participants. HRDC and DAEL have significant experience in working with private sector employers. The positive effects of the long-term relationships among partner agencies were observed at both the coordinating and operations levels.

At the local level the coordination of the program is a function of the relationship between staff from HRDC and HRDNB. It is noted that staff from HRDC were more likely to question the need for the involvement of any other agencies in program delivery, especially since "this is the type of work we have always done - the type of service we have always provided".

While there is not a formal structure for coordination at the local level, delivery works well in most areas. Staff from the partner agencies are supplied with participant quotas to be filled. As of September, 1995, all but two positions have been filled in accord with these quotas. Quotas are established at the central coordinating level and reflect the distribution of potentially eligible residents in each area. It is noted that the program quotas also ensured a 60-40% allocation between social assistance recipients and UI claimants.

Recruitment was a key point at the start of the program. Today, there is little need for extensive recruitment activities because of the existing client inventory and the limited need for participant replacement.

Initially, staff from HRDC recruited participants from their client files, through posted notices and through walk-in requests in response to media coverage. HRDNB staff were supplied with a listing of social assistance recipients who met the basic program eligibility criteria and letters were mailed to potential applicants. Other applications were taken in local offices and information about the program was provided on a one-to-one basis.

In FY 94/95 HRDC/HRDNB-sponsored information sessions were held and applications were taken as a result of those sessions. A representative from J.D. Irving was also involved in several sessions. The information sessions were positively reviewed by the staff involved and by the participants who attended.

Staff from the two service agencies each accept and approve participant applications, in accord with the regional quotas. Staff may or may not meet to discuss the applicants. Approved applicants are referred by staff from each agency to employers who recommend/select from the referrals. Staff from each agency maintain separate inventories of potential participants and may refer to these inventories when vacancies occur. It is noted that the lack of a computerized inventory is a potential problem (see section 4.2.2).

A review of any program suggests that there are areas of weakness or areas in which improvements can be made. For example, communication among the partner agencies can be improved within NB Job Corps.

The program's central office managers in various partner agencies suggested that informational material is provided to all field staff at the same time, often with the same memos being sent under the letterheads for the two service departments. In reality, staff suggested that the timing is not exact and that sometimes poses a problem when one agency's staff has more up-to-date information than another. This was demonstrated in the distribution pattern for the revision of the *Administrative Guidelines* (when HRDNB staff received the revisions in advance of HRDC staff).

As is the case with most programs today, the primary problem with the coordination of approaches is the changing composition of staff at both the local and central office level. It is unlikely that this situation will change, but the reality of the staff changes should enhance the need for communication and the need to bring new staff up-to-date on program procedures and regulations.

At the start of the second program year (FY 95/96), HRDNB arranged a province-wide call with field staff involved with NB Job Corps to ensure a common understanding of program changes and approaches. This approach was well-received by staff. Staff from HRDC would have preferred to be involved in that conference call. In Bathurst, the HRDNB staff invited the HRDC staff to that conference call and both agreed that the common learning experience improved communications and facilitated program operations at the local level.

Participants and hosts also expressed a need for a single contact point or person to whom inquiries could be directed. Some of those inquiries may relate to payroll while others could relate to the process of recruitment, selection or operations.

In summary:

- the key strengths of the structure are found in its simplicity, in the surplus of clients who meet the eligibility criteria and are interested in finding work; the experienced staff in different aspects of the program is also assessed to be a strength of the program; and
- the weaknesses related to structure involve a need for improved communications, clarification or refinement of roles/responsibilities and the need for a central contact point for inquiries.

In addition to previous suggestions related to the need for clarification of responsibilities, *Baseline* suggests consideration of the following:

- while it does not seem possible to have only one contact person because of the different types of information needed by hosts and participants, it would appear logical to provide hosts and participants with the appropriate contact agency/person for various types of inquiries; also, it does appear to be essential that there be a single contact point for all payroll inquiries;
- greater effort should be made to ensure that program staff receive information at precisely the same time and that an annual conference call link all program staff at the start of each fiscal year; and
- given the assertion that a key strength of the program can be found in its simplicity and clarity, the overall operation of the program should not be changed.

4.1.4 Efficiency of Delivery

NB Job Corps was conceptualized and implemented within an eight-month period.

The Operations Working Group meets bi-weekly and the average meeting time is one hour. Other committees meet on an as-needed basis. Working groups established at the onset were disbanded when their tasks were completed.

The NB Job Corps *Administrative Guidelines* were made available to program staff in September, 1994. The guidelines were produced by a working group and approved by the Operations Working Group. Staff had access to the guidelines in the early stages of the program and this access enhanced program implementation and operation. The guidelines were revised to reflect clarifications and adjustments required after the first year of operations. The revised guidelines were distributed to staff in the summer of 1995.

Local staff have processed a surplus of applications and have an existing inventory to which they can refer when program vacancies occur. The program provided placements for its full allocation in FY 94/95 and will achieve the same results in FY 95/96.

Hosts expressed a high level of satisfaction with program operations, as did participants. Approximately 11% of participants exited the program and 85% of active placements have remained with their initial project host over two active periods.

Based on these observations, it is concluded that the delivery system is efficient in reaching potential participants and in delivery of the program. It is noted that improvements in the way in which the client inventory is maintained are discussed in Section 4.2.2.

4.2 Program Operations

In accord with the evaluation issues identified, *Baseline* focused its assessment of the operations of NB Job Corps on the key questions which follow:

- what criteria do NB Job Corps staff use for approving hosts;
- by what means are applicants recruited and selected;
- do any operational constraints exist which impinge on the ability of the program to achieve its objectives; and
- what is the take-up of basic and extended health benefits offered through NB Job Corps?

The information which follows, with reference to material presented in the appendices, addresses each of these key points.

4.2.1 Host Selection

Applications for projects have been generated from two primary sources: hosts were approached by the provincial government to become involved with the program or hosts initiated the applications.

Applications initiated by government included J.D. Irving and NB Power, providing placements to more than 200 participants, applications related to the development of the provincial parks, trails and beaches, initiated and coordinated through the New Brunswick Department of Economic Development and Tourism and the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy and applications related to the library automation projects, initiated by the Department of Municipalities, Culture and Housing. In addition to these hosts, others were approached on an as-needed basis in local areas. In these instances potential hosts were contacted by field staff in local offices of HRDC or HRDNB.

The other primary source of applications for projects resulted from media coverage of the program. Potential hosts learned about the program, requested an information package and submitted an application in response.

The application package provided is complete. It contains a description of the program, the criteria for projects and the process for selection of participants.

All applications for projects are processed by DAEL. Once an application is received, it is reviewed by staff to determine if the proposal meets the specified criteria. In FY 94/95, projects which meet the criteria were approved and funds were allocated, but participants were not necessarily referred or placed in that project. The actual referral and placement of participants was and is a function of the match, determined at the local level, between the skills demanded by the project and the skills of the participants available.

All projects were entered into the NB Job Corps information system. The classification of projects within the information system carry a designation which indicated that they were approved, active (with placements) or rejected.

In FY 94/95 the approval process was confusing to some project hosts because the number of projects approved and the funds allocated exceeded the financial resources available to the program. For example, *Baseline* contacted a total of 58 potential hosts who had been notified that their application had been "approved" but these hosts had received no referrals for the positions available. These hosts expressed confusion about the process because they had assumed, and the correspondence provided by DAEL was not clear on this, that approval indicated that placements would be assigned.

For FY 95/96, changes have been made in this process. The notification letter of project approval was revised. Further changes were made in the classification of projects in the fall of 1995 and this will serve to remove cause for confusion. Projects will now be classified as approved or rejected. Approved projects will include only those for which funds are available. Projects approved in FY 94/95 which did not result in active placements have been cancelled. This change is logical because the program operates on the assumption that most hosts will continue with their project over at least a three-year period. This is confirmed by the fact that 85% of participants have had only one host over the course of their involvement with the program. Secondly, most of the funds for projects have been allocated. Reflecting this revised classification of applications, as of September, 1995:

- a total of 568 applications for projects had been submitted to DAEL;
- 337 projects had been approved and provided placements to a total of 998 participants; and

- 231 host projects, most of which met program criteria, did not receive placements due to a lack of available funds; the projects which did not meet the established criteria were rejected.

A review of program operations related to project hosts provides the basis for the observations which follow.

- Overall, there appears to be no significant shortage of participants in any area of the province to meet the needs of project hosts (although recruitment in some rural areas was more difficult than expected) but there have been some problems.

The more rural and less populated areas are also the ones which, logically, generate fewer project proposals. In the Peninsula area, for example, the number of projects generated locally was insufficient to provide the required number of placements. Staff from HRDC and HRDNC, therefore approached local non-profits, municipalities and health care providers to generate additional placements. These approaches resulted in an increase in the number of placements. Situations such as this reflect the reality of the variation in resources available across the province. These variations are also reflected in the employment rates for more rural areas. When necessary, there have been adjustments made to the allocated quotas in the different regions. These allocation decisions are made by the Operations Working Group.

- A review of the project files at DAEL indicated that most were in compliance with the stated criteria for NB Job Corps; however, there is a need to review all files and ensure that the statement which certifies that participants do not displace other employees is signed by all hosts.
- As noted elsewhere (Section 4.1.2), there is also a need to ensure that all project files contain appropriate documentation of the host's share of the costs for each participant. While it is not expected that this will pose a major problem for hosts, such documentation is required and should be on file with DAEL.
- A review of the files maintained by DAEL indicated a problem for future evaluators. Each project is assigned a specific contract number for each program year. A host with multiple work sites will, therefore, be assigned multiple contract numbers in each year. There is no unique identifier assigned to hosts which will make the evaluation of project outcomes for different hosts more complicated and difficult than necessary. Given the current system, for example, it will be difficult to define the total allocation of dollars to a host over the course of the program. Since 85% of participants remain with the same host, this suggests that most hosts will have a minimum of three or five (depending on the duration of the program) contract numbers. The addition of a unique identifier to the system record would enhance the tracking of host activity which is anticipated to be required in the summative evaluation.

Given the suggested changes and observations, the overall conclusion is that NB Job Corps operations in relation to host selection are generally working well and efficiently.

◆ **Community Needs Assessment**

The evaluators were to address the following question:

- how do the criteria for selecting project hosts compare with community needs?

The evaluators were to review the community needs assessment through contacts with key informants, project hosts and through a review of administrative guidelines. Community informants were contacted through the interviews with project hosts. The information which follows is based on the completion of the required review and contacts.

The *Administrative Guidelines* do not address a community needs assessment although it is stated that "all hosts must ensure that proposed activities meet all requirements in regards to environmental assessments" (p. 4).

There is no formal process in place for community needs assessments; however, the amount of information available suggests that a complex process is not required.

Based on interviews with project hosts, it is recognized that non-profit agencies, which play a key role in NB Job Corps, have experienced significant reductions in the level of government support over the past five years and that they have limited funds for human resources to meet the demands of their clients.

Based on interviews with key informants, it is recognized that a plan has been developed for the expansion of the network of hiking trails across the province, but the funds required to supply the needed human resources to expand that system have been limited.

Based on discussions with staff within the Department of Economic Development and Tourism and project hosts, it is known that provincial parks are in need of revitalization and that the overall budget allocations to provide the needed resources have been reduced, although some funding for materials has resulted from the Environmental Trust Fund (representing a part of the provincial in-kind contribution).

Interviews with project hosts from the municipal sector confirm that provincial funding to municipalities has been reduced over the past five years and that municipalities are in need of human resources to carry out planned improvements.

Based on interviews with management at NB Power, it is known that NB Power has a need for roadside right-of-way clearing which exceeds the annual budget allocations.

It is noted that the province initiated contact, and requested the assistance of, the private sector firms involved in NB Job Corps.

Private sector firms have presented proposals which indicate that the work performed by participants does not displace people who would otherwise be employed. According to the private sector hosts contacted, the work being performed is in addition to (incremental to) the usual work plan and it is work which would not be completed without the resources provided through NB Job Corps. Some project staff (within HRDC) suggested that displacement should be an issue of concern. Determination of any problems related to displacement should be addressed by the Management Committee. The evaluators recognize that this is a point which requires further exploration to satisfy concerns of staff.

A review of the information collected in the survey of project hosts suggests that it was very (22%) or somewhat (19%) likely that projects supported through NB Job Corps could have been completed without the financial resources provided. Based on a review of all comments received (from the host survey and case studies), the following conditions should be attached to these assessments:

- while some projects may have been completed without assistance, it is highly unlikely that they would have been completed *within the given time period*; for example, the trails may have been developed or the beaches cleaned, but such activity may not have been completed for several years; the participants involved with the automation of the public libraries are speeding up the time period for computerization; and
- the assessment from the non-profit sector is indicative of the realization that the operations would have continued without NB Job Corps, but the services may have been curtailed; this assessment is related to other comments and responses which suggested that the services offered were improved or expanded with resources provided by NB Job Corps.

The detailed reports presented in the appendices provide more documentation of the observation that NB Job Corps meets needs of both communities and participants.

◆ Expectations of Managers and Hosts

Discussions with program staff suggest that the primary expectation from the projects funded is the generation of employment opportunities for those who have not been otherwise able to find employment. The secondary expectations of staff related to recognition that the program can meet the needs of financial security for participants, make an overall contribution to the economy of local communities and accomplish meaningful tasks.

The following observations result from a review of the information provided by project hosts concerning their motivations/expectations about involvement with NB Job Corps:

- clearly, the labour resource provided is seen as a key benefit of NB Job Corps; but
- other hosts specifically noted that the service of their operation was improved as a result of the addition of NB Job Corps participants (57 mentions);
- some recognized or appreciated the experience and skills which some of the participants brought to the workplace (28 mentions); and
- some hosts noted that NB Job Corps provided economic benefits to the community and environmental improvements (10 mentions).

Project hosts were also asked to provide their assessment of the down-side of their involvement in NB Job Corps. *Overall, 57% of hosts for FY 94/95 projects and 69% for FY 95/96 projects noted that there were no disadvantages to their involvement with NB Job Corps.* However, a review of the disadvantages cited by a total of 54 project hosts suggests the following:

- that some hosts experienced particular problems with the participants and it is suggested that some expected more qualified participants than those who were actually placed in the organization (22 mentions);
- that some hosts had a difficult time providing adequate supervision for participants, because of a lack of resources or because of the additional time required to supervise (37 mentions); and
- that some hosts found the work schedule to be inconsistent with the period in which they could use additional labour or had a problem with the scheduling of participants (17 mentions); and some hosts had problems with the attendance of participants (5 mentions).

Given the expectations cited and the review of advantages and disadvantages of program involvement, it is concluded that NB Job Corps is meeting the expectations of staff and project hosts.

◆ Consistency of Opportunities

The profile of the participants, as presented in material in the appendices, indicates that participants tend to have the following characteristics:

- low levels of educational attainment;
- a limited range of skills, generally acquired through their past work experience within traditional, unskilled or semi-skilled occupations;
- a pattern of employment which consists of somewhat regular employment, with periods of frequent unemployment over the past several years;
- a strong motivation to find work and a strong work ethic; and
- because of their age and level of educational attainment, a low probability of being re-trained to meet the changing demands of work in the new economy.

A review of the types of projects funded suggests the following:

- the demand for skilled labour is quite low;
- the work is often physically demanding;
- the hosts expect and want a high level of motivation;
- the host can benefit from human resources which bring experience to the workplace;
- some hosts are willing to provide the assistance needed during the learning stage for the task; but
- many also want workers who require limited supervision on a day-to-day basis.

There appears to be a good match between the types of placements and the participant group with the following exceptions:

- the work is too demanding for some participants (39 mentions);
- the supervision of placements can be a problem for both hosts (cited by 32 hosts) and participants (18 mentions of problems): some hosts, often in the non-profit sector, lack the staff required; some participants believe that supervisors, generally within those sectors with positions requiring manual labour, may not understand the physical limitations or other problems of participants;
- for some placements, notably within NB Power and at least one of the JD Irving sites, the travel required to reach the workplace is perceived to place excessive demands on the resources of participants; and

- for some participants, the amount of work required is not reflected in the income earned (58 mentions).

While the employment and socio-demographic profiles suggest otherwise, it is noted that the majority of participants (56%) do not believe that the placements provided are directly related to their past work experience.

The information collected in the survey of participants provides the basis for the following observations:

- lower levels of overall satisfaction are associated with placements in the natural resources and public works sectors; the lower level of satisfaction among participants in these fields may be related to the physically demanding work that it is carried out in sometimes difficult climatic conditions;
- participants' perceptions suggest that the projects meet the objectives of contributing to improvements in the overall quality of the environment and the overall quality of life for participants; and
- ninety-three percent of participants indicated that they were somewhat (23%) or very (70%) satisfied with the placements provided.

The confirmation of the "goodness of fit" between participants and placements is perhaps best documented in the program exit rate: as of September, 1995, a total of 1,119 participants have entered the program and 121 (11%) have exited.

A further confirmation of the fit is evidenced in the fact that 85% of participants indicated that they have had only one employer over the course of their involvement with the program. In only a limited number of placements have participants actually initiated a request for transfer, most notably in those placements demanding a high level of physical output. On the other hand, many participants placed in positions which require heavy physical output reported that they enjoyed the work and especially liked working outside (20 mentions).

At the initiation of a few hosts, participants whose work output exceeded the specified standards received bonuses. In the first year some bonuses were based on the performance of the group for some participants (roadside crews) and on individual performance for others (thinners). In the second year the bonus system was revised and based only on individual performance. Participants involved expressed general satisfaction with the bonus system and a higher level of satisfaction with the system in place during the second year.

Overall, a total of \$83,489.95 was paid in bonuses to 144 participants in FY 94/95 and, as of September, 1995, a total of \$69,228.02 has been paid to 58 participants in FY 95/96. These bonuses were issued to some participants with placements at J.D. Irving, Fraser, Avenor NB Power and Moncton Headstart. A total of 202 participants had received at least one bonus based on performance by the end of September, 1995.

It is also noted that many participants reported a sense of accomplishment/achievement from the placements provided. Some participants continued to work within their host organizations, as either volunteers or employees, in the inactive period. Participants continued to volunteer in the inactive period with the Saint John Library Automation Project, Moncton Headstart and a nursing home in Bathurst.

Based on the information presented:

- the types of projects funded under NB Job Corps meet the established criteria;
- overall, the projects completed have addressed the needs of the community and the target population;
- the projects have matched the expectations of hosts;
- the work available provides a good match for the skills and experience of the target population; and
- the level of satisfaction of both hosts and participants is demonstrated in the low program exit rate (11%) and in the high percentage (85%) of participants continuing with a single project host over the course of their involvement (to-date) within NB Job Corps.

There are issues which need to be addressed in order to improve the operations of NB Job Corps:

- changes in the information management system and the review of project files are suggested in order to ensure full compliance with the demands of both auditors and evaluators; and
- rather than make substantial changes in program operations, additional efforts are required to ensure that participants are physically capable of performing the work tasks required by project hosts.

4.2.2 Recruitment of Participants

The target group for NB Job Corps participants has been described previously. This section addresses the program's accessibility to the target group and any variations in the selection process. The evaluation framework suggests that the evaluators assess the operations of local committees. As noted, local committees do not exist; local field staff of partner agencies meet the local committee function.

The recruitment process implemented was observed to be consistent with the process presented in the program design and has been previously described in this narrative (Sections 4.1.1, 4.1.3) and is described in detail in Report # 1.

◆ Accessibility

Participants were most likely to learn about the program through the media (52%), referrals from partner agency staff (24%) and through family and friends (13%).

A review of information collected from comparison group members indicates that 60% of that group was aware of NB Job Corps and that approximately 15% of those aware of the program had attended an information session. The ways in which the comparison group members learned of NB Job Corps were similar to those for participants.

Given the common information sources and given that only 15% of comparison group members who were aware of the program chose to follow through by attending an information session, it is concluded that the opportunities available were presented, and the program was generally accessible, to the target group.

Overall accessibility is limited by the number of placements available within the existing program budget. Both hosts and participants expressed an interest in expanding the number of positions available to others who meet the criteria for the target group. Participants also expressed a desire to have the criteria for the target group expanded to include a wider range of potential participants.

There is a possible problem in ensuring equal access to eligible participants who applied when placements are filled. There is no system in place which ensures consideration of referrals on a "first-come, first-served" basis (all other elements being equal) when filling vacancies from the client inventory. At least three instances have been reported in which a person has been referred to a placement ahead of others whose names have remained on file. In other instances, a host "hired" participants in advance of their submission of

required application forms; aside from other problems, this suggests that those in the client inventory may not have had equal access to program vacancies.

It is also noted that there is no readily accessible means of determining the basis for non-referral or inclusion of the participant in the client inventory.

In conclusion, it is observed that the program is accessible to the target group, but the following changes could enhance accessibility:

- the client inventory should be computerized in order to ensure accurate record-keeping and equal access on a first-come, first-served basis for all potential participants;
- the data base should contain an explanation of the basis for the decision to include the applicant in the inventory rather than to make a referral to a placement; and
- a quarterly report should be presented to the Operations Working Group concerning the status and profile of the client inventory.

◆ **Variation in Recruitment/Selection**

No *significant* variations were observed in the process of recruitment or selection in the different regions of the province. In some areas, there were initial shortages of applicants and hosts, but those situations were addressed by staff from local offices or allocations were reassigned by the appropriate committee. Lack of local placements were also supplemented by the Deersdale operation of J.D. Irving which provided live-in camp facilities for participants.

4.2.3 Operational Constraints

In addition to points previously noted, there are other operational constraints for program staff. For example, the assignment of a new contract number for employers in FY 95/96 complicated the payroll function.

The system demand for the submission of a second application form for participants returning for the second active period appears to be both a waste of administrative time and an exercise which resulted in a significant amount of missing data. In interviews with key informants it was also noted that the demand for a second application form was not conveyed to staff until the last minute which further confused the situation. Participants, and in some instances staff, noted that they had already supplied the information and that there was no valid purpose in supplying the same information again.

While participants indicated a desire for more varied placement opportunities, the skill and educational level of the majority of participants is an operational constraint. The range of employers and opportunities available to the program are limited by the same changes in the structure of the workplace as those which led to the development of NB Job Corps - the range of opportunities is as limited as the current demand for unskilled employees with limited educational attainment in the contemporary workplace.

The scheduling of active periods, especially in FY 94/95 was a constraint for some hosts and although the problem has been reduced through an early start-date for FY 95/96, some continue to express concern about the fact that the time periods in which participants are available do not necessarily coincide with the work demands of the host.

In FY 95/96 adjustments were made for start dates for some placements, especially those which involved work in outdoor conditions. Start-dates for some employers were advanced by as much as eight weeks. The decision was made to, in essence, buy back weeks lost in the inactive period to compensate for the early start dates.

The buy-back decision raises a question about fiscal accountability. While it is appreciated that the participants affected by early starts did lose time in the inactive period, according to the tracking survey only 15% of participants were actually employed in their inactive period and it is, therefore, unlikely that participants were losing employment income as a result of the early start dates. It is suggested that the program may have made an unnecessary payment.

Participants are assured, at this point, of a 26-week work placement and an income of approximately \$12,000 per year for three years, *if they complete the program*. If a participant chooses to exit the program, there is no future financial liability for NB Job Corps. Since one cannot predict future exit rates, and since a participant may not have lost earned income, the participants could have been advised that the program would be liable for payment upon completion of their three-year commitment.

One also notes that consideration of the future versus current value of money did not appear to enter into this decision. According to committee minutes, this decision affected 388 participants (who may have received payment up to a maximum of \$2,000) suggesting that the decision had significant financial implications. While it is assumed that all adjustments in start dates have been made, it would seem appropriate that any future

decisions of such magnitude reflect a more fiscally responsible perspective. Such consideration seems particularly important when the major program constraint is that the demand for placements and projects exceed the financial resources available to the program.

Based on a review of the operational constraints, the following points are noted:

- there is a need to eliminate the collection of unnecessary information from participants; information collected should be limited to only that which is related to continued eligibility in NB Job Corps; it is also noted that the administrative guidelines are unclear as to the issue of re-certification of eligibility following the first year of eligibility; this point requires clarification; and
- the buy-back policy should be reviewed and any changes reflected in the participant agreement.

4.2.4 Benefit Take-Up

Seventy-nine percent of the participants contacted in the tracking survey were participating in the health insurance plan.

Those who did not elect to take the coverage provided the following reasons for their decision:

- the insurance was too expensive (34%);
- other insurance coverage was available (29%);
- the insurance plan did not cover needed items (17%);
- the respondent had no pattern of illness or no current problems and thus perceived no need for the coverage (17%); and
- other individual or multiple reasons (3%).

The most commonly noted deficiencies in the coverage included the benefit available for eye glasses, the lack of coverage for dentures and the lack of coverage for specific medications.

It is noted that the health insurance premiums have been reduced by approximately 3% for FY 95/96 due to the claims pattern; however, it is unlikely that this reduction will be sufficient to result in a change in the decision of the 21% of participants who did not elect the coverage.

4.3 Profile of Project Hosts

In order to meet the requirements for this evaluation, *Baseline* developed a detailed profile of project hosts which included the following:

- the sector/industry in which they are located, the type of jobs provided and descriptions of project activity; and
- motivations leading to involvement in NB Job Corps, the integration of participants in the organization, past and intended future involvement with other employment initiatives and other factors defined in preliminary evaluation activities.

Each of these issues is addressed in detail in Report # 3. Key findings from that report follow.

According to information collected in the survey, hosts are drawn from a variety of sectors:

- 49% from non-profit organizations;
- 22% from municipalities;
- 10% from health care;
- 8% from provincial government departments;
- 5% from private sector operations;
- 4% from libraries; and
- 2% from education.

Hosts expressed multiple motivations for becoming involved with NB Job Corps. The most frequently mentioned motivations included the following:

- "free" labour (48%)
- recovery from previous budget cuts affecting human resources (38%);
- the potential benefits for participants (13%);
- the opportunity to create jobs (11%); and
- the ability to access people with skills and experience (10%).

The benefits derived from participation were closely related to the motivations for involvement and included the following:

- the addition of human resources to the organization (27%);
- the additional work completed by participants (17%);
- "free" labour (15%);
- improved service to customers (19%); and
- the addition of personnel with experience/skills to the organization (9%).

The match between motivations and perceived benefits suggests that the needs of hosts have been met through NB Job Corps.

While the hosts' expectations have been met through the program, there are changes which hosts would like to see. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the hosts contacted offered suggestions to improve NB Job Corps:

- the program could be expanded to make more participants available; there is much work to be done and limited resources available;
- better communication should take place between program operators and hosts to ensure a better understanding of the work rules and the procedures;
- pre-referral screening of applicants should take place to ensure that referrals to potential hosts are appropriate to the demands of the workplace and the abilities of participants;
- the decision-making process and notification of acceptance could be more timely;
- there should be a more adequate period of time to prepare for project start ups; and
- administrative changes should be made in the payroll system to simplify the process for hosts.

4.4 Project Participants

Report # 5 (Appendix E), includes a report on the tracking survey and the baseline data summary and presents a detailed profile of program participants. A summary of the information from that material follows.

4.4.1 Participant and Comparison Group Profiles

The participant group and comparison group are similar in the level education: 73% of the participants and 78% of comparison group members have not attained a high school diploma. Analysis of the information available provides the basis for the following observations:

- while the overall educational level of both groups is comparable, comparison group members were likely to leave school in earlier grades (although approximately the same percentage in each group, 10%, have a high school diploma);

- the lower levels of education do correspond to age: older members have lower educational attainment; and
- approximately 40% of the participant group and 50% of the comparison group ended their education before Grade 9.

Program participants are more likely to be men (63%) while members of the comparison group are more likely to be women (58%).

The participant group is more likely to have an approximately equal distribution from both linguistic communities in New Brunswick while comparison group members are more likely to be from the anglophone community.

Participant group members are more likely to be unmarried (60%) while comparison group members are more likely to be married (57%). This point could gain relevance in the assessment of the cost-benefit analysis of the program (see Section 4.1.2), given the established rate of social assistance payments to single people in New Brunswick. A review of the case studies presented as a part of this evaluation confirms the higher percentage of unmarried people in the participant group.

A review of the age distributions confirmed that the two groups were similar. That review also indicated that one person who is a current participant is under the minimum age of 50.

The education level and the age distribution confirm that the program is reaching the designated target group, as defined on these two variables. The education patterns provide a partial explanation of the employment patterns (evidenced and presented in the information which follows), and also confirm the reach of the program to the low-skilled and displaced workers in the contemporary economy.

A key target group for NB Job Corps is the displaced worker, especially within the natural resource sectors. In order to explore the employment patterns of participants and comparison group members at the time of application to NB Job Corps, *Baseline* combined data from two sources:

- the baseline study which collected information on the past three employment situations for comparison group members, along with related information; and
- the information generated from the data base maintained by DAEL for all participants for FY 94/95.

A review of past employment within specific industries and occupations provided the basis for the following observations:

- participants were drawn from the designated sectors and the sectors in which participants have been employed are those which are subject to significant labour reductions as a result of economic conditions;
- the skills required for many of the occupations in which both participants and comparison group members have been employed in the past are consistent with the education level of program participants; and
- the occupations in which participants have been employed are also frequently those most subject to reductions and eliminations as a result of increased mechanization.

A review of the employment patterns within a comparable 24-month period preceding the application indicated that both groups had approximately 50% of their members employed at some point, but differences were noted in the reported periods of employment. Among those who were employed:

- on average, participant group members were employed for a total of 8.3 months;
- comparison group members were employed for an average of 13.2 months;
- participants who reported a wage averaged \$340.94 per week in their most recent position; and
- comparison group members who reported a wage averaged \$372.32 per week in their most recent position.

Based on the information reviewed and collected:

- it is apparent that NB Job Corps is reaching its designated target group;
- only one current participant does not meet the eligibility criteria; and
- the program has a higher than expected number of single people (60%) and a significant number of people whose income in the year prior to participation was close to the \$20,000 limit.

The information collected suggests a need for the following:

- the Management Committee should review the eligibility criteria; currently, maximum income levels are unrelated to the size of the household; and

- to prepare for the cost-benefit analysis and summative evaluations, a data file containing an historical file of annual income support payments for both SA and UI participants should be developed; comparable data should also be developed for the comparison group.

4.4.2 Motivations for Participation

The pre-program employment status of participants is clearly reflected in their motivations for application: participants saw limited alternatives for employment. According to responses received in the participant survey, if they had not been offered a placement, 43% of participants would have remained on social assistance and 13% would have "done nothing" (remained on social assistance).

A review of the information collected in the baseline data study suggested that the fundamental motivation for participation related to the need for work and income. The motivations expressed by participants were as follows:

- to obtain employment (32%);
- to return to employment (14%);
- to counter the limited opportunities available (11%);
- to earn an income (10%)
- to terminate involvement with social assistance (10%);
- to obtain interesting work (9%);
- to achieve a consistent income and other job-related benefits (6%);
- to obtain work which could be performed, given specific health limitations (4%);
- to earn more money than could be provided through social assistance (3%); and
- various other reasons (1%).

Among comparison group members who were aware of NB Job Corps, the primary obstacle to an application related to a health condition. It is interesting to note that a similar situation was found with the comparison group for another federal-provincial/territorial project, New Brunswick Works.

4.4.3 Outcomes for Participants

The primary benefits which participants associated with NB Job Corps included:

- the opportunity to work:** the comments received suggest that participants are genuinely appreciative of having the opportunity to work; many have struggled for a considerable period of time, to no avail, to find employment; many participants also noted that the opportunity to work provided the opportunity to be free of a dependency on passive assistance programs;

- enjoyment:** in 1995 it is often rare to hear comments from people who actually enjoy the work that they are doing; some participants in the program "feel at home" in the woods and truly like the work and the physical demands of that work;
- camaraderie:** the camaraderie of the workplace is a strong point for many participants; the work group has become, for some, a type of family;
- challenge:** in some instances, such as the library automation projects, Moncton Headstart and the province-wide projects for organizations/associations, participants, especially in the non-profit sector, are presented with the opportunity to meet new challenges and expand their range of skills; and
- work ethic and motivations:** there is no doubt that the majority of participants bring a solid understanding of the demands of employers and a strong work ethic to their placements; throughout this evaluation, many comments have been received which suggest that this group of participants want, and are willing, to work.

In measuring expectations or outcomes, the participants' perspectives on the negative aspects of involvement with NB Job Corps were also explored. Analysis of open-responses received in the telephone survey and personal discussions provide the basis for the following identification of the concerns of participants:

- wages:** it is hypothesized that a part of the concern about wages is related to the level of physical effort which some participants expend in the work placement, on a daily basis; this is compounded by the common perception, especially among those working in the forests, that non-participants doing similar work receive higher wages;
- physical demands:** a significant number of participants noted the physical demands of the workplace (approximately 39 mentions); there can be no doubt that some positions are very demanding for a participant between the ages of 50 and 65 years of age; as one participant noted: "I have no problem sleeping at night";
- travel:** a visit to any work site will suggest that participants are most likely to drive the types of cars and trucks which require a high degree of maintenance; given this, it is not unexpected that participants expressed concern about the cost of travel to reach the work site;
- supervision:** the issue of supervision recurred through several questions presented to participants; concerns expressed were primarily related to what was perceived to be excessive demands of some supervisors, especially younger supervisors, who did not take the age or physical abilities of the participants into account when setting work plans; a second concern about supervision (for a few participants)

related to the attitudes expressed by supervisors or the manner in which supervisors may have addressed participants;

- workplace facilities:** workplace facilities are a source of concern for some participants; the lack of toilet facilities, especially at J.D. Irving work sites is a cause of concern, especially for women working in the woods;
- equipment:** the issue of equal access to equipment is especially relevant to different host sites which are located in the same area; if one crew receives more safety equipment or training than another, and both crews are made up of people from the same area, there is discussion and one crew is likely to feel that they are being treated unfairly; and
- workplace safety:** several participants (n=25-30) from woods operations and a project supervisor questioned either the safety of their workplace or the equal application of rules governing workplace safety; apparently, according to at least one supervisor and several participants (from more than one work site in the woods), there is a variation in the frequency of workplace inspections by the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission among different employers.

A review of the expressed motivations for, and outcomes from, participation in NB Job Corps suggest the following:

- the program is meeting the participants' primary motivation: employment;
- many participants would have remained on some form of income support had they not been offered an employment opportunity through NB Job Corps;
- most participants were satisfied with their work placements and derived a variety of benefits from their experiences;
- some participants (n=25-30) are concerned about issues related to workplace facilities and safety; and
- some participants believe that the compensation provided through the program is inadequate in relation to the work performed or inadequate to meet their personal needs (58 mentions).

The material collected suggests consideration of the following:

- there is a need to ensure that all work sites meet the established standards for workplace safety; and
- it would be beneficial to have comparable information available to document the appropriateness of the level of income provided, relative to the work performed

and, the level of output, as well as the costs of other means of income support.

4.5 Program Exits

A report on the 121 program exits to date was presented to the Operations Working Group on August 8, 1995. Based on that report: 20 exits found full-time employment; 3 found part-time work; 36 exited for health reasons; 17 found the program too stressful; 29 were asked to leave for administrative reasons; 7 had personal or family problems; 6 left for a combination of reasons; one exited to enter a training program and 2 participants died.

Baseline interviewed 34 of the program exits in the tracking survey. The following information was collected in those interviews:

◆ **Among exits contacted:**

- 29% (10) were employed at the time of the survey;
- 29% (10) were at home and not seeking employment;
- 21% (7) were seeking employment;
- 18% (6) were disabled; and
- 3% (1) were retired.

◆ **Among those exits employed at the time of the contact for this evaluation:**

- 90% (9) were in full-time positions (defined as 30 or more hours per week) and 10% (1) were in part-time positions;
- 60% (6) were employed in seasonal/casual positions and 40% (4) were employed in year-round positions;
- 40% (4) were employed in positions related to their NB Job Corps experience;
- the average hourly rate of pay for full-time positions was \$10.10; the respondent working part-time refused to supply the rate of pay;
- 80% (8) were receiving a wage higher than earned in NB Job Corps and 20% (2) were receiving about the same rate of pay;
- those working full-time averaged 41.6 hours per week; the part-time employee was working 7 hours per week; and
- only one of the employed exits had health insurance coverage in their current position; and

- ◆ Regardless of their decision to exit, most were very (50%) or somewhat (21%) satisfied with their NB Job Corps experience.

4.6 Summary of Findings

The information developed through this process evaluation confirms the following:

- NB Job Corps is a program which, to date, is being managed in a reasonably efficient manner;
- the program is effective in meeting the needs of both participants and employers;
- the placements provided offer, in many instances, a meaningful work experience;
- the work accomplished is contributing to improvements in the overall quality of the environment and to improvements in the overall quality of life for participants;
- overall, approved projects are in compliance with the selection criteria; however, there is a need to verify that all project files contain a signed statement by the host employer certifying that participants do not displace other employees; there is also a need to confirm that no workers are, in fact, being displaced by participants;
- the project is providing employment to the designated target group; however, there is a need to confirm the eligibility of one participant and to review the stated entry criteria; and
- the potential demand for participants and projects exceeds the available resources.

Information developed for the process evaluation confirmed the need for the following changes which could improve the operation of NB Job Corps:

- the payroll system is unnecessarily cumbersome and could be streamlined;
- the administrative system should be reviewed in order to eliminate the collection of non-essential information from participants (specifically the duplication of background and employment information in the application required each year) and to ensure the availability of relevant information for the summative evaluation;
- a formal budget document should be prepared by the Management Committee and shared with administrators in the three partner agencies;
- whenever possible, there should be a closer match between the physical demands of the work placement and the physical abilities of the participant; and
- both participants and hosts confirm a need for a central contact person to whom questions can be addressed; as well, more coordinated communication is required between the partner agencies.

Chapter

Points for Consideration

5

One of the primary purposes of a process evaluation is to provide feedback to management concerning the ways in which the program could be enhanced or improved. The evaluators do see the need for improvements and encourage management's consideration of the points which follow.

◆ Payroll System

As noted, the payroll system is unnecessarily complex. There should be one agency/department which is responsible for the complete payroll function. Within this agency/department, one person should also be designated as the key contact point for all payroll inquiries.

While it is recognized that any errors in payroll must be corrected and that the payroll must be precise, the guiding principle must ensure that all participants receive their payroll cheques on the date due.

◆ Information System

There is a need to revise the information system for NB Job Corps in order to accommodate the following:

- a unique identifier should be supplied for each host organization; this will facilitate both general program reviews and future evaluation activities;
- if the same contract number for a project cannot be maintained over the duration of a project, the number assigned should be consistent from year-to-year, with a revision only in the alpha assignment;
- the request for completed applications from returning participants should be eliminated; additional information collected should pertain only to employment in the inactive period and the information required for documentation of household income; and

- a systematic approach should be developed for the client inventory, including a quarterly report to the Operations Working Group on the number of clients in the inventory in each area and the date of initial application; it is recognized that this may have to involve a separate data base system.

◆ **Financial Reporting**

Auditors and evaluators will need to have access to clear and concise financial reports. In order to accommodate future demands for information, *Baseline* suggests the following:

- a formal budget document should be prepared to report planned and actual program expenditures and projected revenues; this document should be used as the basis for reporting to the Operations Working Group and Management Committee on a quarterly basis;
- a supplemental document should be prepared which contains the procedures for determining the sources, and calculations for the amount of diverted funds and in-kind contributions for the provincial departments; and
- there should be a formal process and format for reporting in-kind contributions required from private sector hosts; the information from private sector hosts should be submitted annually, within 30-45 days of the fiscal year-end.

◆ **Communications**

While the evidence suggests that communications within NB Job Corps are better than what the evaluators have observed in several other programs, improvement could be made. A simple solution would be an extension of the initiative of HRDNB's conference call: link staff from *all* partner agencies on an annual basis or when, and if, any major program changes occur.

◆ **Project Hosts**

Overall, aside from minor problems with communications, the project hosts are satisfied with NB Job Corps; however, some other points should be considered:

- to address the expressed concerns of participants, all work sites for participants should be certified for compliance with existing regulations of the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission; reports on work site visits by the Commission should be maintained in the project files and, at a minimum, an annual inspection should be requested, *at a time when participants are in the workplace*;

- there is a need for consideration of a common standard for equipment provided by the program; currently, some hosts cover the costs while others do not; it is suggested that the program return to its original requirement for project hosts and that future adaptation not be made to accommodate the requests of specific hosts, regardless of the number of placements a host may provide; in making this point, it is noted that the costs for some of the original safety equipment for social assistance recipients was covered by HRDNB; this appears to be a cost which is more appropriately covered by hosts;
- it is anticipated that many of the participants' concerns about travel to work sites would be eliminated if one of the major employers (NB Power) could receive their notification of placements at least three weeks prior to the project start dates; this notification should include the name and location of residence of participants assigned; NB Power has indicated that they would be able to make the required adjustments to achieve a better match between work sites and residences if this information were available within this time period; and
- as noted, hosts should file an annual forma providing documentation of expenditures; this form should be provided prior to the end of each fiscal year; submission of that form should be required within 30-45 days of the program's fiscal year end.

◆ Participants

Given the low program exit rate (11%), it is obvious that the participants selected match the type of work available; however, improvements can be made:

- the income requirements for participation should be reviewed; there are currently no provisions which relate the income criteria to the number of people in the household; in these times of fiscal restraint and cost containment, it is assumed that a program which could prove to be considerably more expensive than alternative forms of passive assistance would have a low probability of continuation; such could be the case with NB Job Corps if the majority of participants reside in single-person households;
- while many participants expressed concern about the level of income support provided through NB Job Corps, given the limited resources available and the demand for more positions, consideration of any increases other than those incorporated in the program budget would appear to be inappropriate;
- while it is not recommended that work be adapted to individual needs, more consideration should be given to the physical abilities of the applicants, both when making referrals and placements; some of the work is very demanding and those referred to placements have to be able to meet the standards set; and

- some staff have suggested that work in the active period should be redesigned to accommodate the needs of those who may not be able to work full-time for 26-weeks; it is urged that such adjustments not be made; NB Job Corps works well, in large part, because of its simplicity; if individual adjustments are allowed, the program will become more complex, more varied and it will lose one of its key strengths; to support this point, it is suggested that future programs will differentiate between potential participants who are able to work and those who are not; NB Job Corps is a test of those who are able to work.