

**EVALUATION OF THE SASKATCHEWAN
PROVINCIAL TRAINING ALLOWANCE (PTA)**

October 5, 2000

Prepared For:

Departments of Post-Secondary Education and
Skills Training (PSEST) and Social Services

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Table 1: List of acronyms	
Acronym	Full name
Training Institutions	
CBO	Community Based Organization
DTI	Dumont Technical Institute
SIASST	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology
Government Training Programs/ Income Support	
CTB	Child Tax Benefit
NSIM	Non-Status Indian and Metis Program
NTP	Northern Training Program
SSDP	Saskatchewan Skills Development Program
PTA	Provincial Training Allowance
SES	Saskatchewan Employment Supplement
Government Departments	
PSEST	Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training
Database	
OCSM	One Client Service Model
Clients	
SAR	Social Assistance Recipient
SAP	Social Assistance Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program Background

The Provincial Training Allowance (PTA) is part of the provincial training strategy¹ and the Saskatchewan government's redesign of Social Assistance (SA). The PTA consolidates a number of diverse income support programs for individuals in training programs under one system. The previous programs included the Non-Status Indian and Métis Program (NSIM), the Saskatchewan Skills Development Program (SSDP), and the Northern Training Program (NTP). They were not uniform in terms of the support they offered or the eligibility criteria they applied.

The PTA is an income support program, not a training program. Its immediate goals are to increase access, independence, and fairness and to improve the efficiency/effectiveness of training delivery. As an income support program, the PTA is not primarily intended to move people into immediate employment, though some should find work eventually as a result of PTA-supported training.

The PTA consists of the following features:

- It offers assistance in the form of a monthly cash grant.
- Eligibility for the program is based solely on financial need in the context of family resources (parental and spousal).
- Income defines need, with a daycare supplement based on the number of children.
- Overall level of assistance is determined by family size with supplements for daycare and northern participants.

Independence

The concept of independence refers specifically to the PTA's practice of allowing clients to manage their own affairs, while providing support to assist people with budgeting and overall financial management. This contrasts sharply with the former SSDP program, which enforced heavy reporting and counseling requirements, and was thought to foster dependence on social workers. Former Social Assistance clients who participate in the PTA are independent of needs based income support available within Social Assistance. Low-income clients who have never been on Social Assistance also participate in the PTA.

In the longer term, it is arguable that increasing the sense of independence of participants while in school, may ease their transition to the labour market. For clients with low levels of education and limited job experiences, the transition to employment is unlikely to be education, with secure employment some years in the future. Therefore, as a

¹ See Saskatchewan Training Strategy: Bridges to Employment, and Children, Families and Independence: Social Assistance Redesign (Government of Saskatchewan, March 1997).

longer-term outcome, the transition to employment lies outside the scope of this evaluation. Future evaluation efforts might examine the combined impact of income support (PTA) and training content (BE, bridging, Quick Skills) in contributing to greater labour force attachment, using follow-up surveys and other evaluation techniques.

Goals of the PTA

The PTA has four goals that form the heart of the evaluation questions:

1. **Access** is defined by need, as measured by the applicant's income in the context of family income and family size. No limit is placed on the number of on applicants who come from a specific target group such as Aboriginal people or single parents on Social Assistance. The PTA is intended to ensure that no one is denied access to a basic education or other training because they have low income.
2. **Independence** is the ability of a PTA client to successfully manage their financial affairs, especially those making the transition from Social Assistance to the PTA. A long-term goal is to help those on the PTA to move toward further training and eventual employment.
3. **Fairness and equity** mean that eligibility is standardized, based only on need as defined by income and family size. Practically, it also means that those moving from Social Assistance to the PTA should not have a lower income.
4. **Efficiency and effectiveness** relates to the coordination among PSEST, the Department of Social Services (SS), and service providers (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (SIASST), Regional Colleges (RC), Community-Based Organizations (CBO)) to support clients in training and to deliver programs. Specifically, this includes improved processing and verification of information, ensuring that clients receive adequate support and counseling, and creating smooth linkages for those making the transition from Social Assistance to the PTA.

Key findings for the evaluation are as follows:

Access

- 4 The PTA has maintained access levels for target groups (Aboriginal people, Métis, Social Assistance recipients (SAR), and persons with disabilities) and broadened access for the "working poor". Client demographics are comparable to the SSDP, and income support for training can now be accessed by non-Social Assistance recipients.
- 4 The majority of PTA clients are single parents or singles, who enroll in educational upgrading full-time. PTA clients reported that they need

educational upgrading so that they can proceed to further training or work that pays above minimum wage.

- 4 Rejected clients are similar in most respects to those who are accepted for the PTA, with one main exception - they are more often married with children. These clients are typically rejected because their household income or assets are too high.
- 4 Field staff also see the PTA as an improvement, and offer specific suggestions to improve access with respect to adjusting the course length of PTA eligible programs as well as the start/end dates. Some identify seat shortages as an important problem, but others question whether these shortages really reflect the underlying demand for the program.

Independence

- 4 At this point in the program, most clients endorse the PTA as an income support system. Most report no special problems. The difficulties that they do report appear to be characteristic of many who are in training and who have a low income.
- 4 PTA clients rate the PTA as an improved process for gaining additional training. Compared to Social Assistance and the living allowances provided through SSDP, NSIM and NTP, participants state that the PTA is better in all respects, except in its coverage of utilities.
- 4 PTA clients report that counseling support is adequate; however, some said that counselors are overworked at times and have too many clients. However, relatively few PTA clients use counseling or see a pressing need to increase its availability. Some managers reported a need for better financial counseling and budgeting, as well as a need for better career planning and pre-assessment screening. These managers also recommended separating personal counseling from the academic/financial role of counselors.
- 4 Based on information collected through the survey of participants, the impact of the PTA is as follows:
 - Approximately two-thirds of clients go directly from Social Assistance to the PTA, and a similar proportion return to Social Assistance at some point following program completion. These findings reinforce the notion that the PTA and Social Assistance are tightly linked, and that many will rely on Social Assistance to support themselves upon program completion if they are unable to find work.
 - Most PTA clients (70%) completed their most recent training intervention, a proportion similar to that of non-participants. Non-completions were

higher among Basic Education classes compared to Quick Skills and Bridging programs, most likely because of the length of the programs.

- Some clients see the current PTA wage exemptions as a deterrent to combining work with school.
 - Most PTA clients have relatively little work experience, with 43% reporting no pre-training employment. Those who work while on the PTA typically earn less per hour than non-participants, while working approximately the same amount per week. Quick Skills students have typically earned more and worked more in the past.
- 4 The PTA has increased financial independence, as most clients report improved ability to manage their expenditures. More than half (56%) report no delays in paying their utility bills, while three-quarters report paying their rent on time. Approximately 17% of PTA clients applied to Social Assistance for a "top-up", of which 9% received additional support.

That said, some do have difficulty managing their money and achieving financial independence. Although these individuals are in the minority, steps to identify these individuals and provide greater counseling and financial support have been suggested by those we interviewed.

Fairness and equity

- 4 Based on a review of PTA and SAP records, the income support that PTA clients receive is equal to or slightly higher than they would have received from Social Assistance, under the SSDP.
- 4 Most (75%) PTA clients are satisfied with the income support they receive, and appreciate the PTA for creating a less stigmatizing environment than Social Assistance.

Increased Efficiency and Effectiveness of Delivery

- 4 One-third of managers believe that communication remains a problem. These managers suggested improving communications among PSEST, Social Services, and training providers. As training providers become more involved in program delivery, enhanced communication will be needed. This will become even more important if additional training programs offered by community-based organizations are deemed eligible for students receiving PTA funding.
- 4 Computer systems for efficient record keeping, verification, cross-referencing, and reducing overpayments are key to improvement. Several managers maintained that SIAST, regional colleges, and community-based

organizations need to be brought into the administrative loop through widespread computer systems. At the same time, issues of confidentiality need to be addressed.

- 4 An important philosophical debate exists among management as to whether the PTA should be:
 - more regionalized, with income funding delivered by training providers (SIAST and colleges).
 - delivered by regional offices (Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services).

This debate reflects a range of perceptions about the appropriate role for training institutions in delivering services such as qualifying clients, administering payment, verifying continuing eligibility, and maintaining progress records.

- 4 Managers are committed to the income-tested approach, but several are concerned that some PTA clients may face financial difficulty. Some would like to see clients who face financial difficulty encouraged to return to Social Assistance for top-ups, especially if this would prevent withdrawal from the program. Others argue that using a top-up, except in the most extreme emergencies, erodes the rationale for the program. These managers argue that the income-tested model, with its set monthly payment, is central to the program objective to reduce/eliminate welfare stigma.

The PTA is a successful income support program. It is well accepted by clients, and because it offers support that is slightly higher than would be available under Social Assistance, the support level is not a barrier to participation. Managers and staff also support the program, although many offered suggestions for improvement - most notably, increased communication among the departments involved.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Provincial Training Allowance

The Provincial Training Allowance (PTA) is part of the provincial training strategy² and the Saskatchewan government's Social Assistance redesign. The PTA consolidates a number of diverse income support programs for individuals in training programs under one system. The previous included the Non-Status Indian and Métis Program (NSIM), the Saskatchewan Skills Development Program (SSDP), and the Northern Training Program (NTP) were not uniform in terms of the support they offered or the eligibility criteria they applied.

The PTA is an income support program, not a training program. Its immediate goals relate to increasing access, independence, and fairness and improving the efficiency/effectiveness of training delivery. As an income support program, the PTA is not primarily intended to move people into employment, though some may find work as a result of PTA supported training.

The concept of independence refers specifically to the PTA's practice of allowing clients to manage their own affairs, while providing support to assist people with budgeting and overall financial management. This contrasts sharply with the former SSDP program, which enforced heavy reporting and counseling requirements, and was through to foster dependence on social workers. Former Social Assistance clients who participate in the PTA are independent of needs based income support available within the Social Assistance program. Low-income clients who have never been on social assistance also participate in the PTA.

In the longer term, it is arguable that increasing the sense of independence of participants while in school, may ease their transition to the labour market. For clients with low levels of education and limited job experiences, the transition to employment is unlikely to be rapid. Indeed for many, a desirable outcome of the PTA is further training and education,

² See Saskatchewan Training Strategy: Bridges to Employment, and Children, Families and Independence: Social Assistance Redesign (Government of Saskatchewan, March 1997).

with secure employment some years in the future. Therefore, as a longer-term outcome, the transition to employment lies outside the scope of this evaluation. Future evaluation efforts might examine the combined impact of income support (PTA) and training content (BE, bridging, Quick Skills) in contributing to greater labour force attachment, using follow-up surveys and other evaluation techniques.

Features of the PTA

The PTA has the following features:

- It offers assistance to eligible participants in the form of a monthly cash grant.
- Eligibility for the program is based solely on financial need in the context of family resources (parental and spousal) and not on membership in a target groups such as Social Assistance recipients, single parents, Aboriginal status, etc.
- Income alone defines need, with a day care supplement based on the number of dependent children in the care of the participant.
- The overall level of monthly assistance is determined by family size (number of children) less other sources of income such as spousal wages or applicant earnings.

Goals of the PTA

The PTA has four goals that form the heart of the evaluation questions. The evaluation and this report is oriented to assessing the extent to which the PTA meets these goal:

- 1. Access** is defined by need as measured by the applicant's income in the context of family income and family size. No limit is placed on the number of clients or whether the applicants come from as specific target group such as single parents on Social Assistance or Aboriginal people. The PTA is intended to ensure that no one is denied access to a basic education and other training because they have low income
- 2. Independence** is the ability of a PTA client to successfully manage their financial affairs, especially those making the transition from Social Assistance to the PTA. A long-term

goal is to help those on the PTA move toward further training and eventual employment.

3. **Fairness and equity** mean that eligibility is standardized, based only on need as defined by income and family size. Practically, it also means that those moving from Social Assistance to the PTA should not have a lower income.
4. **Efficiency and effectiveness** relates to the coordination among the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, the Department of Social Services and service providers (SIAST, Regional Colleges, Community Based Organizations) to support clients in training and deliver programs. Specifically, this includes improving the processing and verification of information, ensuring clients receive adequate support and counseling, and create smooth linkages for those transitioning from Social Assistance to the PTA.

Training opportunities

Three types of training are open to those who enroll in the PTA:

- Basic education includes literacy, academic upgrading, life skills, employment readiness, English as a Second Language, and other related courses.
- Quick Skills courses of between 4 and 12 weeks duration, that ready clients for a quick transition to the work force in occupations where demand for employees is high.
- Bridging programs that offer training to link participants to the labour force.

PSEST approves programming for the PTA that is determined by the content, instructor qualifications, and program history. The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (SIAST), regional colleges, and various community-based organizations (CBOs) typically deliver courses.

Students who are attending an approved course may apply for the PTA. Once accepted, they are awarded a flat monthly grant (varies according to family size, and modified by a northern

allowance) less the income of a spouse and any income earned by the applicant.

1.2 Goals of the Evaluation

The main issues covered in this report are shown in Table 2, along with identifiable goals and selected questions. Appendix A presents the detailed evaluation framework, all of the questions addressed in the evaluation, and a response to each question.

Table 2: Selected evaluation questions (please see Appendix A for the detailed evaluation framework)	
Access	To what extent has the PTA enhanced access to training by low-income persons compared to the prior programming (SSDP, NSIM, NTP)?
	How appropriate is the mix of programs approved by the PTA?
	To what extent has the PTA reduced/introduced barriers to accepting training?
	What are the barriers/incentives to returning to Social Assistance after training?
	To what extent has the PTA been used for non-provincially funded programs?
	What aspects of the PTA have facilitated access?
Independence	Do Social Assistance eligible clients stay in training longer than previously or non-Social Assistance clients?
	Has the PTA contributed to client's completion of programs?
	To what extent does the PTA move individuals off Social Assistance?
	Why do clients return to Social Assistance?
	Is the support provided under the PTA adequate to facilitate program access?
	To what extent has the PTA affected the client's ability to manage the financial, academic, and personal aspect of their lives?
	To what extent is the PTA less stigmatizing than Social Assistance?
	How much and what types of counseling support do clients receive under the PTA?
Fairness and Equity	Has there been consolidation of income support programs?
	Are clients receiving consistent levels of support?
Efficiency and effectiveness	Is the PTA administratively simpler than previous arrangements?
	How do the costs (rates) of the PTA compare to previous programs (SSDP, NSIM and NTP)?
	What are the costs and benefits of the PTA compared to previous programs?
	How can cost-effectiveness be increased?
	To what extent do clients move into other education and training, and what movement is there between Social Assistance, PTA, and Student Loans?
These are the Priority 1 questions in the evaluation framework.	

1.3 This is an evaluation of income support and not training outcomes

A word of caution is important: the PTA is an income support program for training. In the short run, its goals are to increase access to training, promote client independence and fairness, and improve the efficiency/effectiveness of the training programs in which PTA clients participate.

Based on the questions in Table 1 above, it is apparent that the focus of the program is to determine the role of income support in promoting access to training, the comparability of the income support offered by the PTA and Social Assistance, and whether clients can manage their financial affairs. This last point is the essence of the concept of independence in the short run.

It is reasonable to expect that the PTA will contribute to increased participation in training and employment in the long run. It is worth remembering that many PTA clients face multiple barriers to employment and have low educational levels. The PTA should be seen as a program that supports students in taking their first steps towards increased training and employment.

This reports presents evidence at a comparatively early point in the program history, and employment outcomes are not expected at this stage. A follow-up study is needed to assess whether the PTA contributes to the transition from Social Assistance to work, or to the upgrading of those in low-income casual occupations to higher paying, more secure employment.

That said, assessing the impacts of the PTA (e.g., employment, wages, and long-term employment), raises the larger issue of whether an income support program should be evaluated according to this criteria. For example, a study of university or college programs would likely focus on the type of training, rather than assessing the effectiveness of an income support program (i.e., Student Loans). In a similar vein, it is more appropriate to look at the training programs that PTA and non-PTA clients take (BE, Bridging, Quick Skills), and include the type of income support as a variable when examining outcomes. This would more clearly reflect the income support role that the PTA plays for students in training, and would minimize the chances of drawing a simple causal association between income support and training outcomes.

The PTA is most closely aligned with labour market outcomes on the administrative side. Aside from being an income support, PSEST also determines which programs are eligible for students to receive PTA support. Employment outcomes are primarily the result of client attributes, the selection of appropriate training, and the state of the labour market. The nature of the income support that clients have used while participating in training is a factor, but is probably less important than the other three factors.

1.4 Outline of the evaluation

This report is divided into four main sections, each corresponding to the goals of the PTA. Section 3 presents the evidence we obtained on how the PTA meets its goal of increasing the access to training. In Section 4, we review how the PTA contributes to independence, especially the ability of clients to manage their financial affairs. The comparison between the income support available under the PTA and prior programs under Social Assistance is basic to the question of fairness, which is discussed in Section 5. Finally, in Section 6, we present evidence of the efficiency and effectiveness of the PTA. A concluding section (7) offers our observations on the program including possible changes.

2.0 Methodology

The methodology used to evaluate the Provincial Training Allowance (PTA) is described below in Table 3. A full account of the methodology was included in the Methodology Report submitted earlier.

The methodology changed slightly between the time the Methodology Report was submitted (Nov. 1999) and June 2000, to accommodate a change in emphasis agreed upon by the evaluator and the Evaluation Working Group.

Given that the PTA is relatively new, there is not enough data to support a proper impact analysis (many clients have little post-program impact information). As such, we focus on income support issues rather than program impacts. In consultation with the client, the impact analysis (Task 9), cost-benefit analysis (Task 10), and program efficiency analysis (Task 11) were replaced by the Cost Comparison (Task 9a).

An impact analysis requires program outcomes, which were not available in the databases, and were available only to a limited extent through the survey of participants. A cost-benefit analysis requires an impact analysis to determine savings to the government account. It was agreed that these tasks would be of limited value without a larger sample, a longer follow-up period, and more detailed outcome information.

The program efficiency analysis was excluded because it relies on outcomes, and a detailed accounting of the costs to support a student in the PTA compared to Social Assistance.

To replace these components, we undertook a comparison of the income support provided to PTA clients with those who were in training in the SSDP program. This comparison speaks more clearly to issues of equity and fairness, and helps to identify differences in support among client types, as well as areas where additional income may potentially be needed.

Table 3: Evaluation methodology		
Task	Purpose	Sample
1. Initial consultation	Consultation with client to discuss the work plan and timing for the evaluation. Bi-weekly meeting were established to monitor evaluation progress, review instrument and issues, and ensure deliverable dates were met.	
2. Methodology report	The Methodology report was used: 4 to describe the Provincial Training Allowance within the context of Saskatchewan's array of income supports 4 to provide an overview of the administrative / quantitative information available to support the evaluation 4 to outline the methodology	
3. Management interviews	Management interviews set the context for the evaluation, identified a range of operational issues that affect outcomes, and assisted in the interpretation of results. The first set of interviews (n=11) was completed in October 1999. We used these interviews to understand the PTA and assess managers' perceptions about <i>access, independence, and program effectiveness/efficiency</i> . A second set of interviews (n=30) was completed in May and June to review preliminary findings from the surveys, and to obtain manager's perspectives on the PTA.	Round 1 4 PSEST (3) 4 SS (5) 4 Trainers (3) Round 2 4 PSEST (14) 4 SS (13) 4 Trainers (3)
4. Survey of field staff	The survey of field staff gathered the opinions of: 4 Frontline PSEST employees, including career and employment services workers and members of the PTA administrative unit 4 Social Services staff (social workers and managers) 4 Employees from training institutions (instructors, counselors, administrators, and managers)	Completed sample 4 PSEST (n=24) 4 Social Services (n=56) 4 Training Providers (n=152)
5. Focus groups	Focus groups were used to identify the often-unanticipated range of impacts that the PTA has had on clients. Two rounds of focus groups were held: the first one in November (two groups), and the second in March (four groups). Four of the groups were general, one included only Aboriginal participants, and one included only single parents.	Round 1 4 Regina 4 Indian Head Round 2 4 Saskatoon (single parents) 4 La Ronge 4 Biggar 4 Regina (Aboriginal)

Table 3: Evaluation methodology		
Task	Purpose	Sample
6. Data assembly and analysis	<p>We used administrative data to identify program demographics, establish whether the PTA supports clients in post-secondary education, and to track transitions between PTA and Social Assistance.</p> <p>The database analysis also provided a means of comparing costs between Social Assistance and the PTA, and comparing PTA demographics with other income support programs (NSIM, NTP and SSDP).</p>	<p>Databases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 PTA 4 Social Assistance 4 Student Loans 4 NSIM 4 NTP 4 Basic Education
7. Survey of participants	<p>The survey of participants assessed client perceptions of the PTA, other income support programs, financial independence, access to counseling, and information on employment and training before and after the PTA.</p> <p>The survey included responses from 604 clients, with representation across the different training programs (BE, Quick Skills, and Bridging).</p>	<p>604 completed surveys from a sample of 1500 (43% current students and 57% recent).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 436 BE 4 79 Skills 4 89 Bridging
8. Survey of non-participants	<p>The survey of non-participants provided a baseline to compare students who have accessed training without receiving the PTA and/or who had been rejected for the PTA.</p> <p>The survey included responses from 454 clients, with representation across the different training programs (BE, Quick Skills), former income support programs (NSIM, NTP, SSDP) and those rejected by the PTA.</p>	<p>454 completed surveys from an original sample of 1919.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 242 BE 4 101 Rejected 4 16 Skills 4 2 NTP 4 44 NSIM 4 61 SSDP
9. Cost comparison	<p>The cost comparison examined a sample of SSDP clients from 1995 (n=1782 records) with a sample of PTA clients from 1998 (n=3858). Records from March and June were selected to identify differences in costs associated with each season.</p> <p>An extract from Social Assistance was used to identify both Basic and Special Needs, and coding categories were used to provide comparability between programs. Variables identifying region, family status, and number of dependents were used to identify costs associated with different groups and regions.</p>	<p>Sample</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 PTA (n=3858) 4 SSDP (n=1782)
10. Stakeholder interviews	<p>Interviews with community stakeholders provide further information on the impact that the PTA has had on clients. They also involve the community in the consultation process.</p> <p>The sample included representatives from utility companies, landlord associations, training providers, non-profit organizations, and advocacy groups.</p>	<p>Sample</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Utility / landlord (3) 4 Other (16)

Task	Purpose	Sample
11. Final report	The final report synthesizes information gathered in Tasks 2 to 10.	

3.0 Access to training

Immediately prior to the creation of the PTA in 1997, three forms of income support targeted specific client groups:

- 1) **The Saskatchewan Skills Development Program (SSDP):** The SSDP served Social Assistance recipients in training, with income support provided through Social Assistance.
- 2) **The Northern Training Program (NTP):** The NTP provided northerners in training with a flat daily allowance.
- 3) **The Non-Status Indian and Métis Program (NSIM):** NSIM provided Non-Status Indian and Métis peoples in training with a flat daily allowance.

Rates for NSIM, SSDP, and NTP were intended to be comparable; however, the restrictions for wage exemptions and allowable family incomes differed. Clearly, programs also had different target populations, which resulted in some overlap. Further, access to programs was categorical, requiring that someone be either a Non-Status Indian or Métis person (NSIM), a Social Assistance recipient (SSDP), or a person living in the north (NTP).

The Saskatchewan government created the PTA to ensure consistent funding and to standardize rates across programs. It was also intended to increase access for low-income people who could not or did not previously gain access to training because they were not on Social Assistance.

In some cases, there is not enough data to adequately address all of the questions in the evaluation framework, and these are noted as items for future research. As previously noted, outcome issues would require follow-up surveys.

3.1 To what extent has the PTA enhanced access to training opportunities? (1.1)

The PTA is based on “financial need”, and does not limit the number of recipients who qualify. As a result of this design, the PTA was meant to broaden access (by making participation non-categorical), and enhance funding opportunities by creating a single income support program to service clients who were previously served by three other income support programs (SSDP, NTP, NSIM).

Comparison of PTA, SSDP, NSIM, and NTP records sheds light on who is using the PTA. The SSDP is the main comparison group, as it was the largest of the three previous programs, and represents a clientele (Social Assistance recipients) that the PTA was predominantly served by.

A comparison of databases shows that PTA clients are the same as SSDP in most respects. However, PTA clients are more likely to be Aboriginal, and less likely to be disabled.

Most PTA clients have received Social Assistance at some time prior to the PTA, suggesting that they represent a similar population to that served by the SSDP.

3.1.1 The PTA and SSDP are composed of similar age groups

Table 4 shows the age breakdown of PTA and SSDP clients. The proportion of clients falling into each group is essentially identical.

Age	PTA (n=8,458)	SSDP (n=1,939)
16-24	36%	32%
25-29	23%	26%
30-39	29%	31%
40+	12%	12%
Total	100%	101%
<i>Source: PTA Database, SSDP Database3.</i>		
<i>Note: 15 PTA records did not indicate age. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.</i>		

3 Extracts from PTA Database are taken from August 1997 – January 2000; extracts from SSDP database are taken from April 1994 – March 1995.

3.1.2 Same access by women

Women made up at least half of the clients for all types of income support programs. PTA records indicated the highest proportion of female clients, at 62%.⁴

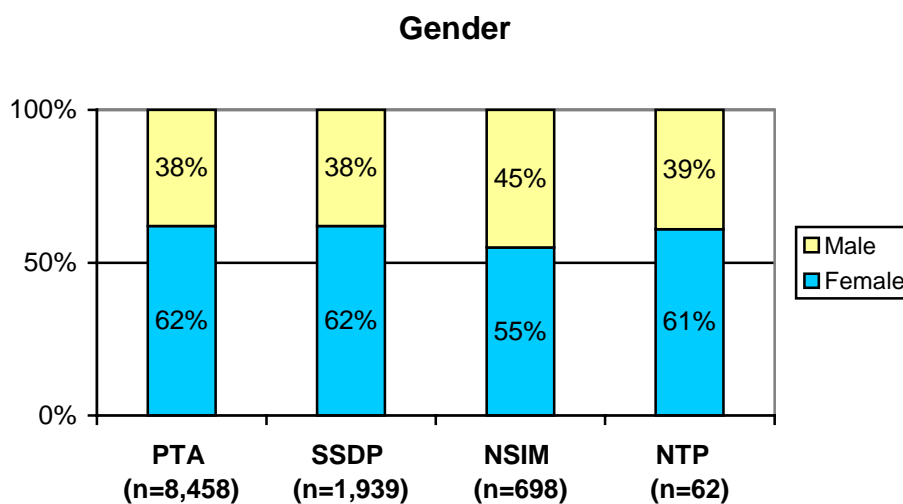


Figure 1

Source: PTA Database, SSDP Database, NSIM Database, NTP Database.

⁴ Note that samples for the NTP are small and need to be viewed with caution.

3.1.3 Single people make up the majority of PTA clients

PTA clients are most likely to be single parents (43%) or single individuals (33%). Couples with children make up 19%, while couples without children make up 5% of clients. PTA family composition is the same as SSDP.

Similarly, NSIM served more single individuals (43%) than single parents (27%). All income support programs typically served couples with children more than couples without children.

Response	PTA (n=8,458)	SSDP (n=1,606)	NSIM (n=691)
Single – no children	33%	32%	43%
Married / common-law – no children	5%	5%	9%
Single – with children	43%	40%	27%
Couples – with children	19%	23%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: PTA Database, SSDP Database, NSIM Database.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Missing data for SSDP clients is excluded.

3.1.4 Increased access for people of Aboriginal ancestry

Compared to SSDP, PTA clients are somewhat more likely to be of Aboriginal descent. Specifically, they are more likely to describe themselves as Status Indian or Métis. That said, the personal identifier “*Aboriginal*” is often omitted or incompletely recorded in database records. This is not surprising, since income support for PTA and SSDP is not influenced by one’s constitutional status.

Response	PTA (n=8,458)	SSDP* (n=1,939)	NSIM (n=698)
Status Indian	35%	32%	-
Non-status Indian	5%	3%	15%
Métis	20%	9%	84%
Inuit/Other	<1%	<1%	1%
Non-Aboriginal	40%	56%*	-
Total	101%	100%	100%

*Social Assistance non-Aboriginal category is “Other”
Source: PTA Database, SSDP Database, NSIM Database; 1% of SSDP=Unknown.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

3.1.5 PTA increases access for the disabled

About 9% of PTA clients are identified as disabled, compared to only 4% of SSDP clients. Learning and physical disabilities are most common among those with reported disabilities.

Response	PTA (n=8,458)	SSDP (n=1,939)
Disability – total	9%	4%
Type of disability		
- Blind	1%	-
- Deaf	1%	-
- Learning disability	4%	-
- Mental disability	<1%	-
- Physical disability	3%	-
- Psychological disability	1%	-
<i>Source: PTA Database, SSDP Database.</i>		
<i>Note: Respondents may have more than one type of disability.</i>		

3.1.6 PTA clients are likely to have been Social Assistance recipients

The vast majority (93%) of PTA clients have received Social Assistance at some time prior to going on the PTA. Some 65% of PTA recipients are coming directly from Social Assistance to the PTA, meaning that they were on Social Assistance during the month before going on PTA for the first time.

Response	PTA (n=8,458)
Was on Social Assistance at some point prior to the PTA	93%
Was on Social Assistance immediately prior to the PTA	65%
<i>Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.</i>	

3.1.7 Field staff provide a different perspective on access to training than the PTA database

We asked field staff whether they believed access to training under the PTA had increased, decreased, or remained the same for a variety of client types.

As Table 9 shows, many field staff (29% to 54%) are unable to say whether access has changed for certain types of clients under the PTA. Among those offering an opinion, most believe that the PTA improves or maintains access for a variety of students, especially those of Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit ancestry, Social Assistance recipients, single parents, and persons with disabilities.

Field staff offering an opinion (other than “*don’t know*”) report that EI eligible clients and part-time students have slightly less access under the PTA, as compared to previous income support programs. In general, staff offered mixed opinions on whether the PTA provides more or less access to training for “*the working poor*.”

	More access	Same access	Less access	DK / NR
Aboriginal people – Non-Status or Métis	22%	36%	6%	36%
Aboriginal people – Status Indian or Inuit	27%	27%	7%	39%
Persons with disabilities	13%	30%	7%	50%
Social Assistance recipients	29%	34%	8%	29%
Single parents	29%	34%	6%	32%
Part-time students	11%	11%	32%	46%
EI clients	11%	21%	14%	54%
Working poor (those with low income but not on Social Assistance)	26%	13%	21%	40%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Horizontal percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

It is important to note that, field staff opinion may differ from database or survey findings, as respondents typically offer their own experiences, not that of “all clients.” That said, the perception among those offering an opinion about accessibility (other than “*don’t know*”) is that access has increased or remained the same among all previously targeted groups (e.g., Non-Status Indians and Métis, and Social Assistance recipients).

3.2 Are there individuals in training who remain on the Social Assistance Program? (1.2)

Some Social Assistance recipients will remain on the Social Assistance Program, if they are in the following situations:

- 4 Taking short-term training courses that are typically less than four weeks in duration. Courses could include life skills, work preparation, or short-term skills training.
- 4 In training part-time (less than 20 hours per week) and are therefore not eligible for the PTA.
- 4 In high school.
- 4 In EAPD-sponsored training with high needs.

A full evaluation of Social Assistance files was deemed beyond the scope of this evaluation, so we cannot quantify what proportion of students this includes.⁵

3.3 Should the PTA support non-PTA-supported programs? (1.3)

3.3.1 Synopsis of the training

The PTA currently funds three types of training programs: Basic Education, Quick Skills, and Bridging Programs. When first created, the PTA also funded training programs under the Links to Employment program that has since been dissolved.

Of the three types of training programs, the **Basic Education** (BE) program is considered a “stepping-stone” towards future education, additional skills training, or the workforce by providing an opportunity for individuals to improve their literacy, numeracy, and employability skills. This is by far the largest component of the PTA, with approximately 78% of enrolments.

Most Basic Education programs are delivered by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

⁵ We arrived at this determination in consultation with representatives of the Evaluation Working Group.

(SIAST), regional colleges, and the Dumont Technical Institute (DTI).

The **Quick Skills** program provides training or retraining for those who are “employment ready” and require short instruction to get them back into the workforce. Programs that qualify for the PTA must be between 4 and 12 weeks in length, and are thus not Student Loan eligible. Quick Skills programs account for 10% of enrolments.

As with BE courses, Quick Skills courses are delivered by SIAST, DTI, and regional colleges using the Institutional Quick Response Grant. Training must be in specific programs and must be responsive to community needs. Examples include training in truck driving, office computer skills, and home care aide. Course and PTA approval for Quick Skills is centralized and rests with the Programs Branch of PSEST.

Bridging is a component of PSEST’s Employment Programs, delivered primarily through community based organizations (CBOs) and regional colleges. The main goal of Bridging programs is for people to enter the labour force. Programs are targeted to Social Assistance recipients and Employment Insurance clients. Bridging encompasses a flexible range of training programs, including job readiness and employability skills, BE, and work experience.

Group Bridging programs are held at institutions, and involve courses combining skills training, BE, and job placement. *Individual Bridging* programs are generally not covered by the PTA, as they involve short-term training and are targeted to the specific training needs of individuals.

Bridging enrolments account for 14% of the total. Like Links to Employment, PTA approval for Bridging programs rests with the Regional Services Branch, reinforcing its regional labour market focus.

Programs that are not supported by the PTA but that were supported under previous income support programs could include medium term skills training (greater than 12 weeks in length), and short-term training less than 4 weeks in length.

3.3.2 Management perception of training

Managers in PSEST debate the role of long and short-term skills training within the PTA. Most suggest that the PTA is primarily directed towards Basic Education, as that is where the greatest need lies. Managers we interviewed appear to think that short-term training could not (or should not) be supported under the PTA. They think there is too much administrative inefficiency and awkwardness for those transferring from Social Assistance to the PTA to support this. Three managers recommended extending PTA support to longer-term training, though most would prefer to confine PTA support to Quick Skills courses. Two managers recommended eliminating Quick Skills from the PTA portfolio altogether and providing an alternative form of income support for these programs, such as the Skills Training Benefit (STB). The argument for this view stems from the observation that Quick Skill programs are designed to result in an immediate job. If this is the case, the client should be asked to shoulder some of the financial costs.

3.3.3 Some field staff suggest a need for more skills training programs

The majority of staff did not identify additional training programs that the PTA should include (Table 9). Those who did make suggestions may have had a particular program in mind, since the type of program mentioned was often PTA eligible.

Table 10: Are there any types of training programs that are NOT currently eligible for the PTA that you think should be?

PSEST (n=24)		Social Services (n=56)		Training providers (n=152)	
Specific skills training	13%	Specific skills training	7%	Specific skills training	5%
Long-term skills	13%	Life skills	5%	Literacy	2%
Quick Skills	13%	Quick Skills	4%	BE/ high school	2%
No response	54%	No response	79%	No response	82%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

Field staff said that such programs should be eligible for the PTA because:

- 4 there seems to be a demand for such courses (25%).
- 4 student loans are not available (23%).
- 4 employment opportunities exist in the field (19%).
- 4 they will increase students' skills (13%).

Sample sizes are small, but they do indicate a minority position among field staff that some form of income support is required for those in skills training. A small proportion of field staff would like to see PTA offered for certain skills training courses, rather than supporting skills training with Student Loans.

3.4 How appropriate is the mix of training programs approved for the PTA? (1.4)

It is hard to assess the appropriateness of training programs without a benchmark. The closest approximation is waiting lists, though these are not centrally maintained, nor were individual institutions audited to find out the nature of their enrolment lists. This issue is more closely related to program delivery and the administration of waiting lists by institutions, and less so to the PTA. This evaluation stresses the role of the PTA as an income support program (relative to Social Assistance), rather than reviewing issues on the training program delivery side.

That said, PTA training programs are profiled according to type and length of program. Management and field staff perceptions of training program availability offer some insight into this issue.

3.4.1 Profile of PTA programs

Most PTA clients (78%) participate in Basic Education programs. The remaining one-quarter of participants enrolls in either Bridging (14%) or Quick Skills (10%). (Note: codes are based on information contained in the PTA database).

Enrolment reflects the focus of the PTA and the needs of the low-income population traditionally served by income support programs. Enrolment in Basic Education courses typically lasts for 185 days (approximately 6 months).⁶ Bridging courses last approximately 110 days, and Quick Skills 73 days. By definition, Quick Skills courses last 4 to 12 weeks, and it would appear that most lie at the maximum.

Table 11: Profile of PTA programs (n=11,938)

Program type	% of interventions		Duration (days)
	n	%	
Basic Education	9157	77%	185
Bridging	1646	14%	110
Quick Skills	1135	10%	73

Source: PTA Database.

Almost all PTA courses (96%) require full-time attendance. This figure is the same whether viewed per client or per intervention.

Table 12: Type of course – full-time / part-time

	Client (n=8,458)	Intervention (n=11,938)
Full-time	96%	96%
Part-time	4%	4%
Total	100%	100%

Source: PTA Database.

⁶ Course length is based on client start and end dates, as recorded in the PTA database.

3.4.2 Field staff suggest that training opportunities are adequate

Overall, between 50% and 80% of field staff offered ratings on the adequacy of training opportunities eligible for the PTA. A small proportion of field staff (24% to 34%) reports shortages in the number of training opportunities in Basic Education and Bridging programs (See Table 13).

- 4 More field staff observed Basic Education opportunities are adequate (47%) rather than inadequate (34%).
- 4 Approximately one-quarter of field staff believed that Bridging, Quick Skills, or other training opportunities eligible for PTA support are inadequate.
 - 4 42% rated Bridging opportunities to be adequate, while 35% had no opinion.
- 4 Finally, 28% of staff rated Quick Skills as having adequate training opportunities, while 50% offered no opinion on Quick Skills at all.

Table 13: Are there adequate numbers of training opportunities eligible for PTA support to meet the demand for training among students? (n=238)

Training type	Very inadequate	Somewhat inadequate	Somewhat adequate	Very adequate	DK / NR
Basic Education	14%	20%	26%	21%	20%
Bridging	6%	18%	31%	11%	35%
Quick Skills	6%	16%	21%	7%	50%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.

3.4.3 Some PSEST field staff do not think the PTA should fund Quick Skills

The majority of field staff reported that the PTA was available for appropriate training programs. A high 63% of PSEST staff, 88% of Social Services staff, and 91% of training providers did not respond to the question, “*Are there any types of training programs that are currently eligible for the PTA that shouldn’t be?*”

The few PSEST staff who did suggest programs that should not be eligible for the PTA most often mentioned *Quick Skills* (17%) and *courses less than 12 weeks* in duration (8%). Social Services staff most often mentioned *courses less than 12 weeks* (5%) and *Life Skills* (4%). Training providers mentioned *Pre-Employment courses* most often (2%).

Table 14: Are there any types of training programs that are currently eligible for the PTA that shouldn’t be?

PSEST field staff (n=24)		Social Services (n=56)		Training providers (n=152)	
Quick Skills	17%	Courses <12 weeks	5%	Pre-employment	2%
Courses <12 weeks	8%	Life skills	4%		
No response	63%	No response	88%	No response	91%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

A small proportion of field staff reported that some courses should not be eligible for the PTA, as they result in too much administration (15%). This point is specific to short-term training, where the transition from PTA to Social Assistance requires a transfer of income support from one department to another.

3.5 What is the impact of PTA on training program design? (1.5)

The PTA has criteria in place for determining which courses are eligible for students to receive PTA support. For example, Quick Skills courses must be between 4 and 12 weeks in length, and must be approved by PSEST. Basic Education courses must end after June 1st and begin before September 15th for students to receive the PTA over the summer break (commonly referred to as “break funding”).

3.5.1 The PTA has resulted in programs being modified to fit program rules for eligibility

Field staff also provided comments on the impact of the PTA on program design. Of the 238 respondents, 42% offered comments on the impact that the PTA *has* had, and the impact that it *should* have. Note that 38% offered no comments.

Field staff report that the PTA has resulted in adjusted course lengths (28%) and adjustments to course design (e.g., content) to meet eligibility guidelines.

The need to expand to more part-time courses and to vary start and end dates (to meet regulations for break funding) was also mentioned by about 10% of field staff.

Table 15: What effect has the PTA had on training program design? What changes are needed? (n=97)	
	%
Effect it has had on program design	
Adjusted course length	28%
Adjusted how course is structured (courses changed to meet PTA criteria, fit content into time allowed)	23%
Effect it should have on program design	
Only full time courses are eligible (part-time needed)	11%
Adjust course start and end dates	10%
Increase income supports	6%
More access for students is needed	6%
Attendance must be compulsory	6%
Miscellaneous effects/observations	
More interest in PTA than course	6%
Increased partnerships have occurred	4%
Seat shortages have occurred	4%
More career exploration is needed	4%
Too much administration	3%
Other	4%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff.</i>	
Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.	

3.6 PTA clients who were not on Social Assistance - Are they more or less successful in completing their programs? (1.6)

Prior to the PTA, those who were not on Social Assistance or part of a target group (Aboriginal persons, disabled persons) had limited access to income support for training.

Key questions for this evaluation are:

- 4 Do those who come to the PTA from Social Assistance differ demographically from those who do not?
- 4 Are non-Social Assistance clients more successful in completing their training?

Findings from the survey of participants suggest that non-Social Assistance clients are more likely to be male, younger, have fewer children, and are more likely to be single. Non-Social Assistance PTA clients are also likely to earn more money and have more than one person contributing to the household income.

3.6.1 Demographic profiles

As mentioned in Section 3.1.6, the majority of PTA clients (93%) have been on Social Assistance (Social Assistance) at some time prior to the PTA. The tables below compare PTA recipients who have been on Social Assistance at some time prior to the PTA, to those who were never on Social Assistance at any time prior to their first PTA intervention.

Slightly more of the non-Social Assistance clients are between the ages of 16-24 (48%), and slightly fewer fall into the middle age groups (25-39).

Age	Social Assistance PTA (n=7,810)	Non-Social Assistance prior to PTA (n=633)
16-24	35%	48%
25-29	24%	15%
30-39	29%	25%
40+	12%	12%
Total	100%	100%
<i>Source: PTA Database.</i>		
Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. DK/NR have been omitted.		

Social Assistance PTA clients are also more likely to be female (63%) compared to 48% who have no previous Social Assistance exposure prior to the PTA.

Table 17: Gender (n=8,458)		
Gender	Social Assistance PTA (n=7,820)	Non-Social Assistance prior to PTA (n=638)
Female	63%	48%
Male	37%	52%
Total	100%	101%
<i>Source: PTA Database.</i>		
Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.		

The majority of those who have no previous Social Assistance exposure are single individuals (55%), compared to 32% of Social Assistance PTA clients (Table 18). Those with previous Social Assistance exposure are much more likely to be single parents (45%).

Table 18: Family status (n=8,458)		
Status	Social Assistance PTA (n=7,820)	Non-Social Assistance prior to PTA (n=638)
Single, no children	32%	55%
Single, with children	45%	15%
Couple, no children	5%	7%
Couple, with children	19%	24%
Total	101%	101%
<i>Source: PTA Database.</i>		
Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.		

PTA clients coming directly from Social Assistance are also slightly more likely to identify themselves as being disabled (10%) compared to people who have not come directly from Social Assistance (6%).

Table 19: Disability status (n=8,458)		
Status	Social Assistance PTA (n=7,820)	Non-Social Assistance prior to PTA (n=638)
No disability reported	91%	94%
Disability reported	10%	6%
Total	101%	100%
<i>Source: PTA Database.</i>		
Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.		

PTA clients with past Social Assistance exposure are more likely to be of Aboriginal ancestry (Status Indian, non-Status Indian, Métis, other - 63%), than those who have no pre-PTA exposure to Social Assistance (36%).

Table 20: Aboriginal status (n=8,458)		
Status	Social Assistance PTA (n=7,820)	Non-Social Assistance prior to PTA (n=638)
Status Indian	36%	25%
Non-status Indian	5%	1%
Métis	21%	9%
Inuit/Other	<1%	<1%
Non-Aboriginal	37%	65%
Total	100%	101%
<i>Source: PTA Database.</i>		
<i>Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.</i>		

The survey of participants offers some supplemental demographic information on Social Assistance and non-Social Assistance PTA clients. For the survey, a non-Social Assistance client is defined as someone who has never been on Social Assistance (either pre- or post-PTA), while a Social Assistance client is defined as someone who has been on Social Assistance at some time. This definition differs slightly from that above, and should be borne in mind when comparing attributes.

Based on the survey of participants, non-Social Assistance PTA clients are better educated. Sixty-two percent (62%) of Social Assistance PTA clients have less than a grade 12 education, compared to 41% of non-Social Assistance PTA clients. Conversely, 16% of non-Social Assistance PTA clients have either completed or taken some courses at the post-secondary level, compared to 6% of Social Assistance PTA clients.

Status	Social Assistance PTA (n=512)	Non-Social Assistance (ever) PTA (n=89)
Less than Grade 12	62%	41%
Grade 12 / GED 12 / BE 12	32%	42%
University / college – some	4%	7%
University / college – degree/ diploma	2%	9%
Other	<1%	1%
Total	101%	100%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Don't know and no response categories have been omitted.

Non-Social Assistance clients typically have higher family incomes. More than one-third (36%) earn more than \$20,000 per year, compared to 10% of Social Assistance PTA clients.

Status	Social Assistance PTA (n=444)	Non-Social Assistance (ever) PTA (n=76)
Under \$10,000	53%	29%
\$10,000 to \$20,000	37%	36%
More than \$20,000	10%	36%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Don't know and no response categories have been omitted, accounting for a smaller sample size than reported in other tables.

Other findings from the survey of participants are consistent with the database:

- 4 Those with Aboriginal ancestry represent a higher proportion of Social Assistance PTA clients (54%) than non-Social Assistance (22%).
- 4 Social Assistance PTA clients are more likely to report having a disability (16% of Social Assistance PTA clients and 8% of non-Social Assistance).
- 4 Almost two-thirds of non-Social Assistance PTA clients (63%) have no children living with them, compared to 29% of Social Assistance PTA clients. The former have 0.8 children per household, while the latter have 1.7.

- 4 Non-Social Assistance clients are more likely to have two or more people contributing to the household income (46%, compared to 27% of Social Assistance PTA clients).

3.6.2 Current activity and plans for the future

As mentioned in the introduction, this evaluation cannot provide conclusive outcome measures, due to the relative newness of the PTA and the fact that it is an income support program, not a training program.

That said, the survey of participants did collect information on current and expected activity to offer some indication of what clients are doing and intending to do.

- 4 Two-thirds (66%) of non-Social Assistance PTA clients who are no longer in training are currently working either full or part-time, compared to 37% of Social Assistance PTA clients.
- 4 35% of Social Assistance PTA clients who have completed their training, indicated that they were back on Social Assistance at the time of the survey.

Status	Social Assistance PTA			Non-Social Assistance (ever) PTA		
	Current (n=208)	Past (n=304)	Total (n=512)	Current (n=33)	Past (n=56)	Total (n=89)
Working full-time	1%	19%	12%	3%	45%	29%
Working part-time	2%	18%	12%	15%	21%	19%
In school full-time	90%	12%	44%	82%	16%	40%
In school part-time	6%	2%	4%	3%	9%	7%
On Social Assistance	1%	35%	21%	-	-	-
At home caring for children	5%	18%	13%	-	7%	5%
Looking for work	1%	2%	2%	3%	5%	5%
Other	1%	8%	5%	-	7%	6%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Totals will sum to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than one response. The term "current" denotes those who were in training at the time of the survey, while "past" categorizes those who had completed or withdrawn from training.

As shown in Table 24, Social Assistance PTA clients are more likely to enroll in or continue with a BE program (40%), while non-Social Assistance PTA clients are more

likely to enroll in or continue with a University or college program. Given that a higher proportion of non-Social Assistance PTA clients are working, it is not surprising that a higher proportion report that they will continue to work in the near future (40%).

Table 24: Plans in the next 12 months (n=601)

Status	Social Assistance PTA (n=512)	Non-Social Assistance PTA (n=89)
Enroll or continue with BE	40%	23%
Enroll or continue with University or college	14%	21%
Enroll or continue with Skills training	14%	14%
Continue to work	18%	40%
Looking for work	30%	27%
Stay at home	3%	1%
Finish course	2%	2%
Other	5%	-
Don't know/no response	39%	4%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Totals will sum to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than one response.

3.6.3 Do non-Social Assistance clients go back to Social Assistance?

Based on the PTA database, 13% of PTA clients with no previous Social Assistance history go onto Social Assistance at some point after completing their training. By comparison, 61% of PTA clients who have spent some time on Social Assistance prior to their training return to Social Assistance upon program completion.

3.7 To what extent has the PTA reduced or introduced barriers / incentives to going back on training / Social Assistance? (1.7, 1.8)

PTA clients typically come to training from one of two paths:

- 4 Social Assistance (approximately two-thirds of PTA clients).
- 4 Employment (approximately 30%).

A relatively small proportion (10%) were previously unemployed and at home caring for children. Many of these individuals are supported by a spouse or family member, or living off previous assets or EI.

A key issue of the evaluation is whether the PTA has created incentives for training or, alternatively, barriers that did not exist when social assistance was the main income support for low income people in training.

Possible incentives include:

- 4 advancement towards a better job or greater employability,
- 4 improved self-confidence,
- 4 achieving an improved basic education level, or
- 4 more money than one would receive from other sources, such as Social Assistance or a low-wage job.

Barriers to participating in and completing training can include:

- 4 being unable to access training that would improve one's employability or job prospects,
- 4 being unable to access training that fits ones availability (e.g. evenings, part-time, etc.)
- 4 having difficulty coping with the potential stress and the rigors of training, or
- 4 earning less in training than one would on Social Assistance or at work.

Upon completing training, clients are again faced with returning/going to Social Assistance or finding/returning to work. Incentives to move into the work force can include improved self-confidence, independence and higher wages.

Barriers to moving directly into employment and remaining off Social Assistance include:

- 4 time is required to make job contacts and find employment,
- 4 even after upgrading, clients may still lack marketable skills,
- 4 clients may lose health coverage and child care support and be relatively "worse off" taking a low-income job, or

- 4 clients may still be coping with personal or health problems that limits their employability.

Findings from the survey of participants show the following:

- 4 As shown in Section 5.1, PTA income support levels are comparable if not higher than Social Assistance on average, suggesting this is likely not a disincentive to take training. If anything, higher rates for daycare under the PTA may act as an incentive to take training and apply for the PTA. During management interviews, two respondents claimed that there were inequalities between Social Assistance and PTA daycare rates, and that those with larger families received more under the PTA.
- 4 Wage exemptions may be a disincentive for those who go from work to the PTA. Two-thirds of PTA clients with work experience said they would work more if they were allowed to do so. Of the few in focus groups who went from work to training, all said they did so as a short-term sacrifice, with the hope of long-term higher paid employment. Although this evidence does not directly address whether potential PTA clients decided not to take training for which they would be eligible for PTA support, it does suggest that wage exemptions are a possible barrier to taking training.
- 4 Rules limiting part-time training or training at irregular times (summer, evening) provide a disincentive for a small number of clients. Although evidence is slight, some clients (focus groups), field staff (survey), and management (interviews) reported that greater flexibility is needed. According to these individuals, increased flexibility would provide greater access to those finding it difficult to access training due to location (no local training deliverer), or family status (parent who wants/needs to spend time in the house or who need to take training over the summer/at night).
- 4 Lack of capacity (waiting lists) was also considered a barrier to training by some field staff and managers.

3.7.1 PTA clients with work experience would like to see wage exemptions increased

Current wage exemptions for PTA clients appear to deter some from working while in training, while others reported that they would benefit from the combination of education and employment. This finding was reinforced in focus groups, where a few said they would consider working if rules were changed.

Findings from the survey of participants showed that most PTA clients would work if they could keep more money from employment (67%).

Table 25: If the PTA/training program allowed you to keep more money from a job while in the program, would you choose to work, or change the amount of hours you work?	
Response	PTA (n=344)
Yes	67%
No	25%
DK/NR	8%
Total	100%
<small>(Asked of all people with prior work experience who were in a program that limited the amount of income they could earn while in training) Source: Survey of Participants Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.</small>	

We asked those who answered “yes” (Table 26) why they would attempt to work more. Almost half (46%) said that working would provide *more money to get ahead*. A further 17% said that working would provide them with more money for bills and expenses, and/or would improve their self-esteem (17%).

Those who said they wouldn’t work more were also asked to explain why and 38% said they wanted to *concentrate on school/study* (note, sample sizes in Table 27 are very small).

Table 26: Why would you attempt to work more?	
Response	PTA (n=231)
Yes	
More money to get ahead	105 46%

More money for bills/expenses	39	17%
Self-esteem/like to work	38	17%
Have the opportunity to do so	23	10%
Keep skills up/experience	5	2%
Conditional Yes		
No time for work and school	4	2%
Concentrate on school/study	4	2%
Young family	3	1%
Physically demanding	3	1%
Other	3	1%
DK/NR	12	5%
<i>Source: Survey of Participants</i> Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%. Small sample.		

Table 27: Why wouldn't you attempt to work more?		
Response	PTA (n=85)	
No		
Concentrate on school/study	32	38%
No time for work and school	22	26%
Young family	14	17%
PTA / training support enough	1	1%
Other	6	7%
DK/NR	5	6%
Conditional No		
More money to get ahead	5	6%
Self esteem/like to work	2	2%
Have the opportunity to do so	1	1%
<i>Survey of Participants</i> Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%. Small sample.		

3.7.2 Some PTA clients expressed the need for more flexible delivery during focus groups

Although not a dominant theme during focus groups, some clients expressed a desire for greater flexibility in program delivery. Two clients wished they had the option of taking training over the summer, or taking part-time training so they could finish their training rather than having to come back for a full semester. Those wanting to take extra courses are not able to do so. Taking courses over the summer is a program issue, as PTA would support them, but the institutions do not offer them. Part-time courses are a PTA issue, as criteria for part-time program eligibility is determined by PSEST. Expanding part-time eligibility is an issue for the PTA to consider to improve access and equity of participation.

3.7.3 Perceptions of field staff and management

Some field staff and program managers also reported a need for greater program flexibility. Both management (7 respondents) and field staff (12%) suggest broadening training options. This could include Internet-based training, correspondence or distance learning, and increased availability of summer and evening courses (see Table 28). It could also include a continuous intake process that would enable clients to take training at various times during the year. However, this issue is in part a “program” issue, and would depend on negotiations between PTA administration and training providers.

Considerable comment emerged from some field staff and managers about waiting lists / program capacity, suggesting that a shortage of courses in the SIAST/regional college system was a problem. At the same time, others expressed doubt about the reality of these waiting lists, and suggested more investigation to validate the nature of the backlog in demand for training. This unresolved empirical question could use further investigation.

Table 28: What suggestions, if any, do you have for improving access for those who have "less access under the PTA"? (n=83)

	%
Make part -time students eligible	30%
Provide more seats	30%
Increase rates	16%
More flexible course design	12%
Better wage exemptions	11%
Advertise the program	8%
Provide transportation allowance	7%
More financial support for special needs	7%
Allow higher family/household income	4%
Other	11%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%

3.8 What criteria have been used to approve program deliveries and do they enhance access and cost efficiency? (1.9)

The PTA currently delivers most of its training through public training deliverers, such as SIAST and regional colleges. In part, this delivery system has been used in an attempt to maximize efficiencies and enable the possibility for management of the PTA to be devolved to a third party.

Compared to SIAST and the Regional Colleges, community-based organizations have a relatively minor role in the PTA. Two stakeholders and one key informant interviewee mentioned the need for expanded delivery through community-based organizations as they claim that these organizations provide a better alternative for certain clientele (e.g., Aboriginal people, First Nations, Métis). However, in some regions few community-based organizations are available to deliver training.

It is difficult to assess whether the criteria for program delivery enhances access and cost-efficiency. Based on information in Section 3.1, access to the PTA is comparable to that provided under previous income support programs. This implies that training programs meet client demand, given available PTA resources.

Measures of cost-efficiency are driven by outcomes, which this evaluation did not address. As such, there is neither evidence on whether the criteria for program delivery lead to greater

cost-efficiency, nor benchmarks that would provide a baseline for comparison purposes.

3.9 To what extent has the PTA been used for income support in non-provincially funded programs and at what cost? (1.10)

The PTA has been used for income support in non-provincially funded programs. However, program managers suggested several reasons for limiting support to provincially funded programs only:

- 4 Accountability: Managers report that the Province maintains greater accountability over provincially funded programs;
- 4 Resource availability: With fixed resources and waiting lists for training for provincially funded programs among PTA eligible students, program managers said that the priority lies with these programs. With more resources available, the opportunity to fund other institutions may arise.

Two stakeholders commented on the need for increased funding to non-provincially funded programs to increase training opportunities for those who do not fit with “traditional” training institutions. It was reported that this might be particularly important for segments of Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal population, who make up a substantial portion of the PTA caseload (many of whom require BE upgrading).

Table 29 shows PTA participation in non-provincially funded programs for 1997-98 and 1998-99. Institutions include private trainers (e.g., AAA Academy and Consulting, Cornerstone Consulting), Aboriginal trainers (e.g., Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology, Won-Ska Cultural School), and public schools (Saskatoon Public School Division). As indicated, these trainers accounts for a relatively small proportion (4%) of the total number of training applications.

Table 29: Comparison of enrolment between provincially and non-provincially funded programs		
	n	%
Provincially funded	12762	96%
Non-provincially funded	543	4%
Total	13305	100%
<i>Source: PTA Database.</i>		

3.10 How many applications to the PTA have been refused, what are the demographic characteristics, and what was the impact on the client? (1.12)

The PTA's income tested approach was meant to broaden access and provide a fairer method for assessing eligibility. Given that the income test was based on Social Assistance eligibility criteria, those refused for the PTA would probably not be eligible for Social Assistance.

As the PTA database and the surveys of participants and non-participants show, rejections are typically a result of clients with income/assets that are too high.

3.10.1 Refused applicants likely have higher incomes

Certain demographic characteristics of individuals who were refused the PTA are different (by at least 5%) from those who have been accepted for the PTA.

Compared to those whose applications for the PTA are accepted, those refused are:

- 4 more likely to be 40 years of age or older (24%, compared to 12% of those accepted);
- 4 less likely to be single parents (10%, compared to 43% of those accepted), but more likely to be a couple with children (42%, compared to 20% of PTA clients).

Other characteristics of refusals stood out:

- 4 Refused applicants are less likely to be Aboriginal (38%) compared to accepted applicants (60%).
- 4 Of those who were accepted for the PTA, 93% had previously received Social Assistance at some time prior to

applying for the PTA. Conversely, 94% of applications refused were from those who had never received Social Assistance.

The most common reason (85%) for applications to be refused was due to having too much income. The demographics are consistent with these findings. For example, we expect older people, couples, and those who have never received Social Assistance to have higher incomes than other groups, and therefore have a greater chance of being ineligible for the PTA.

3.10.2 Impact of having application refused

We asked all PTA clients (survey of participants) if they would have been able to take the course if the PTA was not available. The results are quite evenly distributed between the *yes* and *no* responses although 55% of respondents said that they would not have been able to participate if the PTA was not available (Table 30).

Table 30: Participants: <i>Think of your most recent course that you took while on the PTA. Would you have taken this course if the PTA were not available? (n=604)</i>	
Response	%
Yes	40%
Maybe	4%
No	55%
DK/NR	1%
Total	100%
<i>Source: Survey of Participants.</i>	

Respondents were then asked if they had ever applied for the PTA and had their application rejected. Only 5% (n=28) said they had their applications rejected.

Those respondents who had an application for PTA rejected were then asked how many times they had been rejected (Table 31). Almost two-thirds of eligible respondents had been rejected once, while the other one-third had been rejected twice. When asked why their application had been rejected, 25% said they were rejected by the school (academic reasons).

Table 31: Why was your application rejected?				
Reason	Part (n=28)		Non-part (n=92)	
	n	%	n	%
Rejected by school	7	25%	-	-
Earned too much income	5	18%	39	42%
Course not eligible for PTA	4	14%	3	3%
Parents/spouse earn too much	3	11%	31	34%
Applied too late	1	4%	2	2%
Assets above limit	1	4%	7	8%
Other	8	29%	8	9%
Don't know	1	4%	5	6%

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%. A few respondents from the participants survey had received the PTA at least once, and had been rejected at least once.

Those respondents were also asked if being rejected prevented them from taking the course (from Table 31), 54% said that it did not.

Table 32: Did having your application rejected prevent you from taking the course you wanted to take?				
Response	Part (n=28)		Non-part (n=92)	
	N	%	n	%
Yes	13	46%	10	11%
No	15	54%	79	86%
DK/NR	-	-	3	3%
Total	28	100%	92	100%

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: A few respondents from the participants survey had received the PTA at least once, and had been rejected at least once.

We asked rejected non-participants what they did instead of taking their course. Four said that they worked part time, two took a different course, one worked full-time, and one went on Social Assistance.

3.10.3 How do clients who have been refused the PTA support themselves in training?

Clients who have been refused the PTA typically receive support from their spouse (50%) or work while in training (24%).

	n	%
Spouse supported me	41	50%
Worked while in course	20	24%
Used personal savings	7	9%
Parents paid for me	7	9%
EI	6	7%
EAPD	4	5%
Band council funding	2	2%
Student loans	2	2%
Other	9	11%
DK/NR	1	1%

Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

3.10.4 Those refused for the PTA are less likely to apply for it again in the future

Some 48% of non-participants who have experienced an application refusal (n=44) said that they would apply for the PTA again in the future. Among those who wouldn't reapply, most said that they would still be ineligible and considered it a waste of time.

	n	%
Ineligible/will be rejected/waste of time	32	71%
Will not take any more courses	7	16%
Other	4	9%
DK/NR	3	7%

Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

3.11 How has the PTA helped facilitate access?

Based on database information, it is clear that the PTA has maintained access to training. If clients rate the PTA higher than other previous income support programs such as the

SSDP, NTP, or NSIM, then it can be said to help facilitate access as clients prefer it (See Section 3.12).

3.11.1 How do clients access information about the PTA?

Most clients (60%) find out about the PTA through counselors or administrators at training institutes. Others learned of the PTA from friends or relatives (19%) or from their social worker (9%).

Response	% of cases
Counselor/administrator at school or training institute	60%
Friend or relative	19%
Social worker/Social Services	9%
CSCES	3%
Brochure or poster	3%
New Careers/Links to Learning	3%
Newspaper/radio	2%
Other	3%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

3.11.2 PTA clients report greater access to courses under the PTA than Social Assistance

Eighty-one percent of respondents stated the PTA offered more access to courses than Social Assistance. Only 3% stated that Social Assistance offered more access to courses. According to clients, the courses open to those on Social Assistance are/were much more restricted.

3.12 Clients are very satisfied overall with the PTA

As Table 36 shows, the majority of clients were satisfied with the PTA:

- 4 Sixty percent (60%) of PTA clients said that the PTA covers their costs while in school.
- 4 Two-thirds (65%) *disagreed* with the statement, “*I have to provide too much information to receive the PTA.*” This

suggests that most do not think that the PTA places a high administrative burden on them, nor is it intrusive.

- 4 Eighty-three percent (83%) of PTA clients report that “Under the PTA I feel free to manage my money as I see fit.”
- 4 Most (78%) knew who to talk to when they encounter problems.
- 4 Nine out of 10 clients (90%) reported that there was relatively little stigma associated with being on the PTA.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	DK/NR
The PTA covers my costs while in school	29%	31%	15%	25%	<1%
I have to provide too much information to receive the PTA	15%	18%	42%	23%	3%
Under the PTA, I feel free to manage my money as I see fit	53%	30%	6%	11%	2%
If I have problems with my PTA funding, I know who I should talk with to solve the problem	56%	22%	8%	14%	1%
I don't mind people knowing that I am on the PTA	62%	28%	5%	5%	1%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Horizontal percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

3.12.1 Client satisfaction with Social Assistance

PTA clients (survey of participants) were asked if they had ever been on Social Assistance, and if so, whether they had previously received academic or job training at that time⁷. Those who had received training, were asked to rate different aspects of Social Assistance on a scale from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Comparing Table 36 (above) and Table 37 (next page) item by item, it is apparent that participants rate the PTA more highly than Social Assistance.

- 4 Approximately half of respondents (48%) said that Social Assistance covered their costs while in school.

⁷ The closest comparison for the PTA is the Saskatchewan Skills Development Program (SSDP), a previous training program for Social Assistance clients. The SSDP covered training costs for students, while Social Assistance covered income support costs. When asked about “Social Assistance,” they are implicitly rating the SSDP program or a program that preceded it.

- 4 Just over half (55%) agreed with the statement *I have to provide too much information to receive Social Assistance.*
- 4 Respondents were divided on whether Social Assistance allowed them to *manage their money while on Social Assistance* (49% agreed or disagreed with the statement).
- 4 Most knew who to talk to in the event that they should encounter problems. Over 75% of respondents agreed with the statement, *If I have problems with the funding I got from Social Assistance, I knew who I should talk with to solve the problem.*
- 4 Two-thirds of PTA clients (64%) disagreed with the statement *I don't mind people knowing that I am on Social Assistance.*

Table 37: Rating Social Assistance (n=159) (For those who answered yes above)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	DK/NR
Social Assistance covered my costs while in school	17%	31%	16%	32%	3%
I had to provide too much information to receive Social Assistance	33%	22%	28%	15%	2%
Under Social Assistance I feel free to manage my money as I see fit	20%	29%	9%	40%	2%
If I have problems with the funding I got from Social Assistance, I knew who I should talk with to solve the problem	49%	27%	7%	17%	-
I didn't mind people knowing that I was on Social Assistance	11%	24%	18%	46%	2%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Horizontal percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

3.12.2 According to participants, the PTA compares favourably with other income support programs

Table 38 shows the mean scores awarded by PTA clients who had been involved in each of the four income support programs: PTA, Social Assistance, NSIM, and NTP.

Ratings were derived by having clients respond to each statement on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Ratings for the NSIM and NTP should be viewed as suggestive, given the small sample sizes

- 4 PTA clients agreed **most strongly** (3.5 out of 4) with the statement *I did not mind people knowing that I was on the <program>.*

- 4 The PTA, NTP, and NSIM had similar rating for the statements *Under <Program> I feel free to manage my money as I see fit* and *<Program> covered my costs while in school*. Respondents gave the PTA a 2.6 and 3.3 rating (out of 4) for these statements.
- 4 Social Assistance had the highest rating for the statement *I had to provide too much information to receive my <income support>* (2.7 out of 4).

Table 38: Comparison between programs (Mean values; Scale of 1 to 4 where 1=strongly disagree and 4=strongly agree)

Statement	PTA (n=604)	SA (n=159)	NSIM (n=31)	NTP (n=11)
<Program> covered my costs while in school	2.6	2.3	2.7	3.1
I had to provide too much information to receive <Program>	2.2	2.7	1.7	2.1
Under <Program>, I feel free to manage my money as I see fit	3.3	2.3	3.5	3.6
If I have problems with the funding I got from <Program>, I knew who I should talk with to solve the problem	3.2	3.1	3.4	3.0
I didn't mind people knowing that I was on <Program>	3.5	2.0	3.4	3.3

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: PTA clients who had also participated in these programs provided SSDP, NSIM, and NTP responses.

3.12.3 Respondents prefer the PTA to Social Assistance overall

Among PTA clients who had at one time been on Social Assistance (n=514), some 63% reported that the PTA was a better income support program for those in training than Social Assistance.

Those who rate the PTA as being better than Social Assistance:

- 4 Are more likely to be non-Aboriginal (61%, compared to 40% who say the PTA is better).
- 4 Are more likely to have a disability (26%, compared to 12% who say the PTA is better).

Table 39: Overall, compared to Social Assistance, would you say that the PTA is... (n=514)	
Response	%
Much better	36%
Somewhat better	27%
The same	17%
Somewhat worse	10%
Much worse	6%
DK/NR	3%
Total	99%
Source: Survey of Participants. Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.	

When asked to explain their rating, the following results emerged (Table 40):

- 4 Of those who see the PTA as superior to Social Assistance (326 out of 514 respondents), 45% report that the PTA was better because *they got more money from the PTA*. Some 25% stated that the PTA allowed them *to manage their own money*.
- 4 The majority of respondents (59 out of 87) who see no difference, said that the funding levels are the same.
- 4 Of the 85 respondents (out of 514) who thought they were worse off on the PTA, 92% said that *there was not enough money or not as much as Social Assistance*. This amounts to 78 clients out of the 514 in the survey, or 15% of the total.

Table 40: Why do you think the PTA is better/same/worse than Social Assistance? (n=514)	
Response	%
A. Why do you think that the PTA is better than Social Assistance? (n=326)	
Get more money from PTA	45%
Manage my own money	25%
Increases self esteem	14%
PTA needs less information	10%
Educational opportunities	7%
More help/advice/interest	5%
More career counseling/work experience	3%
Other	1%
DK/NR	6%
B. Why do you think the PTA is the same as Social Assistance? (n=87)	
Same amount of money	68%
Same goal-look for work	16%
Other	16%
DK/NR	6%
C. Why do you think that the PTA is worse than Social Assistance? (n=85)	
Not enough money/not as much as Social Assistance	92%
Other	9%
<i>Source: Survey of Participants.</i>	
<i>Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals within each category may sum to more than 100%.</i>	

3.13 Summary

In summary, the PTA is preferred to Social Assistance by most clients. This represents a strong endorsement of the PTA by its clients.

4.0 Independence

The PTA was designed to move people away from dependence on Social Assistance and *toward* further training and education or employment. Program managers believe that independence is reinforced in two ways:

- 4 by providing clients with income support that is not welfare.
- 4 by providing a flat rate similar to paid employment.
- 4 by making client responsible for managing their own resources.

The desired ends for the PTA include both increased short-term independence (during the training period) and long-term independence (after training has ended) from public income support.

Independence in the short run is seen as the ability to manage money and cope with daily affairs without the intervention of a social worker. Independence in the long run would be employment, subject to the caveat that for many PTA clients, stable employment will require training beyond a first stint on the PTA.

The section shows that clients are more independent in the short-term. An assessment of long-term independence requires further follow-up to determine the extent to which PTA clients become less dependent on public income support.

4.1 Are Social Assistance eligible clients who receive the PTA in training for longer periods than previously, or compared to non-Social Assistance eligible clients? (2.1)

The natural comparison group for the PTA is the SSDP. A comparison of program databases shows that PTA clients are in training for slightly longer, due in part to the fact that SSDP students show a higher discontinuation rate.

It is more difficult to contrast PTA outcomes with those who have never been on Social Assistance. Given that almost all PTA clients (93%) are on Social Assistance at some point prior to going on the PTA, we can assume that most would be Social

Assistance eligible. The main comparison group is drawn from the non-participant survey, and includes those who applied for the PTA but were rejected because they had too much income.

4.1.1 PTA clients are in training for a longer duration, in part because they are more likely to complete it

When aggregated, it appears that more than one-third of participants are in training three months or less (35%), while 29% are in training between four and six months. The remaining one-third (35%) are in training for half a year or more.

PTA clients who come directly from Social Assistance are enrolled in BE courses for approximately the same duration as those do not come directly from SA. However, those coming directly from SA to the PTA spend less time in Bridging (56% are in the program for less than 3 months) compared to those who don't come directly from SA (37%).

Length	BE		Skills		Bridging	
	Directly from SA (n=5,965)	Not directly from SA (n=3,111)	Directly from SA (n=719)	Not directly from SA (n=416)	Directly from SA (n=1,284)	Not directly from SA (n=349)
3 months or less	28%	22%	100%	100%	56%	37%
4 to 6 months	27%	31%	-	-	33%	54%
7 to 9 months	23%	23%	-	-	9%	5%
10 months or more	21%	23%	-	-	2%	3%

Source: PTA Database.
 Note: This includes both completed courses and those discontinued.

4.2 Has the PTA contributed to clients' successfully completing programs? Is the support provided under the PTA adequate to facilitate program completions? (2.2, 2.7)

The PTA database and the survey of participants both provide information on program completion. Based on the PTA database, 59% of interventions are completed. This figure is higher than that for the SSDP (45% completed). Other factors, aside from the PTA, may influence, this apparent increase in completion rates (e.g. length of training, types of courses, types of clients, changes at the institutional level, etc.).

Family or personal problems were the most common response for PTA clients failing to complete their training, followed by illness/health problems. Clients cite not having enough money to live on (i.e., insufficient income support) in about 13% of cases as a reason for discontinuation.

4.2.1 Clients complete approximately 60% of their courses

The PTA database indicates that clients complete approximately 60% of all training interventions. Completion rates are similar both for clients who go directly from Social Assistance to the PTA, and for those who do not.

Comparatively, 45% of SSDP records indicate completions (n=985 out of 2166 records).⁸ This figure excludes 365 records for which no outcome could be determined. Based on this comparison, it appears that PTA clients are more likely to complete their courses.

	Complete		Discontinued		Total	
	N	%	n	%	N	%
PTA	5,681	59%	3,930	41%	9,611	100%
SSDP	985	45%	1,181	55%	2,166	100%

Source: PTA Database, SSDP database.
 Notes:
 1. Completions include those who have reached the formal end of their course without discontinuing.
 2. Totals are per intervention, not per client. That is, one client can take multiple interventions.

8 Of the 1,939 SSDP clients in the database, some took more than one training program. Completions are based per program, not per client.

Figure 2 (below) shows that PTA clients in BE were less likely to complete their most recent training (52% completions) compared to Bridging (72%) and Quick Skills (87%). Undoubtedly, the length of the course is a minor factor, contributing to program discontinuation. This suggests that a more modular approach to BE may be valuable. As we show elsewhere, some participants would prefer this (see Section 3.7.2). The next section (4.2.2) provides further insight on this issue.

Those who have been on Social Assistance at some point in the past are also slightly more likely to withdraw from their PTA training prior to its end (59% complete), compared to non-Social Assistance participants (65%).

Percent of completed interventions by type of training

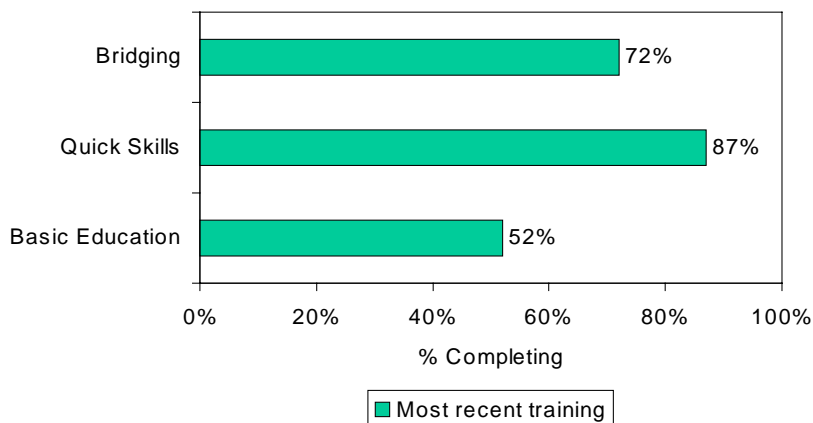


Figure 2

4.2.2 Reasons for discontinuation

Based on the survey of participants and non-participants, family or personal problems were the most common response for PTA clients failing to complete their training, followed by illness / health problems, or not having enough money to live on.

Non-participants were most likely to cite withdrawing for academic reasons, finding employment, or not having enough money to live on as reason for discontinuation.

4.2.3 Characteristics of those who discontinue their training

Based on the survey of participants, those who discontinue their training are similar to those who complete their training, with a few exceptions. Those who discontinue are somewhat more likely to be of Aboriginal ancestry (66% compared to 56%). They are also more likely to go on Social Assistance upon discontinuing their training (69%, compared to 49%).

Data from the survey of participants provides additional demographic information not recorded in the database. For example, those who discontinue are more likely not to have completed high school (79%, compared to 54% for those who have not discontinued).

4.3 To what extent does the PTA move individuals off Social Assistance? (2.3)

A key measure of independence is the ability of the PTA to help clients rely less on public income support in both the short and long-term. Given the relatively short post-program follow-up period, long-term outcomes are not available.

The literature on labour market training for Social Assistance clients suggests that expected outcomes (both short and long-term) are modest. Social Assistance clients often have lower education levels, personal, family or health problems, and relatively little experience in the labour market. Further, training outcomes improve in step with the economy.

4.3.1 Approximately two-thirds of PTA clients go directly from Social Assistance to the PTA, then return to Social Assistance soon after

Based on a comparison between Social Assistance and PTA data, approximately 93% of PTA clients received Social Assistance at some time prior to the PTA. Some 65% go directly from Social Assistance to the PTA when taking their first intervention.

Those currently in a PTA intervention (as of March 2000) were on Social Assistance for an average of 10 months between September 1997 and the beginning of their first intervention.

By comparison, those who completed or withdrew from their intervention were on Social Assistance for an average of 6 months prior to their first intervention. These clients began their first PTA involvement earlier, resulting in an “apparent” shorter time on Social Assistance prior to the PTA. It is only apparent because the observation period is based on a Social Assistance start date of September 1997—some may have been on Social Assistance prior to this date.

Upon completing or withdrawing from their most recent intervention, some 64% returned to Social Assistance at some point (as of March 2000). Post-program data covers a relatively short period for many clients, and needs to be viewed cautiously. There needs to be further analysis on this issue to determine who went back to Social Assistance and why they went back.

Both pre- and post-intervention measures underestimate the length of time on Social Assistance, as the comparison is based on a 31-month period. Longer follow-up is required to determine how long PTA clients remain on Social Assistance, and what proportion go on to employment or further training.

A previous review of the SSDP found that 93% of former SSDP participants returned to SAP at some point during the 13-17 month post-program observation period of the study.

4.4 Are clients who receive a higher level of income support through the PTA in comparison to Social Assistance more likely to successfully complete than clients who receive the same or lower level? (2.4)

The cost comparison between Social Assistance and PTA rates suggests that, on average, PTA clients receive an equivalent or slightly higher amount on PTA than on Social Assistance. Given that there is no comparable group currently receiving training while remaining on Social Assistance (as all are now on the PTA), a direct comparison would have to be based on 1995 rates.

When we view completion rates based on family status, we see little difference in the proportion continuing versus those discontinuing. Further, less than 14% of those discontinuing cite “not enough money” as a reason for discontinuation, suggesting that PTA rates are not the reason that people fail to complete their training (See Section 4.2.3).

4.5 For those who leave Social Assistance, how long do they remain off and what are their circumstances? How many, who, and for what reasons do clients return to Social Assistance? (2.5, 2.6)

Outcome data provides only short-term follow-up on clients. As indicated in Section 4.3.1 above, upon completing or withdrawing from their most recent intervention, some 64% returned to Social Assistance at some point.

Focus group participants indicated that clients will typically return to Social Assistance for one of two reasons:

- 4 Their training program (commonly BE) provides relatively weak linkages to the labour market. Upon completion of their program, clients are not job ready and must try to find work independently. For many, this job search process will lead to an interim period on Social Assistance.
- 4 Even those who are job ready may require a period of looking for work. If a PTA student does not have work lined up prior to program completion, they will require some type of funding in the interim, and will often go on Social Assistance if they qualify.

A further group of students will need further upgrading, and possibly Bridging training before they are job ready. Many will need more education and training before becoming “competitive” in the labour market.

Among the 36% who do not return to Social Assistance, the majority (80%) find work (full-time or part-time), or take further training (see Section 3.6.2). Again, without a longer follow-up, it is difficult to assess the process that clients go through between completing their training and going on to further training or employment.

4.6 To what extent has the PTA affected the client’s ability to manage the financial, academic, and personal aspects of their lives, such as paying their bills? (2.8)

Fostering financial independence is a key objective of the PTA. To meet this objective, the PTA enables clients to manage their own rent and utility payments, unlike Social Assistance. Some managers and counselors questioned whether clients will be able to assume full financial responsibility, managing their budgets and meeting their financial obligations such as rent, utilities and support for themselves and their families.

Based on this research, the PTA has fulfilled this objective, as most clients report increased independence and ability to manage their expenditures. More than half (56%) report no delays in paying their utility bills, while three-quarters report paying their rent on time. Approximately 17% of PTA clients apply to the PTA for a top-up, with 9% receiving additional funding (see Section 5.2). This suggests that most PTA clients are able to meet their monthly expenditures, through their own means.

That said, some do have difficulty managing their money and achieving financial independence. Although these individuals are in the minority, steps to identify these individuals and provide greater counseling and financial support have been suggested by those we interviewed.

4.6.1 Respondents report greater financial independence on PTA than on Social Assistance

Key to this evaluation is comparing client perception of PTA relative to Social Assistance. After rating Social Assistance and PTA independently, we asked participants to compare the income support programs and rank whether the PTA was *better, the same, or worse* in meeting clients costs, reducing administration, and providing counseling and access to courses.

Based on Table 43 and 44, findings from the survey of participants were as follows:

	Program	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
PTA/Social Assistance covered my costs while in school	PTA	29%	31%	15%	25%
	Social Assistance	17%	31%	16%	32%
I feel free to manage my money as I see fit while on PTA/Social Assistance	PTA	53%	30%	6%	11%
	Social Assistance	20%	29%	9%	40%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: DK/NR have been omitted from the table. Horizontal percentages will not sum to 100%.

- 4 61% of respondents *strongly agreed* that their cost were covered while in school and on the PTA. By comparison, 48% of PTA recipients (who were on Social Assistance at one time) strongly agreed that their costs were covered while they were in school and on Social Assistance.
- 4 83% of respondents *strongly agreed* that they felt free to manage their money as they saw fit while on the PTA (compared to a 49% rating for Social Assistance).

Table 44: Comparing the PTA and Social Assistance (n=162)

The PTA was designed to be different from Social Assistance in a number of respects. Please indicate whether you think the PTA does a better job in meeting those goals, a worse job in meeting those goals, or if the PTA and Social Assistance do equally well.

	PTA	Same	SA	DK/NR
Allows students to manage their finances.	73%	17%	7%	3%
Provides students with enough money to cover their child care costs	49%	10%	14%	27%
Provides students with enough money to cover their transportation	44%	24%	18%	14%
Provides students with enough money to cover their utilities	32%	15%	46%	6%

Source: Survey of Participants.

- 4 Overall, PTA clients rate their ability to manage their finances more positively under the PTA (73% said the PTA was better) than Social Assistance (7%).
- 4 PTA clients rate the PTA more highly than Social Assistance in supporting their transportation (44% said the PTA is better, 18% support Social Assistance) and childcare costs (49% said the PTA is better, 14% from Social Assistance).
- 4 When it comes to utilities, Social Assistance rates more highly (46% prefer Social Assistance, while 32% prefer the PTA).

Care is needed in viewing this comparison. PTA literature provides “baseline” expenditure levels for major categories of spending (e.g., utilities, rent, food, transportation). However, these were meant as guidelines rather than allocations, as clients can freely allocate their monthly allowance to meet their needs. The guidelines for transportation were, for the most part, at levels that allowed clients to manage their budget. For many who needed to pay utilities directly under the PTA, and who had been shielded from the costs under Social Assistance, the level of utility expenses came as a surprise.

4.6.2 Most PTA clients see themselves as financially independent

Based on the survey, most PTA clients report being able to manage their financial affairs (Table 45):

- 4 56% say they have had no delays in paying their utilities, while 74% have had no delays in paying their rent.
- 4 25% of PTA clients say that they have delayed on rent, compared to 17% of non-participants.
- 4 42% of PTA clients report delaying a utility bill, compared to 31% of non-participants.
- 4 60% of PTA clients report borrowing money from friends or family or using an overdraft, compared to 44% of non-participants.
- 4 17% of PTA clients report applying to Social Assistance for emergency funding.

It is important to note that many people (PTA and non-PTA) will delay paying bills as a strategy for managing their monthly budget. We see this in the non-participant survey, as even non-participants who have more money and often have a spouse/partner assisting with bills while in training, also report delays paying their bills.

Table 45: Financial management – While on PTA, have you ever had to...

Response	PTA (n=604)	Non-Part (n=454)
Delay paying your rent	25%	17%
Borrow money from friends or family or put money on an overdraft to get through the month	60%	44%
Delay a utility payment	42%	31%
Apply to Social Assistance for additional or emergency funding	17%	Not asked

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.

When asked which utilities they had to delay, 31% of PTA clients said they delayed their *electricity or power* bill, 30% delayed their *phone* bill, and 28% delayed their *heating/gas* bill (see Table 46). In all categories, fewer non-participants have had difficulty paying their bills (below PTA by 6% to 13%).

Table 46: While receiving the PTA, which utilities did you have to delay?

Response	PTA (n=604)	Non-part (n=454)
No delays	56%	69%
Electricity/power	31%	19%
Phone	30%	21%
Heating/gas	28%	15%
Water	19%	13%
Yes, but not sure which utility	2%	4%
DK/NR	2%	<1%

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%

Neither income, nor family status, nor type of program made a difference to the ability to pay rent.

- 4 Single persons without children are less likely to report paying delays on utilities than other family types. That said, many are likely to report delays when in rental situations, where utilities are included with rent. There is no significant difference among the other family types.
- 4 Those in skills training are less likely to have difficulty meeting their utility payments, as 64% report no problems paying bills, compared to 56% for the other two programs (Basic Education or Bridging).
- 4 PTA clients who have been on Social Assistance in the past report more problems with paying their utilities while in training. The gap is largest for the two main utilities—*Heating/Gas* and *Electricity/Power*—in which 13% more ex-Social Assistance clients report delays.

Table 47: While receiving the PTA, which utilities did you have to delay?

Response	PTA Social Assistance (n=512)	PTA Non-Social Assistance (n=89)
Heating/gas	30%	17%
Electricity/power	33%	20%
Phone	30%	26%
Water	21%	11%

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%

Those reporting that the *PTA does not cover my costs while in training* are also more likely to report delays in paying their utilities. Sixty-three percent of those who fall into this category report delays in paying utilities, compared to 30% of those who feel that the PTA meets their needs.

When we look at all aspects of financial management (rent, heating, power, phone, water, and overdrafts), 32% of PTA clients report no delays among these items or need for an overdraft (represented as “0” in Figure 3)⁹. One-quarter (26%) report delaying on only one of these five items or requiring an overdraft (See Figure 3 – represented as “1”).

Count of delays / overdraft needs (Rent, Heating, Power, Phone, Water, Overdraft)

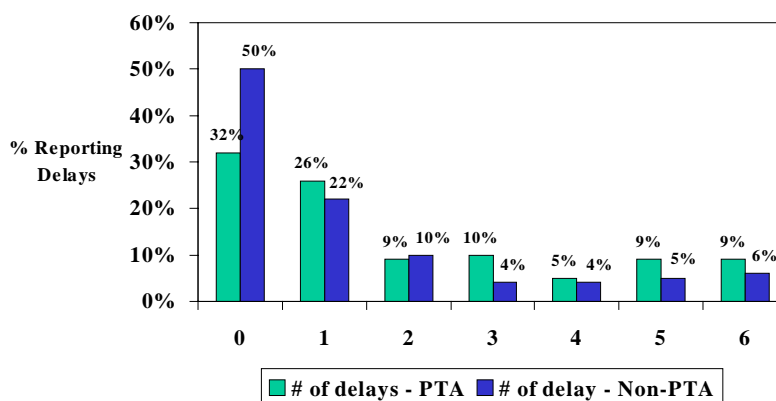


Figure 3

Most PTA clients who have delayed in paying three or more of their bills (n=130; including needing to borrow money) also report that the “*PTA does not cover their costs while in training.*”

⁹ Figure 3 should be interpreted as follows. The number “0” indicates no delays in any of the five items (rent, utilities, heating, phone, water) or the need for an overdraft, while “6” indicates that a person delayed on all of these items and used their overdraft.

4.6.3 Most clients prefer more money rather than more support (counseling) in order to improve their financial independence

Clients were asked what could be done to help manage their money while on the PTA (see Table 48).

- 4 Some 28% said that they *do not require additional supports*, while another 23% said that they would like to be *provided with more money*.
- 4 Approximately 10% suggested financial management courses as a way to help manage money more effectively.
- 4 Program managers often suggested a need for more budgeting courses, PTA clients do not express such a need.

Table 48: What, if anything, could be done to help you manage your money while on the PTA? (n=604)	
Response	%
Do not require additional supports	28%
Provide more money	23%
Provide financial management courses	10%
Base money on actual expenses	10%
Payments every 2 weeks/smaller amounts	7%
Have government pay utilities	2%
Provide emergency funding	2%
Allowed to keep more from job	1%
Keep family allowance/Child Tax Credit	1%
Cheque at end of month	1%
Other	2%
DK/NR	21%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

4.6.4 Field staff’s perceptions of independence

The majority of field staff (59%) agreed that *people are more independent under the PTA compared to other income support programs*. However, almost one-quarter did not offer an opinion.

Response	PSEST	Social Services	Training providers	Total
Yes	58%	64%	57%	59%
No	25%	18%	16%	17%
Don't know / No response	17%	18%	28%	24%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

4 Reasons given by field staff for increased independence of PTA clients included:

- Increased responsibility for budgeting / paying bills (55%).
- Increased focus on budgeting (16%), less stigma (6%), and rates that are higher or equivalent to Social Assistance (6%).

4 Reasons why clients were less independent under the PTA included:

- same or lower rates (13%).
- overlap with Social Assistance for top-ups / emergency funding (13%).
- difficulty making transition to Social Assistance.

Staff was also asked to rate a series of questions regarding the PTA’s effectiveness at increasing financial independence.

4 Thirty-six percent of field staff (PSEST, Social Services, and training providers) report that the *“PTA helps people focus on their studies, by helping them worry less about their finances.”* Of the 53% who disagreed with this statement, PSEST staff was the most likely to *strongly disagree* (29%).

4 Overall, most staff (64%) thought that the PTA *does not provide enough money for clients to cover their expenses.*

PSEST staff was the most varied in their opinion, as 37% believe the PTA does provide enough money, while 58% believe it does not. Social Services staff and training providers were less likely to think that the PTA provides enough money (18% each). Social Services staff felt most strongly that the PTA does not provide enough funds, with 77% agreeing it does not.

- 4 Thirty-eight percent agreed with the statement, “*Too many recipients apply to Social Assistance for emergency support or special needs.*” That said, some 43% responded that they don’t know, suggesting that staff is generally not well informed on this issue. Almost 93% of Social Services staff responded to the statement, “*Too many recipients apply to Social Assistance for emergency support or special needs*” with 75% agreeing. PSEST were split on this issue (38% agreed or disagreed), as were service providers (24% agreed, 17% disagreed). This reflects the different views of the PTA, as many from Social Services think that the PTA should be “stand alone” and should not create overlap between the systems. This perspective was also reflected by management interviewees.
- 4 Most staff (69%) thinks, “*The PTA should be more flexible in meeting clients’ financial needs.*” The majority of all types of staff (PSEST, Social Services, and training providers) who responded to this statement agreed.
- 4 Staff offered a mixed opinion regarding whether the PTA should be a flat rate or an income tested program. Thirty-five percent agreed with the statement, “*The PTA should continue providing a ‘flat rate’ to PTA clients rather than a ‘needs tested’ (Social Assistance) rate*”, while 40% disagreed. PSEST staff were the most likely to respond to this statement (96%), and were the most likely to *agree strongly* (33%). Overall, 63% of PSEST staff agreed that a flat rate is preferable to a needs-tested rate, while 39% of Social Services staff and 30% of training providers felt the same way.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	DK / NR
The PTA helps people focus on their studies, by helping them worry less about their finances	14%	39%	31%	5%	12%
The PTA does NOT provide enough money for clients to meet their monthly expenses	3%	18%	34%	30%	16%
Too many PTA recipients apply to Social Assistance for emergency support or special needs	3%	16%	25%	13%	43%
The PTA should be more flexible in meeting clients' financial needs	2%	11%	37%	32%	19%
The PTA should continue providing a "flat rate" to PTA clients, rather than a "needs tested" (Social Assistance) rate	12%	28%	24%	11%	25%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Horizontal percent may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

4.6.5 Field staff provide range of opinions regarding which clients are better off and worse off under the PTA

Field staff provided a mixed response when asked to assess what proportion of clients were better off under the PTA, and what proportion were worse off. This reflects the varying degrees of experience and “directness” of contact that field staff has with clients. Although these perceptions are important, more emphasis should be placed on client perceptions of financial independence, because they are likely better judges of their own well being.

- 4 Approximately 46% of field staff report that either most (11%) or some (35%) PTA clients are better off under the PTA than under Social Assistance.
- 4 A relatively high proportion (36%) was not sure.
- 4 A similar proportion of staff (43%), suggested that either most (6%) or some (37%) PTA clients are worse off under the PTA than under Social Assistance.

Table 51: Are there clients who are better off / worse off under PTA than they would be under Social Assistance?

	Better off (n=238)	Worse off (n=238)
Most	11%	6%
Some	35%	37%
Few	13%	12%
None	6%	11%
Don't know/No response	36%	34%
Total	101%	100%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 52: Which clients are better off?

Reasons	Better off (n=123)	Worse off (n=125)
PTA clients (general)	46%	37%
Single employables	23%	20%
Single parents	18%	13%
Families	11%	9%
Former Social Assistance	5%	11%
Aboriginal	4%	-
Working poor	2%	3%
Youth	2%	-
Disabled/ special needs	1%	16%
Other	1%	10%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

Those who are disabled or have special needs (16%) as well as former Social Assistance recipients (11%) were also considered worse off by some field staff.

The former group is said to be disadvantaged, as they are often dependent on both PTA and Social Assistance (for special needs). Some field staff would prefer that the PTA met special needs as well, rather than having clients receive two forms of income support.

Social Assistance recipients were considered worse off since some have trouble moving from a system of relatively little financial independence to one where clients are responsible for managing their own finances.

4.6.6 Reasons why clients are better / worse off

In summary, when asked why PTA clients were better off, field staff provided the following reasons:

- 4 **Financial reasons** – more money from PTA (43%), and the incentive to cut costs due to the flat rate (24%).
- 4 **Better childcare** (16%).
- 4 **Personal reasons** - clients are able to manage their own money (18%), improved self-confidence (5%), clients are more serious about training (9%).

Table 53: How are they better off?	
	(n=113)
More money from PTA	43%
Incentive to cut costs	24%
Can manage own money/be independent	18%
Better child care	16%
People are more serious about training	9%
Increased self-confidence	5%
Ineligible for Social Assistance	3%
Live with parents	2%
Other	5%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff.</i>	
Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.	

Reasons why field staff think clients are worse off include:

- 4 **Client supports** - more support / counseling (39%).
- 4 **Financial reasons** – rates too low (26%), cost of utilities (25%), not enough for rent (14%), and reasons related to special needs (17%).
- 4 **Administrative reasons** – overpayments (7%).

Table 54: How are they worse off?	
	(n=117)
More support is required	39%
PTA rate too low	26%
Cost of utilities	25%
Special needs	17%
Not enough for rent	14%
Have overpayments because of timing issue	7%
Work is required to supplement income	3%
Child care could be provided	3%
Other	5%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff.</i>	
Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.	

In many cases, reasons provided by field staff are anecdotal and based on clients with whom they are in contact either in the classroom, the counseling office, through Social Assistance, or in career and employment centres.

4.7 To what extent is the PTA less stigmatizing than Social Assistance? (2.9)

Fostering independence also involves reducing the stigma of receiving income support. Social Assistance, or “welfare” as it is commonly called, is commonly associated with failure and dependency. Creating an income support system for those in training that was distinct from Social Assistance, and run by a separate department (PSEST rather than Social Services) was intended to reduce stigmatization and foster independence.

PTA clients were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement, “*I don’t mind people knowing that I am on the PTA.*” As shown in Table 55, some 90% of PTA clients agree with the statement. The same question was asked of PTA clients who took training in the past and were supported by Social Assistance. By comparison, only 35% agreed with the statement, suggesting that most do not want people to know that they are on Social Assistance. This comparison clearly indicates that the PTA has fewer stigmas attached to it than Social Assistance.

	Program	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>I don't mind people knowing that I am on PTA / Social Assistance</i>	PTA (n=604)	62%	28%	5%	5%
	Social Assistance (n=159)	11%	24%	18%	46%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: DK/NR have been omitted from the table. Horizontal percentages will not sum to 100%.

4.8 How has the PTA contributed to clients achieving their desired outcomes including: facilitating linkages to employment and enabling clients to continue their education and training? (2.10)

Although outcomes for PTA clients are relatively short-term, the survey of participants does provide information on past employment and labour market attachment, as well as current training and employment. Comparison between PTA and Student Financial Assistance records also indicates how many PTA clients have moved on to further training supported through Student Loans (long-term skills training or university).

Given that many PTA clients attend BE classes that often do not have a direct linkage to employment, it is not surprising that many clients will return to Social Assistance or go on to take further training. As we show below, some indication exists that students are going on to further training or looking for work; however, long-term outcomes require further follow-up.

4.8.1 Approximately 40% of PTA clients report no previous work experience

Compared to non-participants, PTA clients have less exposure to the labour force either prior to PTA or during their training.

- 4 About 43% of PTA clients report no pre-training employment, compared to 23% of non-participants.
- 4 Among PTA clients who were employed prior to the PTA, the most common reason for stopping work before going on training was to go to school.

- 4 Among non-participants, being laid off was the most common reason for stopping work before training.

4.8.2 Those who leave work typically do so to take training

Eleven percent of PTA clients said that they had a job while on the PTA, compared to 40% of non-participants who said they were working while in their most recent training course.

Those who were not employed while in their most recent training, were asked if they had a job at any time prior to the PTA. Some 49% of respondents said that they *did not work prior to receiving the PTA*. Another 19% of respondents said that they had *worked 1-3 months prior* to receiving PTA.

Again, these statistics indicate that non-participants typically have more work experience than those on the PTA.

Table 56: Did you have a job at any time prior to receiving the PTA? If yes, how many months prior to receiving the PTA were you last employed? (Asked if respondents did not have a job when they were last in training)

Response	PTA (n=604)	Non-part (n=454)
Did not work prior to training	43%	23%
Worked while in training	11%	40%
1-3 months prior	17%	10%
4-6 months	7%	5%
6-12 months	6%	6%
12-24 months	6%	6%
More than 24 months	8%	7%
DK/NR	2%	2%
Total	100%	99%

Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

For those respondents that stopped working 1 to 6 months before going on the PTA, we asked why they stopped working. Almost one-third (32%) of respondents said that they stopped working *to go to school*, compared to 30% of non-participants.

- 4 Non-participants were more likely to report stopping work as a result of being *laid off* or their *business closing* (35%), compared to 19% of participants.

- 4 Participants were more likely than non-participants to cite *medical* reasons (16%) or *not getting enough hours/money* (10%) as reasons for applying for the PTA.

Table 57: Why did you stop working before going on the PTA / training?
 (Asked if the person worked 1 to 6 months prior to going on the PTA)

Response	PTA (n=146)	Non-part (n=71)
To go to school	32%	30%
Laid off/business closed	19%	35%
Medical	16%	10%
Not enough hours/money	10%	1%
Seasonal/part-time/casual	10%	11%
Moved	5%	3%
Personal problems	3%	6%
Other	1%	3%
DK/NR	4%	1%
Total	100%	100%

Survey of Participants and Non-participants.

4.8.3 PTA clients typically work in the “service sector”

Respondents were asked to describe their current employment situation, and recall their two most recent jobs prior to the PTA (which we have labeled as Job 1 and Job 2). Information such as type of job, wages earned, and hours worked was collected for each job.

Findings from the survey of participants were as follows:

- 4 Of those currently employed, 18% of PTA clients are in food services, compared to 12% of non-participants.
- 4 Other sectors where PTA clients are currently employed include office (16%), retail (13%), and housekeeping (10%).
- 4 A slightly higher proportion of non-participants (16%) work in the home care / childcare sector.
- 4 The most common types of jobs prior to PTA are in food services and retail (each at 20%).

Table 58: What type of work did you do? – PTA

Occupations	Work experience					
	Current employment (former participants)		Most recent job prior to training (Job 1)		Next most recent job prior to training (Job 2)	
	PTA (n=160)	Non-part (n=232)	PTA (n=335)	Non-part (n=320)	PTA (n=220)	Non-part (n=206)
Food services	18%	12%	20%	20%	29%	20%
Office	16%	13%	8%	9%	8%	11%
Retail	13%	9%	20%	8%	13%	17%
Housekeeping	10%	7%	12%	8%	10%	7%
Truck/bus/taxi driver	9%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%
Health/child care	8%	16%	7%	7%	5%	8%
General labour	7%	9%	14%	14%	16%	15%
Construction	6%	3%	8%	5%	6%	6%
Skilled trade	5%	7%	5%	10%	10%	5%
Farmer/resource based	-	3%	2%	3%	3%	1%
Security	-	2%	2%	2%	1%	-
Teacher assistant	1%	7%	-	3%	1%	-
Supervisor/manager	-	6%	-	1%	-	5%
Other	1%	-	2%	<1%	1%	2%
DK/NR	8%	6%	<1%	2%	2%	2%

Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

4.8.4 PTA clients earn lower wages than non-participants

PTA clients typically have lower wages than non-participants for each of the three job experiences recorded.

- 4 The mean hourly wage for current employment is \$8.42 (Current), which is up almost a dollar per hour from the most recent job prior to the PTA at \$7.51/hour (Job 1 Pre PTA).
- 4 Non-participants earned more per hour than PTA clients when comparing current employment.
- 4 Those taking Quick Skills courses earn the most money on average (\$9.40 per hour in current employment), followed by Bridging students (\$9.05) and finally Basic Education (\$7.80).
- 4 PTA clients who have never been on Social Assistance also tend to earn more (\$9.40 in current employment) than those who have been on Social Assistance (\$8.10).

Table 59: What was the wage (per hour)?							
	Work experience						
	Current employment (former participants)		Most recent job prior to training (Job 1)		Next most recent job prior to training (Job 2)		
	PTA (n=127)	Non-part (n=183)	PTA (n=295)	Non-part (n=267)	PTA (n=184)	Non-part (n=158)	
Mean	\$8.42	\$10.11	\$7.51	\$9.21	\$7.80	\$8.61	
Range	Low	\$4.50	\$4.64	\$2.50	\$3.50	\$2.50	\$2.50
	High	\$20.00	\$25.64	\$21.50	\$27.00	\$22.78	\$25.00

Survey of Participants and Non-participants.

4.8.5 PTA clients work approximately the same number of hours per week as non-participants

Participants and non-participants work approximately the same number of hours per week. The mean hours per week for current employment is 34 hours, which is down between one and three hours per week (respectively) from the most recent job prior to the PTA and the next most recent job (See Table 60).¹⁰

- 4 Quick Skills participants typically work more hours per week, with current employment at 43 hours. Basic Education and Bridging students work approximately 31 hours per week when looking at current employment.
- 4 There is relatively little difference in hours worked among Social Assistance and non-Social Assistance PTA clients, with the latter working about two hours more per week on average.

Table 60: How many hours per week did you work?							
	Work experience						
	Current employment		Most recent job prior to training (Job 1)		Next most recent job (Job 2)		
	PTA (n=140)	Non-part (n=206)	PTA (n=301)	Non-part (n=300)	PTA (n=200)	Non-part (n=180)	
Mean	34	33	35	36	38	37	
Range	Low	3	2	3	3	4	1
	High	85	70	90	90	95	80

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.

¹⁰ Not all PTA clients were in training at the time of the survey.

4.8.6 Participants rely more heavily on Social Assistance, while non-participants rely on wages

As shown in Table 61, prior to their first PTA-supported training, clients were most likely to rely on Social Assistance (48%) or employment (31%) to cover their expenses. In the current period, approximately 42% rely on Social Assistance (22%) or employment (20%) as the means for supporting themselves when not in training.

By comparison, a higher proportion of non-participants rely on employment, either full-time (30%) or part-time (10%), to meet their expenses.

- 4 The combined proportion of those on income support (Social Assistance or PTA) goes up in the current period, suggesting that there are some who move from employment to the PTA to take training.

Non-participants are much more likely to be supported by their spouses while in training (20%) as compared to PTA clients (3%). Most students whose spouse earns enough to support them would not be eligible for PTA support.

Response	Participants (n=604)				Non-participants (n=454)			
	Year prior		Current		Year prior		Current	
	All sources	Main source	All sources	Main source	All sources	Main source	All sources	Main source
PTA	-	-	41%	38%	-	-	-	-
Social Assistance	57%	48%	26%	22%	24%	21%	19%	15%
Full-time employment	20%	18%	12%	12%	34%	30%	31%	28%
Part-time employment	14%	10%	11%	8%	13%	10%	16%	10%
Child tax credit/Family allowance	12%	6%	18%	5%	6%	2%	9%	3%
Seasonal employment	4%	3%	1%	1%	6%	5%	1%	1%
Husband/boyfriend/spouse	4%	3%	4%	3%	19%	17%	22%	19%
Employment Insurance	4%	3%	2%	2%	5%	3%	6%	5%
Parents/family/friends	3%	2%	1%	<1%	3%	3%	2%	2%
Student loans	1%	1%	4%	3%	<1%	<1%	3%	3%
Band funding	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Worker's Compensation	1%	1%	-	-	2%	2%	3%	2%
Other	4%	3%	3%	1%	4%	3%	9%	5%
DK/NR	3%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	4%

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

4.8.7 Progression through PTA training

Approximately 70% of PTA clients have enrolled in only one course, while one-quarter has taken more than one. SSDP clients appear more likely to take multiple training courses, but this reflects those who participated over several years. In two or three years, more PTA clients will report multiple stints on the PTA and therefore, multiple courses.

Response	PTA	SSDP
1 course	69%	75%
2	24%	20%
3	7%	4%
4 or more	1%	1%
Total	101%	101%
Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.		

PTA clients who have more than one involvement are most likely to take a BE course after their first training. Only a few BE students go on to Bridging (n=107) or Quick Skills (n=105) courses.

First training	Subsequent training			
	No other training	BE	Quick Skills	Bridging
BE	3,784	2,100	105	107
Quick Skills	836	92	41	16
Bridging	1,258	149	11	50
Source: PTA Database.				

4.8.8 Most PTA clients plan to continue training in the future

Most PTA clients plan to enroll in or continue with basic education (37%), university (15%), or skills training courses (14%) in the next 12 months (Table 64). Another 30% said they would look for work, while one-fifth (21%) said they would continue to work. (Note: respondents could offer more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%).

Non-participants are more likely to continue working (36%) or to take skills training, which reflects the higher employability and work experience among this group.

Table 64: What are your plans for the next 12 months?

Response	PTA (n=604)	Non-part (n=454)
Enroll in or continue with Basic Education	37%	18%
Looking for work	30%	22%
Continue to work	21%	36%
Enroll in or continue with University	15%	13%
Enroll in or continue with skills training	14%	20%
Stay at home	2%	8%
Finish current course	2%	2%
Take course	2%	2%
Start business	1%	<1%
Other	1%	3%
DK/NR	3%	6%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

4.8.9 More students have student loans prior to training rather than upon completion

Approximately 1 out of 7 PTA clients (13%) had taken out a student loan prior to their first PTA intervention. This does not mean that they completed their course while on the student loan, simply that they had received a loan for education/training.

Of those with student loans prior to training, a slightly higher proportion are not currently in training (14%), compared to those in training at the time of the database extract (8%). This difference might indicate that many with previous training experience have already passed through the PTA, and that the current PTA population has relatively less training experience.

Approximately 10% of PTA clients received student loans following their most recent intervention. This percentage excludes those currently in training as of December 1999. Although one would expect a similar proportion to apply for student loans for the Fall 2000 semester, more follow-up is needed to determine whether this is the case.

The PTA is a relatively new income support program, with most students enrolled in Basic Education. Over time, more students are likely to continue with skills training or post-secondary education. Thus, results are quite preliminary, and likely an incomplete indicator of post-program transition to further training.

4.9 To what extent does the provision of the PTA as a flat rate assist clients in making the transition to a paid wage? (2.11)

Providing the PTA as a flat rate was also intended to help clients make the transition to a paid wage. Unlike Social Assistance, the “flat rate” makes clients responsible for managing their expenses from a fixed monthly income, much like a wage would. In the same way that differences in rental rates, utilities, and other expenses are not reflected in a person’s paycheck, PTA clients are also responsible for managing these expenses out of their own cheque through budgeting. The only allowances adjusted for family circumstance or “need” are childcare allowances (based on the number of children).

Based on information in Section 4.6.1, clients report being more financially independent on the PTA than on Social Assistance. This suggests that clients are able to meet their expenses on the PTA. That said, a higher proportion of PTA clients said that they were better able to cover utility expenses on Social Assistance (47%) than the PTA (37%). This suggests that some “itemize” their expenses while on the PTA, and want the PTA to adequately cover the various components (rent, utilities, food, transportation, etc.).

Given that many have not yet made the transition to employment, there is not enough evidence to indicate whether the flat rate itself has helped in this transition. Again, this issue should be revisited in a follow-up study.

4.10 To what extent are financial and program counselors available? (2.12, 2.14)

Those who leave Social Assistance and go onto the PTA enter an environment where more self-reliance is expected. In this process, they leave a situation where counselors are available to help resolve life’s problems. On the PTA, clients are expected to deal more directly with these issues. Under Social Assistance, rent and utilities are paid directly to landlords and utility companies, whereas PTA clients will handle these payments themselves.

An important issue is whether PTA clients have more or less access to counseling and the supports needed to make the transition to self-reliance.

To respond to these issues, we reviewed client, management, and field staff perceptions of the adequacy of counseling. Key findings are as follows.

- 4 PTA recipients report that counseling support is adequate; however, sometimes counselors are over-worked and have too many clients.
- 4 Management reported a need for better financial counseling and budgeting, as well as a need for better career planning and pre-assessment screening.
- 4 Management also suggested separating personal counseling from the academic / financial role of counselors.

Bearing these suggestions in mind, any changes or attempts to standardize counseling or career planning needs to be done with cooperation among training providers, PSEST and Social Services. Within the training system, various providers (SIAST, regional colleges, etc.) offer some support for their students. No extra support is available for PTA clients, although one or two schools do offer an introductory course in money management for PTA clients. In general, there is no PTA counseling, but rather academic counseling for students in general, some of whom are on the PTA.

4.10.1 Participants report that access to counseling is better under the PTA

The shift from Social Assistance to the PTA would seem to place students in an environment where counseling is less readily available, as clients no longer have a social worker to help them with specific problems.

Unlike social workers, Basic Education counselors assist all students (PTA and non-PTA), and typically are most experienced in providing academic counseling and planning. Personal and financial planning will vary by institution. While larger institutions (such as SIAST) may have a counselor trained and designated to handle these issues, other smaller institutions or CBOs will rely on fewer counselors or teachers

to provide support when needed. On average, counselors across the system will likely have less training and experience in dealing with the types of problems that PTA clients (most of whom have been on Social Assistance) present.

That said, clients might be expected to report receiving diminished access and quality of counseling while on the PTA. However, based on the survey of participants, PTA clients report that access to counseling is better under the PTA than on Social Assistance (see Figure 4).

Access to counseling

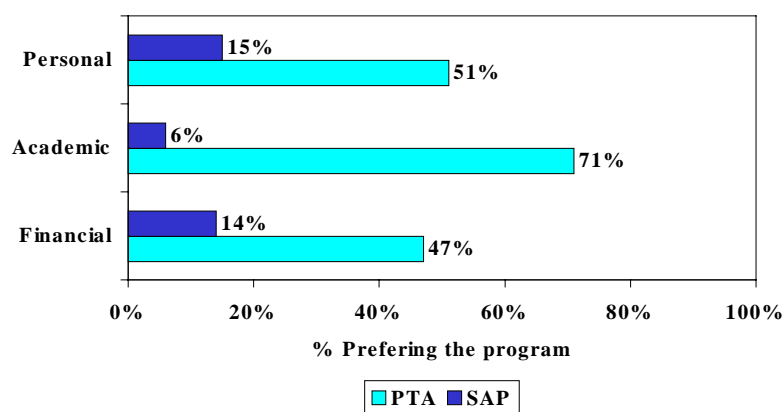


Figure 4

One caveat is important: note that on average, 33% of respondents are neutral or offer no opinion about whether they have better access to counseling while on the PTA. Similarly, 39% expressed neutrality or offered no opinion about financial counseling. While this slightly reduces the difference between the ratings given to Social Assistance, access to counseling under the PTA is preferred.

4.10.2 Few PTA clients receive financial or personal counseling

PTA clients were asked on the survey whether they had ever received financial or personal counseling while on the PTA. In both cases, almost all respondents said that they had not received counseling. Among participants, 14% received personal counseling, while 12% received financial counseling. Among non-participants, 13% received personal counseling and 6% received financial counseling.

Of those respondents who had received financial counseling (n=70), 37% had received it from a *basic education or course instructor*. Another 19% cited a *SIAST or regional college guidance counselor*. As mentioned above, this reflects the delivery model of the PTA, in which counseling is delivered by a training provider, and is not PTA counseling.

Table 65: Whom did you receive financial counseling from?

Response	PTA (n=70)	Non-part (n=28)
Basic Education instructor	31%	18%
SIAST or regional college guidance counselor	19%	14%
New Careers counselor	11%	7%
PTA representative	10%	-
Career counselor (unspecified)	9%	4%
Social Assistance counselor/social worker	9%	14%
Teacher/instructor	6%	18%
Community-based organization	3%	4%
CAN-SASK Employment Center	1%	7%
Other	3%	11%

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%

Of those respondents who had received personal or family counseling (n=97), they were most likely to be counseled by a *SIAST or regional college guidance counselor* (32%) or a *mental health professional, psychiatrist or therapist* (16%) See Table 66. A further 14% of PTA clients received counseling from a Basic Education instructor, compared to 8% of non-participants.

Response	PTA (n=97)	Non-part (n=61)
With a SIAST or regional college guidance counselor	32%	16%
Mental health/psychiatrist/ therapist	16%	13%
With a Basic Education instructor	14%	8%
Community-based organization	10%	12%
With a Social Assistance counselor/social worker	10%	21%
Counselor (unspecified)	6%	15%
Friend/family	6%	8%
With a New Careers counselor	4%	5%
CAN-SASK Career Employment Services	1%	-
Other	1%	6%
DK/NR	4%	-

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

4.10.3 Field Staff report that access to academic and financial counseling is better for students receiving the PTA, but personal counseling is worse

As seen in the following sections, access to counseling is one of the main criteria used by staff to compare overall quality of counseling available to PTA clients, and counseling available to Social Assistance clients. Table 67 shows the mean ratings staff gave to *access to counseling* while on the PTA, compared to access to Social Assistance counseling.

Access to academic and career counseling is rated highly by all groups. This is considered the strength of the training provider, as they have experience with providing academic guidance and helping students with career plans.

The Social Services staff rated access to PTA financial and personal counseling low. This reflects the perception of many Social Services field staff: that a transition of income support for those in training from Social Services (Social Assistance) to PSEST (PTA). The majority of Social Services field staff believe that students were better served when they had access to a social worker, rather than seeking out help from counselors at their training institution.

This perception was also reflected by some managers we interviewed, who suggested that more attention is needed in the PTA to long-term Social Assistance clients who are dealing

with various personal barriers (e.g., family problems, alcoholism or substance abuse).

Table 67: Access to counseling (Field Staff) <i>Better than Social Assistance (SA) = 3, Same as SA = 2, Worse than SA = 1</i>				
Type of counseling	Staff from ...			
	PSEST (n=24)	Social Services (n=56)	Training providers (n=152)	Group (n=232)
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Academic / career counseling	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.4
Financial counseling	2.1	1.3	2.2	2.0
Personal counseling	1.9	1.6	2.3	2.1

Source: Survey of Field Staff

More access was most often mentioned by staff as the reason that counseling was better than Social Assistance counseling. A similar proportion claimed that counselling was worse under the PTA due to less access. This reinforces the idea that access is likely a regional issue, to be dealt with on an institutional level. Respondents also considered the quality and experience of the counselors when comparing the counseling between the two income support programs.

Table 68: Why is financial / personal counseling BETTER/WORSE/SAME?		
	Financial counseling (n=100)	Personal counseling (n=92)
BETTER		
More counseling available	32%	32%
Available at training location	9%	14%
Counselor experienced	6%	3%
Counselors aware of alternatives	4%	1%
Clients must manage own finances	3%	1%
Other	2%	1%
WORSE		
No access / less access	32%	25%
Better counselors required	8%	8%
Other	2%	1%
SAME		
Same sources, counselors	8%	16%
Other	1%	5%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

4.10.4 Staff perception of difference in counseling by location, region and training provider

Staff also reported that counseling differed most by location (32%). The type of program and training institution were also said to have some effect (23-28%).

This finding agrees with what was heard in management interviews. Some suggested that community-based organizations and smaller colleges have more difficulty providing adequate counseling for clients. Given that many of these smaller institutions are rural or northern, it is not surprising that geographical location and size are seen as sources of differences in counseling.

4.10.5 Field staff suggestions for improvement

Many field staff want to see access to counseling improved. They suggest *more qualified counselors* (19%), *mandatory counseling* (18%), and *more pre-admission counseling* (8%).

Table 69: How could access to counseling be improved? (n=131)	
	%
Improve access	58%
More qualified counselors	19%
Make mandatory	17%
Better developed	11%
More pre-admission counseling	8%
Provide counseling on site	8%
No need for improvement	3%
Post-program mentoring	2%
More Aboriginal counselors	2%
PTA take more responsibility	2%
Better administration	2%
Encourage use of services by client	2%
Emphasize employment linkages	2%
Financial: for budgeting	2%
Other	5%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff</i>	
Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.	

4.10.6 Reconciling client and field staff / management perceptions of counseling

Clients and field staff / management have different perceptions regarding the need for expanded counseling. While most

clients claim better access to counseling under the PTA, field staff (particularly those from Social Services) would like to see improved personal and financial counseling. In focus groups, when asked about the need for mandatory financial planning, some PTA clients said it would be useful but few considered it a necessity.

Not all PTA clients have personal problems that require a counselor. Further, promoting independence suggests that clients need to address these problems through their own means (which could require seeking counseling support). That said, field staff and management are most concerned about availability of counseling to all students, ensuring that clients know how to access it, and that they are encouraged to do so. Given that resources vary across the province and by institution, and are the primary responsibility of training providers, it may be difficult to institute a province-wide policy for PTA clients.

Several program managers have suggested greater regional planning as a possible solution.

4.11 Do clients complete action plans and do these plans help clients complete their courses? (2.13, 2.15)

Program managers view career planning as a key tool for helping clients think about their future, and choosing the training that is most appropriate for enabling them to reach these goals. Career planning can also help to ensure that clients access the right training, at a time when they are capable of handling it.

Career planning, however, is not a specific element of the PTA, but rather a process of providing assistance to PTA clients from training providers, support agencies (e.g., Canada Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services), and social workers. This is not new with the PTA; career planning has historically been provided by a variety of sources, and no central database collects this information on all PTA clients, (although this may change in the future with the development of the One Client Service Model (OCSM) database).

Despite this situation, career planning is still seen as an important tool, which program managers would like to be used

more effectively. However, with a variety of providers completing career plans, and the likely inconsistency between them, this evaluation can provide only a general assessment of their effectiveness.

The survey of participants indicates that most PTA clients have completed career plans (62%), and find them helpful (Table 69). Field staff also believe that career planning / academic counseling is improved under the PTA, as this role is handled by training providers who have expertise in this area. Program managers would like to continue refining the career planning process and perhaps implement a more standardized approach, in conjunction with training providers, that will include better information tracking and follow-up.

4.11.1 Client assessment of career planning

We asked PTA clients whether they had ever *developed a plan outlining courses that would be needed to help them find employment*. Some two-thirds (62%) indicated that they had made such a plan, compared to 49% of non-participants.

Table 70: Did you ever develop a plan with a teacher, counselor, social worker or by yourself outlining the courses or skills that you would need to help you find employment?		
Response	PTA (n=604)	Non-part (n=454)
Yes	62%	49%
No	38%	50%
DK/NR	<1%	1%
Total	100%	100%
<i>Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.</i>		
<i>Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.</i>		

From Table 71, almost half (48%) of participants replied either a SIAST or regional college guidance counselor or a Basic education instructor had developed their plan.

Table 71: Whom did you develop the plan with?

Response	PTA (n=372)	Non-part (n=222)
With a SIAST or regional college guidance counselor	24%	21%
With a Basic Education instructor	24%	19%
By yourself	14%	17%
With a New Careers counselor	11%	12%
Teacher/instructor	7%	5%
With a Social Assistance counselor/social worker	6%	7%
Career counselor/counselor (non-specified)	6%	4%
CSCES	2%	5%
Other	0%	10%
DK/NR	1%	1%
Total	101%	101%

Source: Survey of Participants and Non-participants.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Of those developing plans, 90% of PTA clients found it helpful in preparing for the future (See Table 72). A somewhat smaller proportion of non-participants (81%) also found such plans helpful.

Table 72: How helpful was it in making plans for your future?

Response	PTA (n=372)	Non-part (n=222)
Very helpful	61%	46%
Somewhat helpful	29%	35%
Not very helpful	6%	10%
Not at all helpful	3%	7%
DK/NR	1%	3%
Total	100%	101%

Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

4.11.2 Field staff and management assessment of career planning

As shown in Section 4.10.3, field staff report that academic counseling is better under the PTA than Social Assistance. This view is shared irrespective of the type of staff (Social Services, PSEST, and training providers).

Staff associated improved academic and career counseling with more available counselors (30%), and greater availability of counseling across training institutions (22%). Respondents also

mentioned the quality and experience of the counselors as reasons for their rating (See Table 73).

Table 73: Why is academic counseling BETTER/WORSE/SAME?	
	(n=107)
BETTER	
More counseling available	30%
Available at training location	26%
Counselor experienced	14%
Other	2%
WORSE	
No access / less access	10%
Better counselors required	3%
Other	3%
SAME	
Same sources, counselors	14%
Other	3%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff</i>	
<i>Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.</i>	

4.11.3 Impact of career planning on program completions

Having a case plan does not appear to have an effect on the likelihood of program completion. Among those with case plans, 22% have discontinued at some time, compared to 23% of those without a case plan.

4.12 Summary

Clients on the PTA report being able to manage their financial affairs. In this fundamental sense, the PTA has supported many clients in their move to greater independence.

The fact that 60% return to Social Assistance reflects nothing negative about the PTA, but rather represents the problems that many clients face in making up lost time and ground. For many on social assistance, their educational deficits are profound and extended training will be needed to give them marketable job skills.

5.0 Fairness and equity

The PTA's third goal is to increase fairness and equity of the PTA across the province and between client groups. The PTA has standardized levels of income support and eligibility criteria. In the past, previous support programs provided variable and inconsistent income support. In some cases, assistance was based on need, and in other cases it was not.

By consolidating previous income support programs (SSDP, NTP, and NSIM) the PTA has eliminated this inconsistency, as program rules do not allow for discretionary funding. Those requiring additional funding must apply through Social Assistance for an assessment and possible "top-up" to their income support.

For the purpose of this evaluation, fairness is determine by comparing Social Assistance rates for those in training under the Saskatchewan Skills Development Program in 1995 with PTA rates in 1998. This comparison showed that on an actual benefits-paid basis, PTA clients have slightly higher income support than they would have received on Social Assistance.

This evaluation also shows that approximately 17% of survey participants have applied to Social Assistance for a top-up or for emergency funding, of which 9% received the extra funding. The most common reasons for applying for top-ups include paying utility bills, meeting basic needs, and paying rent.

5.1 Has there been program consolidation of income support programs and are clients within the training program receiving consistent levels of income support? (3.1)

As indicated in Section 3.12, most PTA clients report that they are meeting costs while in training, although some have difficulty. During focus groups, we heard several respondents explain that transportation presents a problem in the north or for those living in rural communities. Others explained that they had trouble meeting utility bills, or covering additional costs that were previously covered by Social Assistance (buying school supplies for children).

It is unlikely that all people will have their needs met under the PTA without creating a series of special needs and requiring that the program be tailored to fit individual clients. However, this moves the program away from an income-tested program towards a needs-tested program.

This section examines direct evidence on the income support adequacy of the PTA. It includes an analysis of the PTA and Social Assistance databases to compare the income support for various client types.

Based on this comparison, the PTA offers equivalent, if not higher income support compared to Social Assistance. Singles without children may receive slightly less, but we can find no evidence of systematic discrepancy against PTA clients with no children or whether the household has two adult heads or a single parent.

A case may exist for slightly adjusting the support to single PTA clients, as support levels are almost the same between Social Assistance and the PTA. However, it seems clear that the rate-setting exercise for the PTA accomplished its goal of creating an income support system that is roughly equivalent to Social Assistance.

The slight income edge enjoyed by PTA clients is warranted to compensate for the more limited access to special needs supplements, and the fact that the PTA is a less financially secure environment, in the sense that the student must meet any shortfall. Under Social Assistance, a shortfall that is triggered by a utility bill is handled directly by the program, and the client is not involved.

5.1.1 PTA rates are slightly higher than the Saskatchewan Skills Development Program (SSDP)

Clients/students who enrolled in courses through the SSDP program continued to receive Social Assistance while in training. In consultation with departmental representatives on the Evaluation Working Group, we determined that it was reasonable to compare PTA clients in 1998 with Social Assistance (SSDP) clients in 1995. This comparison provides a good basis for determining whether PTA clients were better off than they would have been on Social Assistance.

Further, we extracted client payment records for March and June to capture a winter month and a summer month. These months also represent periods that avoided any rate change for these programs. We have not adjusted for inflation, as Social Assistance basic rates did not change between 1995 and 1998, and can be considered equal for the purposes of this exercise.

The objective of this exercise is to examine exactly what PTA and Social Assistance clients received from their programs. We wished to determine whether systematic differences existed in the income support for clients in the two programs. The differences by client type (single versus couple versus those with children) and by region are also important.

5.1.2 Cost comparison—PTA and SSDP

On average, PTA clients received higher benefits (\$1,083) than those on SSDP (\$1,002). Differences were as follows:

- 4 basic rates (rent, allowance, utilities) (+\$6 for PTA).
- 4 daycare (+\$68).
- 4 northern allowance (+ \$15).
- 4 transportation (- \$7).

Special needs provided by Social Assistance came to \$26.84. Since PTA was never intended to cover special needs, comparison between PTA and Social Assistance will be based on coverage of Basic Needs.¹¹

¹¹ Note that Social Assistance rates did not change between 1995 and 1999. Therefore, the PTA income support rates in 1999 can be compared with the Social Assistance rates of 1993.

Basic needs	PTA (n=3,858)	SSDP (n=1,782)
Basic rate (food, clothing, personal, household)	\$424	\$454
Rent	\$367	\$322
Utilities	\$95	\$104
Daycare	\$148	\$81
Northern Allowance	\$19	\$4
Transportation	\$30	\$37
Sub-total 1	\$1,083	\$1,002
Special needs		
Ongoing	-	\$8
Shelter	-	\$9
Meals	-	\$1
Clothing	-	\$6
Health	-	\$0
Education allowance	-	\$1
Other	-	\$2
Sub-total 2	-	\$28
Total	\$1,083	\$1,029

Source: Data Extract From PTA And Social Assistance Files.

Basic needs	Single no children		Single parent		Couple – no children		Couple – children	
	SSDP (n=506)	PTA (n=1118)	SSDP (n=856)	PTA (n=1856)	SSDP (n=62)	PTA (n=170)	SSDP (n=357)	PTA (n=714)
Basic rate (food, clothing, personal, household)	\$153	\$157	\$509	\$485	\$371	\$390	\$763	\$689
Rent	\$237	\$223	\$353	\$427	\$330	\$366	\$366	\$438
Utilities	\$39	\$36	\$119	\$119	\$102	\$100	\$158	\$124
Daycare	\$0	\$0	\$144	\$245	\$5	\$0	\$56	\$163
Northern Allowance	\$2	\$5	\$5	\$26	\$0	\$9	\$8	\$26
Transportation	\$29	\$30	\$35	\$30	\$44	\$30	\$54	\$30
Sub-total 1	\$460	\$451	\$1,165	\$1,332	\$852	\$895	\$1,405	\$1,469
Special needs								
Ongoing	\$8	-	\$5	-	\$12	-	\$16	-
Shelter	\$6	-	\$9	-	\$26	-	\$10	-
Meals	\$0	-	\$1	-	\$0	-	\$2	-
Clothing	\$6	-	\$5	-	\$11	-	\$7	-
Health	\$1	-	\$0	-	\$0	-	\$0	-
Education allowance	\$1	-	\$1	-	\$0	-	\$1	-
Other	\$0	-	\$2	-	\$0	-	\$3	-
Sub-total 2	\$22	-	\$23	-	\$49	-	\$40	-
Total	\$482	\$451	\$1,188	\$1,332	\$901	\$895	\$1,445	\$1,469

Source: Data Extract From PTA And Social Assistance Files.

Table 75 above reveals that single parents (+\$169), couples without children (\$45), and couples with children (\$63) are all

better off under the PTA. (See Sub-total 1). The difference is driven by childcare. It appears that the PTA offers more support for childcare, and widens the gap between PTA and Social Assistance for families with children. However, even without the childcare differential, PTA rates are still higher for single parents, though not for couples with children.

This analysis shows that when viewed collectively, singles are worse off under the PTA (-\$9). However, when singles on SSDP are separated into subgroups based on their ability and dependency on special needs, singles are better off under the PTA (see Figure 5). Special needs could include funding for things such as visiting children, special diets, or moving expenses.¹²

Comparison of rates for singles (no children) on PTA and SSDP

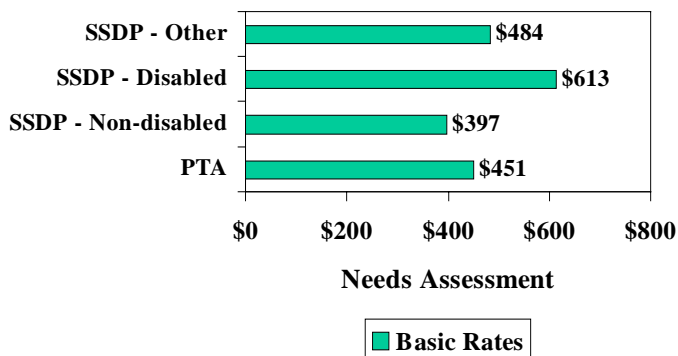


Figure 5

Table 76 shows a regional comparison. Once again, those on the PTA fare better than those on Social Assistance.

12 SSDP rates for those categorized as “other” or “disabled” have additional “special needs” calculated as part of the base rate. PTA rates are the same for all singles, implying that all are potentially employable.

Region	PTA rate (\$)			SSDP rate (\$)			+/-
	Basic rate	Daycare	Total	Basic rate	Daycare	Total	
Regina	\$925	\$183	\$1,108	\$920	\$88	\$1,008	+\$100
Saskatoon	\$893	\$174	\$1,067	\$933	\$81	\$1,014	+\$53
Moose Jaw	\$885	\$120	\$1,005	\$842	\$55	\$897	+\$108
Prince Albert	\$893	\$129	\$1,022	\$910	\$94	\$1,004	+\$18
South East – rural	\$904	\$110	\$1,014	\$920	\$70	\$990	+\$24
South West – rural	\$947	\$123	\$1,070	\$955	\$104	\$1,059	+\$11
North – rural	\$1,046	\$157	\$1,203	\$990	\$37	\$1,027	+\$176

Source: Data Extract From PTA And Social Assistance Files.

The PTA is higher than SSDP in four major urban centres: Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw and Prince Albert.¹³ The largest differences are found in Moose Jaw (\$108) and Regina (\$100). As noted above, childcare has a large influence on the difference between Social Assistance and PTA rates in some areas, particularly Saskatoon. Further, the PTA sample in Moose Jaw has a higher proportion of single parents (+16%) and fewer singles (-6%), which likely drives some of the cost difference.

Conversely, the PTA sample in Prince Albert has a lower proportion of single parents (-7%) and more singles (+6%), leading to a smaller cost differential. Again, childcare drives much of the cost difference, although other basic needs will also affect the spread.

PTA rates in rural areas are greater than SSDP, with the largest difference found in the North. Much of this difference is driven by higher daycare (+\$120) as well as a higher average Northern Allowance (+\$30).¹⁴

In all rural areas, transportation rates were approximately \$20 lower under the PTA.¹⁵

¹³ Regional classification is based on the last available mailing address, and may not reflect the place of residence at the time of the intervention. It also does not reflect differences for those who travel long distance to attend training and those who do not.

¹⁴ Rural areas are based on the definitions used by Canada Post, and distinguished by Forward Sortation Areas (FSAs). Rural regions exclude the four cities identified above (Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw).

¹⁵ PTA samples in the South East and South West have slightly higher singles and couples with no kids, and fewer single parents. The PTA sample in the North has more singles (no kids)

5.1.3 Under the SSDP Special Needs varied by region and client type

Social Assistance still provides special needs payments for those who apply and qualify for “top-ups” to their PTA allowance. Although the cost-comparison does not clearly reveal whether those with special needs are having those needs met, it appears that those with disabilities find it slightly harder to meet their costs under the PTA.¹⁶

Table 77 below shows special needs rates under the SSDP. Note that rates differ by region and family type.

During our interviews, management reported that fewer clients have gone back to Social Assistance to apply for top-ups or special needs payments than expected. This might suggest that clients who previously relied on special needs payments received enough on PTA to cover those needs, or preferred not to rely on Social Assistance and sought alternative sources of support. Some managers have also suggested that it might reflect the discretionary nature of special needs payments, as indicated by the variation across regions.

Region	Special needs - Social Assistance (\$)
Regina	\$23
Saskatoon	\$38
Moose Jaw	\$40
Prince Albert	\$8
South East – rural	\$25
South West – rural	\$22
North – rural	\$26
Family type	
Single	\$22
<i>Employable</i>	\$11
<i>Disability</i>	\$38
<i>Other</i>	\$29
Single parent	\$23
Couple (no children)	\$50
Couple (children)	\$39

Source: Data Extract From PTA And Social Assistance Files.

(+4%) and single parents (+7%), and fewer couples with kids (-9%). The number of children is also highest in the North (1.73), which leads to a higher PTA amount overall.

¹⁶

Forty-seven percent (47%) of those indicating that they had a disability report that the “PTA met my costs while in school,” compared to 61% of those without a disability.

5.2 Who is accessing Social Assistance top-ups and how are they different than those not accessing Social Assistance top-up?

When an individual is unable to manage their PTA budget, they can apply to Social Assistance for a top-up. Social Assistance assesses claims, and can award top-ups in cases where an individual has special needs due to health (i.e., a special diet, transportation, special housing needs, medical expenses that are not covered) or circumstances (e.g., exceptionally high utility costs).

The PTA could be said to provide inadequate coverage if a large number of clients access top-ups. However, based on the survey of participants, only 17% have applied for top-ups, of which 9% received one. Administrative records were not available to assess the entire PTA population, though managers suggested that the number accessing top-ups was lower than expected. PTA clients may find other ways of addressing needs previously covered by Social Assistance, or the PTA may provide an adequate amount to cover these costs.

Based on the survey of participants, approximately 17% of PTA clients have applied to Social Assistance for top-ups or emergency funding.

- 4 Of those applying for support, 68% said that they had applied once, 15% twice, and 14% three or more times. 50% received a top-up the last time that they applied.

Those applying for top-ups are more likely to be disabled (25% apply for top-ups, versus 16% of non-disabled), female (20%, versus 12% of males), and have only one person in the household contributing income to the family. Family status does not appear to be significant.

When asked why respondents had applied for extra funding from Social Assistance the last time:

- 4 Just over one-third (35%) of respondents said that they needed the funds to pay utility bills, meet their basic needs (30%), pay their rent (14%), or pay for transportation costs (7%).
- 4 Other reasons included paying for school supplies (11%), emergency medical needs (9%), and other personal financial difficulties (5%).

Table 78: Why did you apply for the extra funding the last time? (n=104)	
Response	%
Pay utilities	35%
Basic needs	30%
Pay rent	14%
School supplies	11%
Emergency medical needs	9%
Transportation/gas	7%
Other personal financial difficulties	5%
Required new household appliance	4%
PTA cheque lost/stolen/delayed	4%
Moving costs/damage deposit	4%
Daycare costs	4%
Other	4%
DK/NR	1%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%

5.3 Summary

The PTA offers slightly more support than training under Social Assistance. Although some clients apply for top-ups from Social Assistance, these tend to be those with disabilities and women. The fact that managers think that fewer than expected clients had applied for top-ups may reflect a lack of awareness that this is possible. It also may reflect that approval of the top-ups reflects the discretion of individual social assistance offices.

6.0 Efficiency and Effectiveness

The fourth goal of the PTA is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of income support for low-income people involved in training. In creating the PTA, the Government of Saskatchewan has tried to ensure that the level of services available and the delivery of those services have a positive impact on clients.

The two departments involved in delivering income support and training, PSEST and Social Services, seek a system design to support the PTA over the short and long-term. By undertaking this evaluation, the government wants to develop a more integrated approach to income support that would provide better client service and administrative efficiencies, if such an approach is feasible.

Clients support the PTA's administrative simplicity, relative to previous income support programs (particularly Social Assistance). For them, the PTA requires less paperwork, and they are able to talk to someone if they have issues that need addressing.

Perceptions among field staff and managers from PSEST and Social Services vary. Some Social Services staff question the wisdom of having PSEST deliver income support, since some clients are retained on both systems when requiring top-ups. Transitioning between Social Assistance and the PTA reportedly causes some administrative problems, and can lead to confusion over responsibility for what is essentially a common client base.

PSEST staff and managers also hold varying views about the PTA. While some like the system as it is currently designed, others would prefer further devolution of delivery responsibility to large training providers (SIAST and regional colleges). In the near future, this option may need to be reconsidered, once the information systems have the capacity to deliver the program through this model.

6.1 To what extent has the PTA impacted flexibility and responsiveness to the clients' needs and circumstances compared to previous programs? (4.1)

As indicated in Section 3.12, clients generally prefer the PTA to Social Assistance. PTA clients report that Social Assistance was more likely to require them to provide information to receive funding (2.7 rating for Social Assistance, compared to 2.2 for PTA). PTA and Social Assistance rated equally on clients' ability to find someone to talk to when having trouble dealing with funding issues.

As we mentioned above, however, some focus group participants reported problems in dealing directly with the centralized PTA unit staff, as they typically had to work through their counselor or a PTA coordinator at their institution or CESC staff as intermediaries. This was frustrating to some, as they preferred dealing with administrators directly. A few clients expressed this concern particularly in relation to "overpayments", which may have been the result of documents not being forwarded or documents being improperly assessed. This anecdotal evidence is not reflected in the general opinions of PTA clients, but may represent an issue for some.

Statement	PTA (n=604)	SA (n=159)	NSIM (n=31)	NTP (n=11)
I had to provide too much information to receive <Program>	2.2	2.7	1.7	2.1
If I have problems with the funding I got from <Program>, I knew who I should talk with to solve the problem	3.2	3.1	3.4	3.0

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: SSDP, NSIM, and NTP responses were provided by PTA clients who had also participated in these programs.

6.2 How did clients who went from Social Assistance to PTA experience the transition? (4.2)

Based on the survey of participants and non-participants, 85% of PTA clients and 36% of non-participants had received Social Assistance at some time in their life. Note that this percentage is slightly higher from the percentage found in the database, which shows that two-thirds (66%) go directly from Social Assistance to the PTA. Among PTA clients who had

spent time on Social Assistance, some 74% (n=378) went directly from Social Assistance to the PTA.

Of those who made this transition, 79% (n=300) reported no difficulty, while the other 21% (n=78) reported some problems. For those reporting problems during the transition, common difficulties were as follows (see Table 79):

- 4 Almost one-third said that they *had trouble paying utilities* (n=25), or that there was a *long wait for the first cheque* (n=24).
- 4 23% said that they had a *hard time budgeting* (n=18) and/or *paying their rent* (n=18).

Table 80: What difficulties (if any), did you face? (n=78)

Response	n	%
Had trouble paying utilities	25	32%
Long wait for first cheque	24	31%
Not enough/hard to budget	18	23%
Had trouble paying rent	18	23%
Trouble paying: food, bills, school supplies	7	9%
Confusing rules/application	4	5%
Transportation/not enough travel allowance	3	4%
Other	5	6%
DK/NR	1	1%

Source: Survey of Participants.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%

Care is needed in interpreting this table. Deferring bill payment and encountering problems in paying rent is common to the low-income student population, and many non-participants report delays in payment.

6.3 Is the PTA administratively simpler than previous arrangement? (4.3)

Any new program poses challenges for the administration. Within the new training environment being developed in Saskatchewan, a new program must also contend with a changing system. In general, the PTA has weathered its introduction well. Management reported that the PTA has overcome its early growing pains, with fewer complaints from the field.

6.3.1 Management perspectives

Based on our in-depth interviews, we found the following views to be widely held by managers in the program:

- 4 One-third of managers believe that communication remains a problem. These managers suggested improving communications among PSEST, Social Services, and training providers. As training providers become more involved in program delivery, enhanced communication will be needed. This increases the need for close cooperation among government, SIAST, regional colleges and community-based organizations.
- 4 Computer systems for efficient record keeping, verification, cross-referencing, and reducing overpayments are key to improvement. Several managers maintain that regional colleges and community-based organizations need to be brought into the administrative loop through widespread computer systems. At the same time, issues of confidentiality need to be addressed.
- 4 An important philosophical debate exists among management as to whether the PTA should:
 - be more regionalized, with funding delivered by training providers (SIAST, regional colleges and community-based organizations).
 - be delivered by regional offices (Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Centres).
 - be centralized through government offices in the larger centers.

This debate reflects a range of perceptions about the appropriate role for training institutions in delivering services such as qualifying students, administering payment, verifying continuing eligibility, and maintaining progress records.

- 4 Finally, managers are generally committed to the income-tested approach, but many are concerned that some PTA clients may face financial difficulty. Some would like clients who face financial difficulty to be encouraged to return to Social Assistance for top-ups, especially if this

would prevent withdrawal from the program. Others argue that using a “top-up”, except in the most extreme emergencies, erodes the rationale for the program. These managers argue that the income-tested model, with its set monthly payment, is central to the program objective to reduce/eliminate welfare stigma.

6.3.2 Field staff views on the PTA administration

Field staff offer a vantage from which to assess program administration. They see the daily operation of a program and where it is succeeding or failing, which can be valuable in introducing proposals for administrative change.

However, what is striking about Table 81 is that on many issues, field staff simply declined to respond. Because this survey covered a wide number of different types of personnel, many respondents chose to pass to the next question on some issues.

Table 81: Rating the PTA (n=238)					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	DK / NR
The PTA is easier to administer than Social Assistance	5%	12%	19%	6%	58%
The PTA creates additional work for social workers	6%	16%	19%	13%	47%
PTA payments should be based on attendance	4%	10%	32%	42%	12%
The PTA creates additional work for those who deliver training	3%	12%	29%	30%	25%
The PTA should be administered centrally	9%	17%	19%	10%	45%
The PTA has enough accountability measures in place to prevent abuse by clients	24%	24%	19%	5%	29%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Horizontal percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Many field staff appeared not to be able to evaluate the administration of the PTA. In total, up to 58% declined to answer (see Table 81 above).

- When asked if *the PTA is easier to administer than Social Assistance*, over 50% of PSEST and Social Services staff agreed, compared to 12% of training providers. It is important to note, however, that 70% of Training providers

declined to rate the statement. In contrast, 42% of PSEST staff and 30% of Social Services staff declined to rate the statement.

- 4 Many of the field staff (74%) agreed that payments should be based on attendance. Training providers agreed most often (79%), followed by 75% of PSEST staff, and 59% of Social Services staff. Notably, 23% of Social Services Staff did not respond to this question, compared to only 4% of PSEST staff, and 9% of training providers.
- 4 In general, field staff think that the PTA *creates additional work for those who deliver the training*. Note that one-quarter declined to respond. (See Section 6.4.1, which further examines perceptions of training provider workloads).
- 4 Many are unable to offer a comment on whether the PTA *should be administered centrally*, suggesting that field staff may not in a position to evaluate this aspect. It also reflects the complexity of this issue, and that to make an informed choice, a staff person needs more detailed information on the advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

Among the groups, PSEST staff felt most comfortable evaluating the idea of central administration. Seventy-nine percent rated the statement “*the PTA should be administered centrally*”, with 46% agreeing and 33% disagreeing.

- 4 Staff were not uniform in their assessment of accountability measures. Fifty-four percent of PSEST staff disagreed that “*the PTA has enough accountability measures in place to prevent abuse by clients*” (29% agreed with the statement). The vast majority (70%) of Social Services staff also disagreed, compared to 39% of training providers.

Finally, about half of field staff are not confident in the accountability measures (48% disagreed or strongly disagreed to this question – see Table 79 above). Once again, almost one-third (29%) did not respond to this issue.

6.3.3 Suggested role for PSEST

The department of Post Secondary Education and Skills Training (PSEST) currently handles core administration (and verification of eligibility), PTA funding, program approval, and overall policy direction. Some have suggested that PSEST should also provide some special needs or top-ups, although most support the “flat-rate” structure of the PTA. The student applies to Social Assistance for any top-ups.

A significant development by PSEST is the creation of the One Client Service Model (OCSM), which will provide the information system support for the training strategy. When completed, this system will track client interventions for all programs. It will create an efficient system for tracking payments, verification, and sharing information within and between departments.

Field staff offered their comments on the role of PSEST in the delivery of the PTA. As seen in Table 82, most see retention of program funding and core administration as the most important role. This is followed by counseling and performing assessments.

The perceived roles for PSEST in counseling and assessments are closely related. The managers we interviewed expressed concern that many PTA clients needed additional counseling. At the same time, they also believed that the front-end assessment was not sufficient to discriminate between those who would fail and those who would succeed. A strong belief exists among some managers that the assessment process needs to be overhauled to create a better action plan for PTA clients.

Some field staff share this view.

Response	%
Fund program & core administration	49%
Counseling support	26%
Assessments	18%
Reduced Role	8%
Pay according to attendance	8%
Planning / Communication	8%
Deliver supports through CES	3%
Cover special needs	2%
More access to local staff	1%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

A small number of field staff (8%, or 10 respondents) see a reduced role for PSEST, although it is not clear whether they would agree with an enhanced role for SIAST and regional colleges.

6.4 To what extent has the PTA impacted Social Services regions and Social Assistance workers? (4.4)

As mentioned earlier, the creation of the PTA has had a significant impact on Social Services. Prior to the PTA, Social Assistance was the main form of income support for low-income clients in training. The implementation of the Training Strategy and creation of the PTA has shifted most of this responsibility to PSEST, although Social Services still provides “top-ups” for individuals with special needs or for qualifying individuals who require additional assistance.

Further, the majority of PTA clients transition between Social Assistance and the PTA on more than one occasion. For the most part, the client base is shared. However, this transition creates issues of shared responsibility, which makes some field staff uncomfortable. A small proportion would prefer the PTA to have greater autonomy (i.e., providing for special needs), while others would like income support to be returned to Social Services. The majority, however, appear to favour the status quo, as suggested changes reflect “tinkering” with the program rather than a complete overhaul.

6.4.1 Social Services staff feel strongly that the PTA creates more work

All staff members were asked to evaluate whether *the PTA creates additional work for social workers*. Nearly all (89%) Social Services staff were able to evaluate the statement, while fewer PSEST staff (54%) and training providers (39%) were able to do so. Compared to other staff, Social Services staff were most likely to agree with the statement, as 75% felt the PTA created additional work. PSEST staff and training providers were less likely to agree with the statement.

Table 83: Does the PTA creates additional work for social workers?

Response	PSEST (n=24)	Social Services (n=56)	Training providers (n=152)	Total (n=232)
Strongly agree	4%	43%	3%	13%
Agree	25%	32%	11%	18%
Disagree	21%	14%	16%	17%
Strongly disagree	4%	-	9%	6%
Don't know / no response	46%	11%	61%	47%
Total	100%	100%	100%	101%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

While many of the field staff think Social Services should continue providing special needs (35%) and counseling support (30%), a small proportion of field staff (5%) said that Social Services should deliver the PTA. The rationale may be that some clients are maintained on both systems when they have special needs or require a top-up. In their opinion, it is easier to provide both through Social Services.

Table 84: What should the role of Social Services be? (n=156)	
Response	%
Provide special needs	35%
Counseling	30%
None / minor role	11%
Refer clients to the PTA / other programs	10%
Provide transition support	8%
Liaison with institutions	7%
Maintain accountability	5%
Deliver the PTA	5%
Learn the PTA system better	2%
Major role – know clients best	1%
Co-ordinate with PSEST	1%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff.</i>	
Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.	

Some managers would like to see Social Services do more pre-training assessment and counseling, and foster greater independence while clients are on Social Assistance. A few strongly argued that a better “triaging” system is needed to screen out those for whom training is premature. These respondents also thought that many Social Assistance clients should move into a Bridging program that would prepare them for the PTA, both in terms of managing their money and accepting training. A view exists that many PTA clients are simply not ready for training, and that admittance into the program should be based on the capacity of the client to accept training. Right now, if a training institution accepts a student into a PTA eligible course, PSEST will fund that student if they meet the financial need tests. No assessment is made of the students’ readiness to learn.

6.4.2 Integrating the PTA with Social Assistance

Table 85 below shows the importance that field staff place on information sharing and planning. What is striking is that the most common suggestions call for better information and common planning, and not for fundamental changes in the structure or delivery process of the PTA.

Those advocating for change suggest:

- 4 that Social Assistance should deliver the PTA (12%, or 15 respondents).

- 4 that a better transition process from Social Assistance to the PTA is needed (11%, or 14 respondents).
- 4 that the PTA should issue special needs payments (10%, or 12 respondents).

Table 85: In what way could the PTA be better integrated with the Social Assistance Program? (n=125)

Response	%
More efficient / accurate information sharing	38%
Common planning	14%
Social Assistance should deliver PTA	12%
Better transition from Social Assistance to PTA	11%
PTA should issue some special needs payments	10%
Keep separate	8%
Better financial support	6%
More access to top-up supplement	5%
Keep Social Assistance files open while on PTA	4%
PTA same \$ or more than Social Assistance	3%
Support short programs	2%
Social Assistance deliver financial planning	2%
Better payments	2%
Social Assistance should be located at institution	2%
Support utilities	2%
Social Assistance deliver emergency funding	2%
Local PTA rep at training programs	1%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.

6.5 To what extent has the PTA impacted program and service deliverers and counselors / faculty? (4.5)

Under the existing delivery structure, training providers give instruction, counseling, orientation, and handle basic administration and admissions. Management has discussed the possibility of devolving additional delivery responsibility to training providers (admissions, PTA approval and verification). This is not possible given the current state of information systems, though it is a possibility in the future once the OCSM database is fully developed. Whether training providers such as SIAST and the regional colleges negotiate for a greater role in program delivery remains to be seen.

Based on the field staff survey, training providers at the ground level (teachers and counselors) may not want this responsibility, as the majority report that it already creates

additional responsibilities. Some would prefer to focus on teaching, and leave other income support issues to government.

6.5.1 PSEST staff and training providers feel the PTA creates more work

All staff evaluated the statement, *“the PTA creates additional work for those who deliver training.”* Overall, the majority of PSEST staff (67%) and training providers (71%) agreed with this statement. Most Social Services staff (64%) did not feel they had the information to evaluate the statement.

Response	PSEST (n=24)	Social Services (n=56)	Training providers (n=152)	Total (n=232)
Strongly agree	29%	9%	39%	31%
Agree	38%	20%	32%	30%
Disagree	8%	7%	15%	12%
Strongly disagree	13%	-	3%	3%
Don't know / no response	13%	64%	12%	25%
Total	101%	100%	101%	101%

Source: Survey of Field Staff.
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

When asked, *“what role should training deliverers (SIAST, regional colleges, community-based organizations, private trainers) have in the delivery of the PTA”*, some field staff (7%) and management (4 respondents) recommended that the PTA further decentralize responsibility to training providers.

- 4 Fourteen percent (14%) of field staff believe that training providers should solely provide training, leaving the rest up to PSEST and PTA staff.
- 4 Further, managers stressed the need for more planning for counseling, career planning, pre-assessment screening, and control of waiting lists. This responsibility is best located with training providers, although establishing standards would require cooperation between government and training deliverers.

Table 87: What role should training deliverers have in the delivery of the PTA? (n=152)	
Response	%
Administration	55%
No financial role	22%
Provide counseling	18%
Deliver PTA funds	11%
Have PTA contact on site	7%
Do pre-assessment screening	7%
Be accountable for funding at the institution	3%
For special circumstances only	1%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff.</i>	
Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.	

6.6 Evaluating the cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness of the PTA (4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9)

To evaluate the cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness of the PTA, four questions were posed:

- 4 How do the costs of the PTA compare to the costs of Social Assistance for clients in training? (4.7)
- 4 What are the cost-benefits of the PTA compared to previous programs and to Social Assistance? (4.8)
- 4 Is the PTA more or less expensive than the former training allowance plus Social Assistance top-up? (4.9)
- 4 How can the cost-effectiveness of delivery be increased? (4.10)

This evaluation cannot provide long-term outcomes for PTA clients, due to the relative youthfulness of the program and the evaluation focus on process and delivery issues. While short-term outcomes (program completion, current employment status, current Social Assistance status) give some indication of success, longer-term outcomes are needed to determine cost-effectiveness.

In consultation with the Evaluation Working Group, we set aside these cost-effectiveness issues pending an outcome study based on more follow-up. The focus shifted to comparisons of

income support between PTA and SSDP that are reported in Section 5.

6.7 How can integration with other income support initiatives be maximized? (4.10)

Most field staff and management are unsure of how to integrate other income support programs with the PTA. Some support that single window access and/or integration between Skills Training Benefit and the PTA would streamline programs.

Client access and awareness of the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES) appears low. Given that some PTA clients work while in training, this is an important income support program that would allow more lower income residents to participate in the PTA.

Table 88: In what way could the PTA be better integrated with other income support programs, like SES and Child Benefit? (n=60)	
Response	%
Computerize cross-reference	27%
CTB should be passed through	25%
Combine into one program	18%
Careful monitoring in place	8%
Inform students / everyone	7%
They should not be integrated	7%
Same income rules for all programs	3%
Other	8%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff.</i>	
Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.	

Table 88 above shows the response to questions about integrating the PTA with other programs. The importance of information systems emerges once again.

Table 89 presents the suggestions for improvement offered by field staff. The range of responses is wide. Some argue for a unified program (18%), while others see value in a single window of delivery (13%).

Table 89: Are there better ways to integrate income support programs for PTA clients, such as Student Loans, the Skills Training Benefit, and Provincial Training Allowance? (n=55)	
Response	%
Create one program	18%
Single window delivery	13%
PTA partially support via student loans	13%
Better communication	9%
Better verification	7%
Keep programs separate	7%
Attendance should be enforced	7%
Broaden access	5%
Better course planning / information	5%
Bridge funding for PTA to student loans	4%
No student loans for PTA clients	4%
Put all under the PTA	4%
PTA should be paid every two weeks	2%
Only get a student loan if job guaranteed.	2%
Base on needs, not previous earnings	2%
Administer through Social Assistance	2%
<i>Source: Survey of Field Staff.</i>	
Note: Respondents could choose more than one response. Totals may sum to more than 100%.	

7.0 Conclusions and observations: responding to the evaluation questions

This final section of the report considers each question posed for the evaluation. We also offer some observations that may assist the Evaluation Working Group in determining useful changes.

The findings in the previous pages point to the following main results:

- 4 At this point in the program, most clients endorse the PTA as an income support system. Most report no special problems; the difficulties that they do report appear to be characteristic of many who are in training and who have a low income.
- 4 When we compare the income support received by clients under the PTA with the financial assistance received by trainees under Saskatchewan Skills Development Program, PTA clients enjoy slightly higher levels of financial assistance. This is in contrast to the perceptions of many field staff and managers. It also differs from the comments of selected clients in the focus groups, who identified some specific issues with utility bills and transportation.
- 4 PTA clients have an income support that is slightly higher than what they would have with Social Assistance, with the exception of some singles with disabilities or other special needs. Aside from singles without children, clients have higher benefits under PTA than Social Assistance.
- 4 It appears that the PTA population is heterogeneous and presents a range of needs, as reflected in the courses in which they enrol. These needs include academic upgrading, life skills, and skills training.
- 4 Managers and staff raised concerns about assessments and counseling. Some managers argued that pre-program assessments need to be improved. Further, others see that pre-program counseling, or increased counseling support through the training provider, would assist some clients in their transition from Social Assistance to the PTA. Students were typically satisfied with counseling, and generally did not mention a need for greater access.

Using these observations and the results from the previous chapters, we can turn to the main questions of the evaluation.

7.1 Access

7.1.1 For the most part, PTA clients closely match clients in previous training programs for low income individuals

The PTA is based on “need” and is designed not to limit recipients based on membership within a group. The PTA was meant to broaden access and enhance funding opportunities, by creating a single income support program for low income residents of Saskatchewan who wish to take training leading toward employment.

Comparing the attributes of clients participating in the PTA, SSDP, NSIM, and NTP records sheds light on who is accessing these programs. The SSDP is the main comparison group, as it was the largest of the three previous programs, and represents a clientele (Social Assistance recipients) predominantly served by the PTA. Based on the database, approximately one-third (35%) do not go directly from Social Assistance to the PTA, although most are former Social Assistance clients (93%).

Such a comparison of database shows that compared to SSDP, PTA clients are the same age, somewhat more likely to be women and single parents, and more likely to be First Nations or Métis. Most PTA clients have received Social Assistance at some time prior to their participation in the program.

Observation: The PTA appears to be offering income support for training that affords access to a representative group of low-income residents of Saskatchewan. The fact that eligibility for support is based solely on financial need and not on membership in a group, and that all eligible applicants are supported, means that access is maximized.

7.1.2 PTA clients tend to be in basic education

Most clients (almost three-quarters) are using the PTA to further their basic education. This may mean attaining the equivalent of Grade 10 (Basic 10), Basic 12, or GED. Other clients use the income support for Bridging or Quick Skills. Clients are typically in courses for less than 6 months.

7.1.3 Differences exist about what the PTA should fund

Some managers argue that the PTA should confine itself to Basic Education, and that the Quick Skills program is more properly funded through initiatives such as the Skills Training Benefit. Others would like to see skills training extended or course lengths adjusted beyond twelve weeks, as many students are not eligible for student loans.

Observation: Managers and field staff hold differences of opinion regarding the type of skills training supported under the PTA. Some clients may be able to acquire student loans, particularly when training leads to employment. However, the PTA is an income support program for low-income individuals who probably have few resources to finance their education and to finance the cost of training from Basic Education to post secondary training. It is unlikely that many on Social Assistance would be able to finance even a small portion of their education through student loans. This approach would need very careful consideration before it is implemented. It is possible that the use of participant financing would be attempted with the Quick Skills program, where employment is an immediate goal and payments made once employment is secured.

7.1.4 Those never on Social Assistance are different than those coming to the PTA via Social Assistance.

In general, PTA clients who have never been on Social Assistance have slightly more income and education. They also have other sources of income (family members), and more often tend to be married or in common-law relationships than PTA clients.

Some PTA clients who have never been on assistance prior to the PTA go on Social Assistance after completing their

training. This appears to be in direct contradiction to the goals of the PTA to increase independence. However, it is important to recall that these clients are low income, and typically face many hurdles in making the transition to independence. A low income resident may apply for the PTA because they see their prospects worsening. They may have been self-employed, laid off, in casual employment not covered by Employment Insurance, or EI reachback clients who use the PTA to gain training and to forestall/delay the application for Social Assistance. These are all plausible scenarios that do not invalidate the rationale for the PTA.

Observation: The fact that some PTA clients who had never been on Social Assistance move to welfare after the PTA illustrates the broader access inherent in the PTA. Before the creation of the PTA, these individuals may have proceeded directly to Social Assistance. Unfortunately, no baseline data exists to determine whether the PTA slows the entry into Social Assistance for these clients. Also, without long-term outcome studies, it is not possible to determine the success of the client in gaining employment relative to PTA clients that have had prior experience with Social Assistance.

7.1.5 The PTA has increased incentives to training

This is one of the clear results of this evaluation. The PTA has reduced barriers to training. The high take-up rates and strong client approval of the program are important indicators of this.

However, some aspects of the PTA are reported to act as a disincentive. The relatively low level of wage exemptions means that modest earnings can affect eligibility for support. A number of clients reported that, if permitted, they would work more. Potential clients who find the wage exemptions too strict may not apply; in this sense, this requirement is a barrier.

Observation: Some clients in the focus groups agreed that the wage exemption does limit their income, but as one person reported, education requires sacrifice. This is the crux of the matter: the essence of post-secondary education is to sacrifice short-term wage income in order to secure a better future. There is no reason that PTA clients should be in any different position. The fact that no shortages of applicants exist confirms that disincentives are not significant for most low-income residents.

The lack of spaces (to the extent that they are real) and the fact that entrance is limited to twice a year may also be barriers to the PTA. These are regulations that PSEST may wish to adjust, but there is no evidence to show that these are major barriers to access.

7.1.6 Extension of eligibility to community-based organizations and non-provincially funded training programs

Several field staff and managers remarked on the desirability of expanding PTA eligible training to include courses offered by community-based organizations and non-provincially funded providers (vocational schools). If waiting lists in SIAST and the regional colleges do exist, this would appear to be a potential remedy for expanding access.

Such an expansion may create the need for additional resources that could pose a problem in the current fiscal context. Further, sufficient doubt exists about the reality of waiting lists and this issue should be resolved before changes to training are considered.

Observation: Aside from fiscal issues, an important reason to be cautious about including non-provincially funded training within the scope of the PTA is the issue of quality. Although many excellent private schools exist, it can be complicated to ensure that clients receive sound training. Often, private trainers emerge quickly after program funding is announced, which offers some indication that quality might be an issue.

7.1.7 Clients learn of the PTA from several sources

The data show that clients learn of the PTA from sources at school (counselor and administrators), friends/family, and social workers. There appears to be little need to mount a more aggressive campaign, although one might expect that as they become established, the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services Centres will become more important in the communications process for the PTA.

7.1.8 Clients are satisfied with the program

Clients endorse the PTA. They appreciate the approach, and the fact that it is less stigmatizing than Social Assistance or other income support programs. On almost every level, clients see the PTA as superior to what they experienced on Social Assistance. The only exception is that their utility bills surprised many clients.

Observation: In an understandable attempt to offer guidance to Social Assistance clients who were unfamiliar with money management, the PTA offered some guidelines for spending. These included guidelines on typical budgets, which represented an average that did not hold in some situations. The result is that actual utility bills exceed these guidelines. Clients interpreted the guidelines as components that would be met by the income support and concluded that the PTA failed to cover their utilities. Departmental communication could review this issue and consider whether these guidelines might be dropped.

7.1.9 Summary on access

The PTA has increased access to training and is well accepted by the clients. Clients, staff, and managers see little need to widen access, aside from some small adjustments to the time when students may enter programs. PSEST and Social Services could also review whether Quick Skills and Bridging ought to be funded by the PTA. Overall, no major problems exist with access to training under the PTA.

7.2 Independence

The second main theme covered in this evaluation is whether the PTA moves clients toward independence. It is essential to emphasize two points:

- 4 The PTA is an income support program. Whether clients become employed is also dependent on the training they receive and the state of the economy. The role of the income support program in moving a client to a stable job is indirect. It is erroneous to assign primary responsibility for eventual employment to the income support

mechanism, unless it can be shown that features of that support compromise continuation and completion. No evidence exists to show that the features of the PTA caused clients not to complete their programs.

- 4 The goal of the PTA is to move clients toward employment. Most clients are in Basic Education, and after a year might have achieved the equivalent of grade 10. It is hardly surprising that many will not find immediate employment. Further, those continuing in training will spend the summer on the PTA or Social Assistance, after eight months on basic education. This may continue for a few stints, as clients assemble the skills needed to compete. The essential point is that achieving independence from Social Assistance for most clients will be an evolutionary process of cycling through the PTA and Social Assistance before they secure stable employment.

7.2.1 PTA clients complete their courses at a higher rate than SSDP

An important finding is that about 60% of PTA clients complete their intervention, compared to about 45% of SSDP clients. This is an important result, and may reflect that the increased responsibility expected of PTA clients has an impact on completion rates. However, factors such as changes to course content could also contribute to increased completion rates. It is too early to conclude this, and without a long-term follow-up study, this remains speculative. It is a hypothesis that needs to be prominent in any future study of the PTA.

7.2.2 Family issues account for discontinuation

Clients who do not complete their courses and instead return to Social Assistance typically report family and personal problems as the precipitating factors. Illness and running out of money are other commonly mentioned problems, while others discontinue when they find work. Aboriginal persons are more likely to discontinue.

Observation: Viewed from one perspective, a 60% success rate is a good level of performance since the typical completion rate for basic

education is reportedly 50%. From another perspective, a 40% failure rate appears high. Little is known about why people do not complete, although the survey suggests that the main reason people discontinue is family/personal difficulties. Since those who discontinue tend to head back to Social Assistance, this is a question for both PSEST and Social Services. Future evaluations of the PTA should consider a more intensive investigation of why some people discontinue, and should examine the development of programming to reduce this failure rate. Collecting management/staff opinion and self-reports from clients seems incomplete. A longer follow-up process may well reveal important clues about how to increase the probability of success. It is possible that more consistent use of action plans could result in a better match of client and training, or could identify the need for more preparation in life and study skills before the PTA is used.

7.2.3 Basic education is not closely linked to the labour market

Clients in focus groups observed that they move back to Social Assistance after the PTA because Basic Education, the program that PTA clients predominately follow, has weak labour market links. The message is now quite clear from Canadian and US studies that high school completion is a minimum job entry requirement, and even a high school diploma hardly assures employment. A Basic Education client, who completes the equivalent of Grade 10, cannot expect to secure stable employment without additional training. To gain entry into a trade or service occupation typically will require further training.

Observation: The PTA is not intended to secure immediate employment for clients. As an income support system, it is only one of the factors that may encourage clients to move toward employment over the longer-term. Expectations that an eight-month Basic Education course that provides the equivalent of grade 10 will lead to immediate employment are unrealistic.

Observation: It is typical for job ready students (post-secondary graduates) to require some time to locate employment. Job searches of six months have been quite common for university graduates and others with marketable skills. At the same time, the

accelerating pace of the Canadian economy will reduce this transition time to employment.

7.2.4 PTA clients appear to be able to manage their finances

Financial management is essential for independence. One of the goals of the PTA is to move people from the environment of Social Assistance where most bills are paid for clients and where social workers offer logistical and emotional support. The notion that Social Assistance clients should be encouraged to become more responsible for their affairs is basic to the concept of welfare reform. In this regard, the PTA appears to have succeeded. Most clients report that they are able to manage their finances and pay their bills. Three-quarters report paying rent on time, and more than half say they do not delay utility payments. Based on the survey of participants, only 17% applied to Social Assistance for a top-up, of which 9% received one. Clients prefer the PTA to Social Assistance by a wide margin, and tend to see themselves as more financially independent.

Observation: Those with lower income are often expected to be good money managers. However, strategies of delaying bill payments are common with most people, especially just before they receive their pay cheque.

7.2.5 Some PTA clients work

About 20% of the PTA clients we interviewed report working. Typically, these jobs are in the service sector and pay about \$8.40 an hour. PTA clients work about the same number of hours as non-participants.

At the same time, PTA clients typically are more reliant on Social Assistance for their annual income, compared to non-participants who rely on employment earnings.

Observation: In future follow-up studies, the role of prior and current work experience in making the transition to full-time, stable employment will be important. Other research shows the importance of work experience in facilitating the transition to full-time employment.

7.2.6 PTA clients do not use much counseling.

Clients reported that counseling is more available under the PTA. Clients also stated that they are satisfied with the counseling that is available, although they note that counselors are less available through the training institutions than through Social Services.

Staff and managers believe that counseling needs to be improved. Several of those we interviewed argued for increased support for advising on financial management, and greater preparation of PTA clients before they enter the program. Much of this concern appears to be motivated by a perception that a high number of clients are finding the transition to the PTA difficult.

Observation: The issue of counseling is somewhat puzzling. Clients seem unconcerned about the fact that they are unable to access counseling as easily as to when they were on Social Assistance. It is possible that the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Service Centres will assume more of the counseling, especially in those sites where SIAST and regional college personnel will be co-located.

7.2.7 Action or career planning is completed by some clients

Much of the Training Strategy is oriented around a client's action plan. This is designed to match clients' abilities/interests to available training and jobs. About 60% of clients report having completed an action plan, typically with a SIAST or regional college counselor. Some report creating case or action plans themselves. Few PTA clients report using a CSCES.

A few staff and managers argued that matching clients to the program was important. They pointed out that this is the role of an action plan, but these appeared not to figure prominently in the PTA. The training institution accepts clients in a PTA eligible program, and PSEST determines eligibility for financial need. This approach certainly expedites entry and broadens access. Some managers worry that clients may enter programs that may not lead to self-sufficiency.

A tension exists between access and effectiveness in training outcomes. Offering income support to all eligible clients that are accepted into Basic Education ensures that all low-income residents can obtain training. At the same time, unless guidance and monitoring are provided to ensure that clients are taking courses that contribute to the movement toward independence, training resources and client time can be wasted. To be sure, managers in regional offices argue that many clients need to present more than just financial need to be funded. These respondents stated that PTA applicants need to also participate in the creation of a viable plan for training and employment.

Observation: Once the OCSM system is completed, the existence of action plans for PTA clients can be verified. This would make more explicit the presently implicit requirement that clients will be funded on need and on the basis of whether the proposed training is part of a realistic transition path toward independence.

Observation: Field staff note that the PTA made some impact on course length, but a small number argue that more flexibility would be desirable. Reviewing content and format for the PTA eligible courses makes sense, since this is an important client group for the training institutions.

Observation: It is unclear what is meant by a case or action plan. The emerging idea of the action plan is that client interests and abilities are to be aligned to labour market information and employer needs. In this way, a continuum is formed from training to job placement. PSEST may wish to review career planning and determine whether multi-year action plans may be useful to increase the likelihood of eventual success of those funded by the PTA, and whether they are at the point in their training when planning will be most useful.

7.3 Fairness and equity

The planning for the PTA included a detailed calculation of rates. Prior to the evaluation and throughout the interviews with management and field staff surveys, we heard considerable opinion that PTA income support was lower than Social Assistance and failed to cover some costs. In focus groups, several clients reinforced the perception that the PTA

did not offer the same level of income support as Social Assistance.

The client survey dispelled these ideas. For the most part, clients appreciate the PTA and think that it provides them with sufficient support. They also prefer it to Social Assistance.

A direct comparison of PTA rates (1999) and income support provided to those on SSDP (1995) shows that the PTA typically offers slightly higher levels of support for all regions and types of households.

Another measure of the adequacy of income support under the PTA is that few clients (17%) apply for a top-up (9% of whom received one). These clients tend to have disabilities and tend to be female (likely with children). Most are using the top-up to deal with utilities, to meet basic needs (food), and to pay rent.

Observation: It seems apparent that the rate setting exercise for the PTA income support levels got it right. In comparison, to Social Assistance, the PTA changes the form of the income support, but not the level.

Widespread support exists to maintain the PTA as an income-tested program. The concerns of those that feared the PTA offers inadequate income support will no doubt be moderated in light of the information contained in this report.

7.4 Efficiency and effectiveness

The PTA needs to be administratively simple for clients and participating departments. The client survey confirms that it has met this objective, from their perspective. A few clients in the focus groups offered comments about administrative problems with the PTA, but these appear to be isolated.

Field staff and managers we interviewed have a mixed view. Two main issues emerged from the research:

- 4 Some Social Services staff questioned the wisdom/need for PSEST to administer an income support program.
- 4 Other staff and managers also think that the PTA can be devolved further to post-secondary institutions.

At the same time, the majority of the staff and managers accept the model of administration adopted by the PTA.

Observation: The case for administrative change is not compelling. The issue of devolving the PTA to training providers (SIAST and the regional colleges) may offer some increased efficiency, and could reduce the administrative burden on PSEST. Some questions exist with the devolution of the PTA to post-secondary institutions.

- 4 *Will case/action planning by training providers include labour market links and other, non-post-secondary programming such as work placements or life skills?*
- 4 *Will devolution require expansion of administration within training providers? Will this compromise savings?*
- 4 *Will the devolution support overseeing of a large program that essentially responds to demand?*
- 4 *Will the One Client Service Model expand to include training providers?*

7.4.1 Managers and staff advanced several specific administrative problems

Overall, managers and staff are satisfied with the PTA, but noted three administrative issues:

- 4 *Communication among PSEST, Social Services, and training providers needs to improve, especially as training providers become more responsible for elements of the Training Strategy. Most staff/managers stress this suggestion, as opposed to any structural change.*
- 4 *Information systems need continued enhancement, especially if responsibilities are to be devolved.*
- 4 *Staff/managers from Social Services are concerned about the increased workload demanded by the PTA, especially for clients who cycle between the two income supports.*

Observation: Within management and staff, the entire issue of devolution represents an important and controversial issue. Careful deliberation will be needed before making a change.

Observation: Given that many PTA clients will cycle between training and Social Assistance for a few years, the administrative workload is bound to increase. Hopes that Social Assistance clients would move to the PTA and then to independence seem a little unrealistic, given the education and work experience deficits presented by many clients.

7.5 Caveats to the evaluation

This evaluation report responds to each issue and question, with some notable exceptions:

- 4 Outcomes are hard to assess. At least one follow-up study is needed preferably no sooner than one year from now. Given that most PTA clients cannot be expected to have made the transition to work within at least six months of the end of the intervention, at least one year is needed to establish whether stable employment has been secured.

Even one year is short for effective follow-up for these clients. Most will require multiple interventions, and will typically cycle on and off Social Assistance.

- 4 Because we do not have valid outcome data, cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit issues cannot be addressed. These are complex questions to address, and require good cost information from all organizations involved with the program. As more departments and institutions become involved in the delivery, collecting the dispersed cost data will become increasingly challenging. For this reason, careful assessment of the data availability will be needed before commissioning any future evaluation of cost effectiveness and cost-benefit.

7.6 Summary

The PTA is a successful income support program. It is well accepted by clients, and because it offers support that is slightly higher than would be available under Social Assistance, the support level is not a barrier to participation. Managers and staff also support the program, although many offered suggestions for improvement - most notably, increased communication among the departments involved.