

*Strategic
Initiatives
Evaluation*



Nova Scotia
COMPASS
Program



Human Resources
Development Canada

Développement des
ressources humaines Canada



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PROCESS EVALUATION
OF THE
NOVA SCOTIA COMPASS PROGRAM

October 1995

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Nova Scotia Compass is a joint federal-provincial Strategic Initiative being funded and managed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. The program was developed by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services in partnership with HRDC and the Nova Scotia Economic Renewal Agency.

This report is one of two evaluation reports to be produced on Nova Scotia Compass. The second report, a summative evaluation of the initiative, will assess the impact and cost-effectiveness of the program and will be completed in 1997.

This evaluation study was conducted by Martell Consulting Services, in association with Collins Management Consulting and Research, under the direction of the Evaluation Committee comprised of representatives from the two partners.

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	i
Management Response to the Evaluation	xv
CHAPTER 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Study Purpose	1
1.2 Outline of the Report	3
CHAPTER 2 Study Methodology	5
2.1 The Role of Process Evaluation	5
2.2 Methodology Elements	6
2.3 Non-Response	7
CHAPTER 3 Program Description	9
3.1 Background to the Compass Program	9
3.2 Program Context	10
3.3 Organizational Structure and Design of the Compass Program	13
3.4 Components of the Compass Program	15
3.4.1 Work Experience Option	16
3.4.2 Transitional Training Option	18
3.4.3 Enterprise Development Option	19
3.4.4 Opportunity Fund	21
3.5 Program Implementation	22
CHAPTER 4 Client Profile	25
4.1 Introduction	25
4.2 Work Experience Option	26
4.2.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics	26
4.2.2 Labour Market Background	29
4.3 Transitional Training Option	32
4.3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics	32
4.3.2 Labour Market Background	34
4.4 Clients Waiting for a Compass Placement	37
4.4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics	37
4.4.2 Labour Market Background	39
4.5 Preliminary Outcomes and Program Experiences	42
4.5.1 The Compass Placement	42
4.5.2 The Job Developer	45

4.5.3	Improving the Compass Program	46
4.6	Summary	47
CHAPTER 5	Evaluation Findings and Issues	49
5.1	The Compass Program: Overview of Findings	50
5.2	Transitional Training Option	52
5.3	Work Experience Option	53
5.4	Opportunity Fund	55
5.5	Enterprise Development Option	57
5.6	Communication	59
5.6.1	Linkages between Provincial Counselling Staff and Compass	60
5.6.2	Communication Among Regional Partners	61
5.6.3	Mechanisms to Support Job Developers	61
5.7	The Family Benefits Client	62
5.8	The Job Developer	63
5.8.1	Appropriate Job Developer Experience	64
5.8.2	Identification of Employers	66
5.9	Computer Systems	67
CHAPTER 6	Summary and Recommendations	69
6.1	Relevance	70
6.2	Project Design and Delivery	76
6.3	Project Success	86
6.4	Recommendations	89
APPENDIX A	Summary of Interviews and Focus Groups Discussions	
APPENDIX B	Summary of Questionnaire Responses	



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I - Executive Summary

Nova Scotia *Compass* was developed by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services in partnership with Human Resources Development Canada and the Nova Scotia Economic Renewal Agency. *Compass* is funded under the federal *Strategic Initiatives Program* and is designed to provide employment opportunities and/or work experience to job ready clients from both the provincial and municipal social assistance caseload. Single parents, able-bodied municipal clients and youth are the specific targets of the *Compass Program*.

The *Compass Program* fills a number of programming gaps for SAR clients at both the municipal and provincial levels. The *Compass Program* complements and builds on existing training and employment services offered by the province, municipalities and the federal government to social assistance recipients (SARs) and is delivered by existing Employment Resource Centres (ERCs) throughout the province. *Compass* has been established as an integral part of a range of services available to SAR clients and is not intended as a stand-alone program.

A budget of \$15 million is available to the *Compass Program* over the 2 year period from October 1994 to December 1996. The funding is provided through a federal-provincial cooperation agreement, signed March 31, 1995 between Human Resources Development Canada and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.

The following report presents the results of a process evaluation of the *Compass Program* as it has been implemented over the first 6 months of its funding period. The emphasis of the evaluation is twofold:

An assessment of the activities of the Compass Program and their relevance to policy goals and project objectives; and
An assessment of the processes involved in the administration, management and operation of Compass including participant selection, orientation and monitoring.

II - Compass Program Profile

There are four components to the *Compass Program*:

Work Experience Option: The *Work Experience Option* is designed to provide youth (18 to 30 years of age) in receipt of municipal assistance with an opportunity to gain work experience to enhance their employability. Over the pilot the *Work Experience Option* has also been opened up to a limited number of Family Benefits clients. Clients are paid an allowance of \$160 a week while on placement. Placements vary in length but may not exceed 26 weeks.

Transitional Training Option: The *Transitional Training Option* is designed to assist skilled job ready individuals obtain work experience to access employment. Under this component, a wage subsidy is available to private sector employers to hire job ready SAR clients to enhance their employability. The wage subsidy is conditional upon full-time employment being offered to the client upon termination of the placement. Tenure is for a maximum of six months for full-time work with a wage subsidy of up to \$5.62 an hour. Employers are required to contribute a minimum of 25 percent of the total hourly wage.

Enterprise Development Option: The goal of the *Enterprise Development Option* is to assist SAR clients establish and operate small business. Under Stream I of the EDO, clients acquire core training in entrepreneurial skills and business development over a 20 week period. Under Stream II, qualified clients may receive seed capital for their business of \$2000, and in exceptional cases, of up to \$5000. The fund is "a loan of last resort."

Opportunity Fund: The *Opportunity Fund* enables the purchase of specialty items/services such as textbooks, manuals, course fees, workbooks, safety equipment to enhance the employability of a client. The *Opportunity Fund* is also one of "last resort." It can be used both with ERC clients and clients who are involved in provincial vocational training and employment programs.

III - Overall Finding

Overall response to the *Compass Program* 6 months into its operations has been positive. The processes are mostly working and SAR clients are experiencing offers of full-time employment.

Preliminary evaluation results indicate that the *Compass Program* is a valuable job placement tool for the job ready SAR client. Employers have responded favourably to the program and feedback from the municipalities indicates that the *Compass Program* is a success in terms of meeting the needs of youth and the job ready client.

The partnership which has developed between Community Services and the Economic Renewal Agency in the development and delivery of the EDO is of particular significance. By including a component directed towards encouraging SAR clients entry into small business, Compass has provided the first provincial mechanism to assist SAR clients make the transition to self-employment. While a number of issues relating to the operations of this option have arisen over the pilot's first 6 months, the Advisory Committee put in place to oversee the EDO has been able to, with the assistance of the Core Implementation Committee, satisfactorily resolve the most pressing. Preliminary results indicate clients will be establishing small businesses through the training and assistance received through this component.

Establishment of the Job Developer position has been an additional innovative feature of the *Compass Program* which has been welcomed by provincial counsellors, ERC staff and SAR clients alike.

There is room for improvement in linking appropriate Family Benefits (FB) clients to Compass. Part of the reason behind the lower than expected involvement in Compass by provincial clients relates to the need for enhanced linkages between the provincial counsellors and the ERCs as delivery agents for Compass. Other reasons relate to a number of disincentives facing the FB client.

IV - Supporting Findings

The supporting findings of the process evaluation are presented below in summary form under the headings of **Relevance**, **Project Design and Delivery**, and **Project Success**.

Relevance

Target Group

Compass is reaching a substantial portion of its intended target group. The target group, made up of *single parents*, the *job-ready able-bodied municipal client* including laid off fishers/plant workers on assistance and *youth*, was selected to fit under the guidelines of the *Strategic Initiatives Program* and in response to provincial and municipal needs. It was not intended, it should be noted, to reflect all SAR clients in need of employment initiatives.

Youth: The *Work Experience Option*, designed to provide youth (18 to 30 years) with work placements to enhance their employability, has been highly successful across the province in both identifying and placing youth in placements. In the first six months of operation, 1402 youth referrals have been made to the *Work Experience Option* and 255 actual placements have been made.

An unexpected but positive outcome of the *Work Experience Option* is that many youth placed through Compass receive employment offers at the end of their placement.

According to the evaluation survey results, 34 percent of the Work Experience clients who have completed their placement have been hired by their employer.

Skilled Job Ready: The skilled job ready target group made up of single parents in receipt of Family Benefits, persons with disabilities and municipal clients are serviced through the *Transitional Training Option* of Compass.

Municipal Client: There has been a high take-up of the *Transitional Training Option* by the municipal client. Most ERCs reported that they could identify and place as many municipal clients as positions could be made available. Partly in response to the higher than expected take-up of this option by municipal clients, the initial 80:20 allocation of placements between provincial and municipal clients was revised to 60:40.

Single Parents on Family Benefits: There has been a lower than expected take-up of the program by single parents on Family Benefits. In regions where linkages are strong between the provincial counselling staff and the local ERC staff, the number of appropriate FB referrals has been adequate. In regions where the linkages are weaker, the number of FB referrals to Compass are low.

Compass planners and administrators are aware of these difficulties and are working to strengthen the communication linkages.

Interventions Meet Needs of Target Group

Work Experience Option: This option has been highly successful in meeting the needs of the target group for which it was designed. One of the unexpected outcomes of this option is the high rate of full-time employment offers made to participants upon termination of their placement period.

Transitional Training Option: The opportunity for employment provided through this option is meeting the employment needs of municipal clients. Survey results indicate that 67 percent of this client group who have finished their placement have been hired by employers.

The employment needs of the Family Benefits clients have been less able to be met through this option because of barriers related to a lack of transportation, the lack of subsidized daycare and the fear of losing pharma card benefits. The issue of inadequate linkages between some provincial counsellors and the ERCs as delivery agents for Compass has also adversely affected the ability of the option to meet FB clients' employment needs.

Enterprise Development Option: The Stream I training component of the EDO is providing the target group with the knowledge and skills required to establish and run a small business. The \$2000 loan available through Stream II of the EDO has not yet met its original objective of leveraging additional dollars for business start-up costs. This and other concerns are being addressed by the Advisory Committee established to oversee the EDO's implementation.

PROJECT DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Strengths of Program Design

Much of the success of Compass is due to the design established for its delivery. Implemented through the ERCs, Compass was designed to be one part of an integral range of employment training and counselling services available to SAR clients. It is not a stand alone service but rather supports and supplements the counselling and training activities of the ERC staff and provincial counselling staff.¹

Appropriateness of Referrals: The evaluation has identified that much of the success of Compass in securing employment for clients is attributable to the appropriateness of the referrals made to Compass by ERC staff and some provincial counsellors. ERC staff work with their clients on an individualized basis to ensure they are job ready before referring them to the *Compass Program*.

¹ The term "Provincial counselling staff " is used to include Career Planning counsellors and Vocational Rehabilitation counsellors.

Job Developer Function: The Job Developer function is also a key element of the *Compass Program*. An innovative approach to securing placements in the employer community, the Job Developer function is dedicated to matching job ready clients with local employers. The process is client driven and entirely dependent upon having ready access to appropriate referrals from the counsellors. By having the Job Developers work out of the same office as the ERC counsellors, the *Compass* design has assured a team approach between the Job Developers and the ERC counsellors in their work with clients. An added benefit of the Job Developer function is that counsellors are freed up from placement activities to provide more effective counselling.

Regional Compass Liaison Committees: A particular strength of the organizational structure of *Compass* lies in the Regional Compass Liaison Committees being established throughout the province to facilitate communication among the *Compass* partners. Individual regions identified the need for such a forum to discuss *Compass*-related matters and share information and are in the process of replicating the structure of the Regional Compass Liaison Committee first established in South-West Nova Scotia.

Flexibility and Responsiveness of the Process

The evaluation has found that the Core Implementation Committee established to monitor the implementation of *Compass* has been both flexible and responsive to issues and needs that have arisen over the pilot's first 6 months. Changes have been made in various policies as needs arose - such as enabling FB clients access to the *Work Experience Option*, enabling more municipal clients access to the *Transitional Training Option* and finding solutions to the problem of securing ongoing income security during the period of business start-up for the *Enterprise Development Option* client.

Tracking/Monitoring Mechanisms

The *Compass Program* has paid attention to the need to collect information to monitor clients from an evaluation perspective. Work completed to date includes the development of a baseline data questionnaire for *Compass* participants and the development of a client

computer database that encompasses both the client questionnaire and additional administrative program data. These tools provide an adequate basis for measuring the employment impacts of the *Compass Program*.

PROJECT SUCCESS

Partnerships

Compass and ERC Staff: The strongest of the partnerships emerging out of the Compass experience is that built between the ERC staff, the Job Developers and the Compass Coordinator. The ERCs have embraced the *Compass Program* and melded it into their existing operations to provide a seamless service delivery to clients. Compass is a valuable placement-related employment and training tool that has strengthened the ERCs in their work with clients.

The partnership that has developed is two-way. The *Compass Program* could not have been as successfully delivered through a mechanism other than the ERCs. The ERCs have applied their experience and knowledge of municipal and provincial clients to Compass and ensured the client-driven nature of the *Compass Program's* delivery.

Economic Renewal Agency and Community Services: *The Compass Program* has forged a new partnership between the Economic Renewal Agency and Community Services in the development of programming for SAR clients. Compass has provided the first opportunity for the Economic Renewal Agency to become acquainted with the needs and background of SAR clients and provide Community Services with the expertise required to design appropriate business training for SAR clients interested in self-employment.

Employer Community: Employers view the *Compass Program* as a partnership between themselves, the client and the government agencies involved in Compass.

Satisfaction with Compass Program

Participant Satisfaction: Responses to the *Client Placed* questionnaire implicitly indicate a high level of satisfaction with the *Compass Program*. Close to a third of all clients who were placed through Compass indicated that the chance to acquire relevant experience was the most important program feature for them. The second most important feature of Compass cited by clients was the role played by the Job Developer in working with them to find a placement.

More than half of clients placed who were interviewed - 52 percent - could not suggest a single "least satisfactory" feature of the *Compass Program*. Of issues that were suggested, "Pay" was the most common item, noted by 14 percent of clients placed. However, some 69 percent of those citing this reason were placed under the *Work Experience Option* and as such received an allowance rather than a wage.

Employer Satisfaction: Some 52 percent of employers are contacted by other training program organizations seeking jobs or work placements for their clients. Three out of four employers surveyed rated the service they received from Compass Job Developers as "better" or "much better" than the service received from other training program organizations.

The *Compass Program* has been welcomed by the employer community for a number of non-financial considerations including: the length of the placements (6 months compared to a few weeks); a wide range of skills to draw upon (from Grade 7 to Trades and University training); the program monitoring (enabling trouble-shooting between the employer and placement); a minimum of paperwork; and, most importantly, the time saved the employer in the client screening process (a function performed by the Job Developer).

Virtually all employers contacted believe the requirements of Compass are reasonable and that the financial reporting requirements are straightforward.

Disincentives to Employment and Training

The most significant disincentive to employment addressed by the *Compass Program* has been the lack of experience many clients (provincial and municipal) face when seeking

employment. The *Work Experience Option* has provided counsellors with a potent tool to offer clients experience with an employer of their choice and within a field of their choice. Designed with the municipal and young client in mind, Work Experience has become the option of choice for many ERCs. It has also been expanded to cover provincial clients in need of work experience as well as some older clients.

Barriers: It has been estimated by some Compass staff that perhaps only 30 percent of all *FB clients* can legitimately be classified as job ready. The remaining 70 percent face barriers which Compass has not been able to overcome. These include:

- the lack of subsidized daycare;
- the lack of transportation; and
- the fear of losing the provincial pharma card.

V - Recommendations

Transitional Training Option

That the *Transitional Training Option* under Compass not replace the already existing transitional programs in place in some ERCs. These latter programs are available to a broader range of clients than the Compass option, specifically the non-job ready client and the older client who make up at least two-thirds of the ERC clientele. The Compass option is an additional tool for the job ready but is limited by its design under the *Strategic Initiatives Program* in its wider applicability.

That the Core Implementation Committee consider a re-allocation of the placements available under this option for provincial and municipal clients based on availability of appropriate referrals.

Work Experience Option

That regulations pertaining to the *Work Experience Option* be revised to permit clients - who are in need of work experience and who have dependents - to receive a higher allowance.

Transportation Dollars

That a small amount of dollars be made available to the rural ERCs to assist clients with placement-related travel expenses. The fund should be at the discretion of the ERC coordinator and only be used in circumstances:

- . where, without it, a client would be unable to take up a placement; and
- . where the client will be able to make his own transportation arrangements once in the job (car pooling, purchase used vehicle).

Enterprise Development Option

That the loan available under Stream II of the EDO be increased to \$5000 for all approved applicants - if required - and not just "in exceptional cases" as had been recently agreed upon by the EDO Advisory Committee.

Enhancing Linkages between Provincial Counsellors and the ERCs

That the Compass coordinator place additional emphasis on enhancing linkages between provincial counsellors and the ERCs as the delivery body for Compass.

That mechanisms be put in place to ensure feedback from the ERCs to provincial counsellors on the progress of the provincial referrals.

Disincentives and the Family Benefits Client

That the Core Implementation Committee seek ways of addressing the three major barriers to employment facing many Family Benefits clients (the lack of transportation,

lack of subsidized daycare and the pharma card issue) in their search for employment.

Background of the Job Developer

That in future hiring for the position of Job Developer, a blend of business and counselling skills be established as the standard criteria.

Training Workshops and Other Supports

That the Compass coordinator continue to provide the Job Developers with ongoing training, the focus of which should be developed in consultation with the Job Developers.

That Compass staff be provided with adequate office space, telephone facilities and travel budget for their regions.

That resources be provided to develop appropriate literature on the *Compass Program* including professionally written and produced brochures as well as uniform business cards for the Job Developers.

Monitoring of Placements

That the degree and nature of the monitoring of placements within the *Compass Program* be determined on a case by case basis by the individual Job Developers.

Computer Systems

That the Compass coordinator and the TIGER developers work together to determine the feasibility and costs of upgrading the TIGER system to meet the needs of Job Developers and ERCs.

Clients Waiting Group

That the program planners investigate alternative methods to define the comparison group for the evaluation. One option may be to include only those clients who find their own jobs; another may be to define the waiting group with a time limit (for example, waiting for no more than two months).

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The Implementation Group of the Nova Scotia Compass Program is representative of all partners to the agreement, and was responsible for the formulation of this management response. The Process Evaluation provided an opportunity for all partners to realize the strengths and goal areas of the demonstration project. Many of the recommendations made in the actual evaluation document had already been identified by the Implementation Group and action taken.

The process evaluation of the Compass Program confirms the importance of providing both financial and human resources to social assistance recipients to help with reentry to the labour market. This is evidenced by the high degree of satisfaction with all components of the program stated by evaluation participants.

The process evaluation also confirmed the importance of partnerships between all levels of government and the business community. In these times of austerity, this approach to client service demonstrates strategic use of limited resources, and benefits all partners.

The major findings of the evaluation and comments/action taken by the program administrators are noted below.

Recommendation: *That the Transitional Training Option under Compass not replace the already existing transitional programs in place in some ERCs. These latter programs are available to a broader range of clients than the Compass option, specifically the non job ready client and the older client who make up at least two-thirds of the ERC clientele. The Compass option is an additional tool for the job ready but is limited by its design under the Strategic Initiatives Program in its wider applicability.*

Response: Prior to the inception of the Strategic Initiative **Compass**, some Employment Resource Centres (ERCs) had access to funds through the Employability Accord (SAR Agreement) to place clients in subsidized employment and training situations with employers. This option was not available to all ERCs and unlike the Transitional Training component of Compass, targeted the older client and the client who required the placement as a means of becoming more job ready. The Transitional Training Component of Compass targets those clients who are already job ready and can be moved to unsubsidized employment in a more timely fashion. The provision of additional staff in the form of Job Developers to the ERCs has provided ERC staff the time needed to work clients that do not fit the Transitional Training target group. Job Developers have also taken on the responsibility of marketing clients who do not fit the characteristics of the target groups to employers, without using a wage subsidy as a marketing tool.

Recommendation: *That the Core Implementation Committee consider a reallocation of the placements available under this option for provincial and municipal clients based on availability of appropriate referrals.*

Response: The Core Implementation Committee had taken action on this recommendation prior to receiving the Process Evaluation. Consistent monitoring of placement consumption and communication with the ERCs indicated the need to be flexible with the numbers of placements allocated to specific target groups, based on regional trends and community needs. The previous requirement that specific percentages of the total seats allocated to Transitional Training be utilized with single parents has been relaxed upon request of the ERC. The option continues to target single parents and displaced workers, but is now able to deal more effectively and equitably with both groups.

Recommendation: *That regulations pertaining to the Work Experience option be revised to permit clients who are in need of work experience and who have dependents to receive a higher allowance.*

Response: The Work Experience Option has been modified to provide the base minimum wage to participants. To facilitate this change financially, and to maintain the integrity of the Strategic Initiative, the number of placement weeks was reduced from twenty-six (26) to sixteen (16). This modification has enabled social assistance recipients with dependents to participate in this option, and also allows host employers to “top up” this wage if desired. Both changes have immediately demonstrated that they were effective responses to field level issues.

Recommendation: *That a small amount of dollars be made available to the rural ERCs to assist clients with placement related travel expenses. The fund should be at the discretion of the ERC Coordinator and only be used in circumstances:*

where, without it, a client would be unable to take up a placement; and

where the client will be able to make his own transportation arrangements once in the job (car pooling, purchase used vehicle).

Response: The Opportunity Fund has been utilized to meet this need in some of the more rural areas of the province. This fund is limited, however, and cannot meet all the needs identified by the ERCs. The Implementation Committee acknowledges that there is a need for the option of a transportation allowance in specific cases, and will make provisions for this within the Opportunity Fund in the event that any new monies are received.

Recommendation: *That the Compass Coordinator place additional emphasis on enhancing linkages between provincial counsellors and the ERCs as the delivery body for Compass.*

That mechanisms be put in place to ensure feedback from the ERCs to provincial counsellors on the progress of the provincial referrals.

Response: The Department of Community Services has facilitated a series of regional meetings across the province which brought all Employment and Training partners, including the provincial counsellors, to the table. These forums discussed the use of Compass as a tool for all social assistance recipients in municipal and provincial programs, and developed action plans for communication between provincial counsellors and ERC staff. These plans, including ongoing case conferencing regarding Compass participants, have been operational since June 1994 and are well received by both ERC and provincial counselling staff.

Recommendation: *That the Core Implementation Committee seek ways of addressing the three major barriers to employment facing many Family Benefits clients (the lack of transportation, lack of subsidized daycare and the pharma card issue) in their search for employment.*

Response: The Department of Community Services is currently undertaking a major review of income and employment support programs which will culminate in new legislation. The issue of barriers to employment is long standing and will be examined as part of the review.

Recommendation: *That in future hiring for the position of Job Developer, a blend of business and counselling skills be established as the standard criteria.*

Response: A blend of business and counselling skills is the criteria as per the job description developed by the Core Implementation Committee. An emphasis was placed on business to help facilitate the exchange between Job Developers and the business community. As this project was set up with the participating municipalities as program administrators, staffing choices were determined at this level. The Implementation Committee felt that any regional deviation from the recommended policy was reflective of local level need.

Recommendation: *That Compass staff be provided with adequate office space, telephone facilities and travel budget for their regions.*

Response: It is a reality that not all ERCs have been able to provide a private office for each Job Developer. Consultation with partnering municipalities and the Department of Community Services has ensured that clients' needs for privacy and confidentiality during an interview session are met through the provision of interview rooms. Additional funds have been allocated for travel budgets in areas where forecasts were inaccurate.

Recommendation: *That resources be provided to develop appropriate literature on the Compass program including professionally written and produced brochures, as well as uniform business cards for the Job Developer.*

Response: The Department of Community Services has contracted with a professional design company to create two pamphlets. One will be for use with employers and the second with participants. The provision of uniform business cards is not possible as Job Developers are technically employees of the municipal unit(s) sponsoring the ERC and not of the Department of Community Services, however funds have been made available through the Department to cover printing costs for business cards at each local level should this be desired.

Recommendation: *That the degree and nature of the monitoring of placements within the Compass Program be determined on a case by case basis by the individual Job Developers.*

Response: Although there is a written monthly evaluation required from the employer, the extent of monitoring required on placement varies according to the needs of both the participant and the host employer. It is important for the employer and participant to understand that the Job Developer is available on an as needed basis, and it is equally important for the Job Developer to ensure that the contractual agreement is being fulfilled. Job Developers have been encouraged to use their judgement when establishing a monitoring pattern, ensuring that this pattern is always client driven.

Recommendation: *That the loan available under Stream II of the EDO be increased to \$5,000 for all approved applicants - if required - and not just in exceptional cases as had been recently agreed upon by the EDO Advisory Committee.*

Response: It is agreed that the funding limits should be increased. Based on the experience with the Enterprise Development Option to date, the \$2,000 Stream II micro-enterprise loan has not, for the most part, been able to lever other financing as anticipated and has been used as the sole form of financing for business start up requirements. Accordingly, increasing the loan limit to \$5,000 for all applicants and not just those qualifying under exceptional circumstances guidelines is appropriate. This has not been done only because sufficient budget funds are not available at this time.

Recommendation: *That the Compass Coordinator and the TIGER developers work together to determine the feasibility and costs of upgrading the TIGER system to meet the needs of Job Developers and ERCs.*

Response: The TIGER team has forwarded a copy of the software to the Department of Community Services MIS division for incorporation into the new Income Assistance information management system. The TIGER developer is available to all ERCs for site specific upgrades as deemed necessary by ERC Coordinators.

Recommendation: *That the program planners investigate alternative methods to define the comparison group for the evaluation. One option may be to include only those clients who find their own jobs; another may be to define the waiting group with a time limit (for example, waiting no more than two months).*

Response: The Compass Evaluation committee will examine the options for alternative definitions of the comparison group to ensure that the most appropriate group is used for the impact evaluation.

CHAPTER

Introduction

1

1.1 Study Purpose

The *Compass Program* is one of the Nova Scotia government's pilot programs implemented in response to the national federal-provincial *Strategic Initiatives Program*, established in March 1994. The *Strategic Initiatives Program* is designed to identify and develop innovative approaches to social security reform.

The *Compass Program* has been designed:

- to be a comprehensive program targeted to social assistance recipients at various stages of training/employment readiness;
- to provide opportunities to working age adults who have been displaced from the labour market and who do not have the skills to move into other employment. This includes single parent women and laid off fishers receiving social assistance;
- to assist unemployed youth at risk of long-term dependency to develop job skills;
- to be delivered by existing Employment Resource Centres throughout the province;
- to complement and build on existing training and employment services offered by the province, municipalities and the federal government for SAR clients; and,
- to allow for the development of a high-profile communication strategy aimed at informing the public and inducting private sector employers as partners in the program.

A budget of \$15 million, cost-shared between the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia, is being made available to the *Compass Program* over the 2 year period from October 1994 to October 1996. The funding is provided through a federal– provincial cooperation agreement, signed March 31, 1995 between Human Resources Development Canada and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.

The Agreement specifies the program structure, descriptions and criteria along with the legal obligations of both parties. As part of the Agreement requirements, Canada and Nova Scotia have committed to undertake an evaluation of the *Compass Program* “to determine its effectiveness and its potential to contribute to social security reform.”

This report presents the results of a process evaluation of the *Compass Program*, based on the first six months of program operation. The evaluation was completed over the May–July 1995 period by Martell Consulting Services Ltd. in association with Collins Management Consulting & Research Ltd.

The overall purpose of the study is to provide a process evaluation of the *Compass Program*. The study Terms of Reference require the evaluation to:

- examine the activities of Nova Scotia Compass and their relevance to policy goals and project objectives; and
- examine the processes involved in the administration, management and operation of Nova Scotia Compass including participant selection, orientation and monitoring.

1.2 Outline of the Report

This report is organized into five chapters and two appendices. Together, these describe the study methodologies and processes, identify and discuss the key issues arising from the process evaluation, and address the issues and questions set out in the Terms of Reference.

This report addresses the primary study objectives in the following five chapters. In addition to this introductory chapter, the specific components of the study are as follows:

- **Chapter 2 - Study Methodology** introduces the study issues and the specific methodologies characterizing our approach to the assignment;
- **Chapter 3 - Profile of the Compass Program** describes the structure and components of the *Compass Program*;
- **Chapter 4 - Profile of the Compass Client**; describes several socio-economic characteristics and work history backgrounds of respondents (both Client Participants and Client Waiting) attached to the *Work Experience* and *Transitional Training Options*;
- **Chapter 5 - Evaluation Issues** presents the evaluation issues and our analysis of these issues; and
- **Chapter 6 - Summary of Findings and Recommendations** synthesizes the results of the process evaluation and provides specific recommendations for improving the *Compass Program*.

Two appendices are included:

- **Appendix A** - contains a summary of the interviews and focus group discussions held with the ERC coordinators, ERC counsellors, Career Planning counsellors, Job Developers, Economic Renewal Agency field officers, and members of the EDO Advisory Committee.
- **Appendix B** - contains copies of the four survey questionnaires (*Client Participants, Client Waiting, Employer Participants, Job Developers*) and the frequency distributions for each question.

CHAPTER

Study Methodology

2

2.1 The Role of Process Evaluation

Process evaluations are meant to provide information on *what* a program does, *why* it is being done and *what effect* it is having on those it is serving. The information obtained from a process evaluation provides advice to stakeholders to improve the design, delivery and performance of a program.

Process evaluations are aimed at clarifying and understanding the dynamics of how a program operates. Process studies for evaluation focus on the following kinds of questions:

- What are the experiences of clients, employers, program officers and other stakeholders that make this program what it is?
- What are the key strengths and weaknesses of the program design, organizational structure and implementation?
- How are clients brought into the program and how do they move through the program once they are participants?
- What is the nature of staff-client interactions?

Process evaluations not only look at the formal activities and anticipated outcomes of a program but they also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated interactions. Process data permit judgments to be made about the extent to which the program is operating the way it is supposed to be operating, revealing areas in which relationships can

be improved as well as highlighting strengths of the program that should be preserved.

Process evaluations are particularly useful for dissemination and replication of model interventions where a program has served as a demonstration project or is considered to be a model worthy of replication at other sites. By describing and understanding the dynamics of program processes, it is possible to isolate critical elements that have contributed to program successes and failures.

2.2 Methodology Elements

The *Compass Program* process evaluation relies on four basic evaluation methodologies which we implemented:

- a file and document review of *Compass Program* documents and manuals, the Canada/Nova Scotia Cooperation Agreement on the *Compass Program*, the federal government discussion paper “*Agenda: Jobs and Growth*” and related reports and papers on social program pilot projects in Nova Scotia;
- 25 interviews with stakeholders, completed as in-person structured discussions with key persons involved in the *Compass Program*, including:
 - 2 Human Resource Development Canada officials and 3 Nova Scotia Department of Community Service officials involved in the negotiation and implementation of the *Compass Program*;
 - 5 Economic Renewal Agency officials involved in the design and delivery of the *Enterprise Development Option* of the *Compass Program*; and,
 - 15 representative from agencies referring clients to the *Compass Program*, including ERC counsellors and Career Planning counsellors (Family Benefits referrals) with Community Services.
- 10 focus groups with program stakeholders involved with administrative and other implementation-related process details of the *Compass Program* including:

- all 18 ERC coordinators;
 - all 20 Job Developers; and
 - a group discussion with the *Enterprise Development Option* Advisory Committee.
- a series of three sets of telephone surveys of clients and employers designed to obtain information on their experiences with the *Compass Program*, with the following completion levels:
 - 251 completed questionnaires with *Client Participants*;
 - 110 completed questionnaires with *Clients Eligible for the Compass Program but not Placed*—referred to as the *Client Waiting Survey*;
 - 56 completed questionnaires with *Employer Participants*; and
 - a questionnaire was administered to all Job Developers as part of the focus groups.

Together these four sets of methodologies constitute a multiple lines of evidence approach to the *Compass Program* process evaluation. This approach, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, has allowed us to develop a strong perspective on the *Compass Program* and the evaluation issues discussed in the following chapters.

Copies of the four survey questionnaires and the frequency distributions for each question are found in Appendix B to this study.

2.3 Non-response

The overall response to the three telephone surveys was very positive, with less than 10 persons refusing to participate in the surveys. As anticipated, the major difficulty with completing interviews was locating the potential respondents from the *Client Placed* and *Client Waiting* groups. While those in the latter group were considerably harder to contact than the former, we managed to complete the required number of interviews for the *Client Waiting* group. As the report notes, we had problems with “not in service” telephone listings as well as not being able to find people at home. The former situation reflects the difficult financial position of these clients.

The response rate differs by survey type. The largest number of completed responses was for the *Client Placed* group. At the time of the survey, records from the Job Developers indicated that 530 clients had been placed by the *Compass* program. We attempted to contact all persons in this group and succeeded in 251 cases, for a response rate of 47 percent.

Determining the total number of persons in the *Client Waiting* group was problematic, due in large part to the dynamic nature of this group. We selected a random sample of 200 persons from a list of 665 eligible clients, although the total number of persons in this group was considerably higher. We increased the sample size several times during the process to a total of approximately 350 persons. We interviewed 110 persons for an approximate response rate of 31 percent.

We drew a random sample of 75 employers from a list of 557 provided by the Job Developers. We completed 56 interviews for a 75 percent response rate. The main challenge in interviewing employers was making the initial contact within their schedule to arrange the interview.

CHAPTER

Program Description

3

3.1 Background to the Compass Program

The *Compass Program* is the Nova Scotia response to the joint federal-provincial *Strategic Initiatives Program* aimed at identifying innovative approaches to social security reform. The *Strategic Initiatives Program*, launched initially in March of 1994 with a budget of \$800 million and subsequently reduced by half in the 1995 Federal budget, supports innovative approaches to improve job opportunities, reduce barriers to employment and curtail reliance on social security.

In addition to social assistance recipients (SARs), the *Strategic Initiatives Program* focuses on equity groups such as disabled Canadians and the Aboriginal population, the working poor, low income single parents, children and youth, older displaced workers and Unemployment Insurance exhaustees. Evaluation of the various programs implemented under the *Strategic Initiatives Program* will provide an opportunity to compile a body of knowledge and share best practices.

The *Compass Program* was developed by the provincial Department of Community Services in partnership with Human Resources Development Canada and in consultation with the Economic Renewal Agency and the Department of Education and Culture.

3.2 Program Context

In Nova Scotia, the provincial and municipal levels of government share responsibility for the provision of financial assistance to persons in need. The *Family Benefits Act* and *Regulations* authorize the Province to grant assistance to persons or families with long-term need. General Assistance covers short-term need and other special situations and is provided through the province's municipalities with Federal/Provincial cost-sharing.¹

Until recently, there were 66 municipal units in Nova Scotia (the recent move towards amalgamation in Cape Breton has decreased that number to 60). Each municipal unit granting General Assistance establishes its own rules and regulations governing eligibility, benefits and administrative procedures, subject to provincial approval.

Employment and training services to persons in need are also shared by the provincial and municipal levels of government. Employment and training services for the provincial SAR client are primarily provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for Disabled Persons and the Career Planning Program for Single Parents.² Large caseloads and limited staffing however have curtailed what can be offered the provincial client by way of employment assistance.

Persons in receipt of General Assistance receive employment and training services through

¹ Policy issues and funding considerations regarding the two-tiered system in place in Nova Scotia are presently under study with the intent of moving towards a one-tiered system for the delivery of social assistance in the province.

² The Department of Community Services also provides core funding to 29 vocational service centres which provide a broad range of training and employment services to mentally challenged persons. The Department also funds 5 Work Activity Programs located throughout the Province.

the Employment Resource Centres (ERCs).³ The ERCs are cost-shared on a 75:25 basis by the province and the municipalities. Although they receive a significant portion of their funding through the province, only a few ERCs provide service to provincial SAR clients. The majority have focussed their efforts on the municipal client.

As the following table indicates, social assistance caseloads at both the provincial and municipal levels have been increasing dramatically over the past five years in Nova Scotia.

Table 3.1: SAR Caseload in Nova Scotia; 1990-1994⁴

Year	Family Benefit Recipients	Annual Change (%)	Municipal Social Assistance Recipients	Annual Change (%)
1990	25,208	–	14,227	–
1991	27,038	7.3	16,539	16.3
1992	29,300	8.4	17,903	8.2
1993	31,006	5.8	19,281	7.7
1994	31,796	2.5	19,862 ⁵	3.0
'90-'94	% change	26.1	% change	39.6

³ Under the SARs Agreement (1987) provincial dollars have funded a system of 18 Employment Resource Centres (ERCs) throughout the province, mandated to assist social assistance recipients acquire and maintain stable employment.

⁴ Statistics provided by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.

⁵ Jan-Oct 94 .

The *Compass Program* was developed in response to these rising caseloads and in particular to a number of trends associated with the growing dependency on social assistance. One trend concerns the increasing number of youth depending on municipal assistance. A second is the growing numbers of single parents appearing on the provincial family benefits caseload.

The *Work Experience Option* with its emphasis on youth and the *Transitional Training Option* with its emphasis on single parents have been designed with these two target groups in mind. The Job Developer function, which enables a proactive approach to linking clients to employment, recognizes the very difficult labour market facing SAR clients today and was developed as an added resource to the Career Planning and Vocational Rehabilitation counsellors and ERC staff in their work with both these target groups.

Program planners also recognized that while self-employment is one of the fastest growing sectors in the economy there had been no mechanism at the provincial level prior to Compass to encourage SARs to view self-employment as a viable option. The *Enterprise Development Option* was established to fill this gap.

Finally, the *Opportunity Fund* was established in response to the need for ready access to small amounts of funding to purchase specialty items such as safety equipment, work-related clothing or to pay small work-related fees or licensing costs. While small in dollar amounts, the inability to afford these costs could mean the difference between employment or no employment to a client.

The *Compass Program* was specifically designed to provide provincial job ready clients with access to employment. The Province was aware that its continuum of service to provincial clients prior to Compass was limited on the employment side and set out to ensure that Compass would fill this gap.

Compass was also designed as an additional resource for ERC staff to draw upon in working with their clients (primarily municipal). The *Enterprise Development Option*, for example, is the first time that business training and seed capital have been made readily available to qualified SAR clients. For most ERCs in the province, it is also the first time that placement dollars have been made available to clients as well as dollars through the *Opportunity Fund*. While the Province had previously piloted the Transitional Training option and the Halifax ERC had piloted the Opportunity Fund under the SARs Agreement, the Province's participation in the *Strategic Initiatives Program* has allowed a much broader geographic application of those employment interventions.

Compass is intended to fill the programming gaps for SAR clients at both the municipal and provincial levels. The *Compass Program* is a flexible response to the needs of SAR clients in their search for employment/training, to the ERCs as the delivery agent for training programs and to the provincial counsellors in their work with clients.

3.3 Organizational Structure and Design of the Compass Program

A joint Federal-Provincial Implementation Committee made up of representatives from Human Resources Development Canada, the Department of Community Services and the Economic Renewal Agency has been set up to oversee the implementation of the *Compass Program*. The Federal and Provincial partners are responsible for evaluating the initiative while the Province is taking the lead in the development and implementation of the program. Both partners equally share in the \$15 million financing of the *Compass Program*. The municipalities are also represented on this committee through the presence of ERC coordinators.

The *Compass Program* has been designed to be both flexible and easy to administer. Compass operates more or less on a de-centralized model with responsibility for policy

and overall implementation issues held centrally and responsibility for the day to day operations devolved to the individual Employment Resource Centres.

The Compass Coordinator located at Community Services headquarters is responsible for overall program implementation issues, coordination of information among the partners, collection and compilation of statistics and budget allocation.

Responsibility for the day to day administration and delivery of three of the four *Compass Program* components resides with the individual ERC coordinators established across the province and their staff. These three components are the *Work Experience Option*, the *Transitional Training Option* and the *Opportunity Fund*. Referrals to Compass come through the ERC counsellors (municipal referrals), the Career Planning counsellors (Family Benefits referrals) and Vocational Rehabilitation counsellors with Community Services. The Vocational Rehabilitation counsellors refer both provincial and municipal vocationally disabled clients. Outside agencies may also refer clients to the ERCs for assessment for Compass. The Job Developers, hired through the *Compass Program* to work out of the ERCs, are the primary mechanism for identifying employers and making the appropriate match with Compass clients.

Administration and delivery of the fourth component, the *Enterprise Development Option*, resides with the Enterprise Development Option Advisory Committee under the direction of the Nova Scotia Economic Renewal Agency. Responsibility for the *Enterprise Development Option* resides with the Department of Community Services. Make-up of the Advisory Committee consists of staff from the Economic Renewal Agency, the Department of Education, Human Resources Development Canada, the Department of Community Services and the Employment Resource Centres. This partnership reflects the flexibility of the *Compass Program* design and flows out the key partners' commitment to build a coordinated approach to service delivery.

3.4 Components of the Compass Program

The four components of the *Compass Program* are described below:

- Work Experience Option
- Transitional Training Option
- Enterprise Development Option
- Opportunity Fund

The following two tables summarize the first six months of operation of the program, compared to expectations at the outset of the program. The first table presents the financial results of the program and its four components while the second sets out actual placements for the three job placement components.

Table 3.2: Program Activity; October 1994 - March 1995⁶

Component	Projected	Actual	Achievement (%)
Work Experience	\$971,120	\$589,537	60.7%
Transitional Training	\$387,000	\$315,286	81.5%
Enterprise Development	\$385,000	\$505,954	131.4%
Opportunity Fund	\$51,592	\$29,927	58.0%
Total	\$1,794,712	\$1,440,704	80.3%

⁶ Projected: Department of Community Services Compass Program - Financial Summary for Fiscal Year 1994/95

Actual: Department of Community Services Compass Program - Financial Expenditure Summary, 1994/95

Table 3.3: Program Referrals and Placements⁷

Component	Referrals	Actual Placements
Work Experience	1402	255
Transitional Training	1135	186
Enterprise Development	NA	60
Total		501

3.4.1 Work Experience Option

Recent years have seen a growing increase in the numbers of unemployed youth on the municipal social assistance caseloads. Many of these youth have been assessed as lacking both specific work skills and experience in a work environment.

The *Work Experience Option* was designed to address these needs by providing youth (between 18 and 30 years of age) in receipt of municipal assistance with an opportunity to gain work experience to enhance their employability. Recent changes have also seen the *Work Experience Option* opened up to a limited number of Family Benefits clients assessed as likely to benefit from the work experience provided through this option.

The *Work Experience Option* provides youth with their first real job and an opportunity to feel positive about working everyday. Through their participation, it is intended that youth will realize meaningful jobs are not easy to find and that they may require more training or education to obtain the job they want. The option is also useful for providing clients with

⁷ Data obtained from Compass Coordinator.

the opportunity to explore different careers or to provide an opportunity to practice skills acquired but never implemented in a work situation. Finally, the *Work Experience Option* serves as an early intervention for a potentially high risk client group.

Youth are paid an allowance of \$160 a week while on placement. Placements vary in length but may not exceed 26 weeks. Should clients not be hired on at the end of their placements, ERC staff will continue to work with them as may be required, providing counselling, training in job search skills or other job development activities.

Criteria: Criteria for referral to this component are that youth be: on municipal assistance; out of public school for 2 years; between 18 and 30 years of age; in need of entry level skills and career development; have limited or no labour market attachment; and are unprepared at that time for more formal skills training.

Referrals: Referrals of appropriate clients are made by the ERC counsellors to the Job Developers. Other agencies involved with SAR clients may also act as referring bodies to the ERCs.

The Job Developer: Job Developers are mandated with identifying and responding to employers in their region interested in partnering with the *Compass Program* and capable of providing quality on-the-job training with links to future employment or training. The Job Developers make the appropriate "match" between the clients referred from the ERC counsellors and the employers identified as appropriate for the program. Job Developers are also responsible for monitoring the placement over the 26 week period entailing regular contact as required with both the employer and client. The emphasis of all the Job Developer's efforts is how to best meet client employment-related needs reflecting the client-driven aspect of the overall *Compass Program*.

Placements: The budget allows for 1,100 Work Experience placements under the *Compass Program*. As of April 30, 1995, some 1,402 youth had been referred to the *Work Experience Option* across the province and 255 placements secured. Placement dollars committed to March 31, 1995 totalled \$589,537.

3.4.2 Transitional Training Option

The *Transitional Training Option* was designed to assist skilled job ready individuals obtain work experience to access employment. More specifically this component was designed to assist single parents in receipt of Family Benefits, persons with disabilities and displaced fishers/plant workers in receipt of social assistance.

Under this component, a wage subsidy is available to private sector employers to hire job ready SAR clients to enhance their employability. Employers contribute a minimum of 25 percent of the hourly wage. The maximum that Compass can contribute is \$5.62 an hour. Tenure is for a maximum of six months for full-time work.

Up to \$7,500,000 has been allocated as subsidized training wages for the *Transitional Training Option*, originally to be allocated between provincial and municipal clients on a ratio of 80:20. Due to a higher number of municipal clients presenting as job-ready, the ratio has been recently re-adjusted by the Implementation Committee to 60:40. This change in response to the type of client take-up of the program reflects the client-driven nature of *Compass*.

Referrals: Provincial clients to the *Transitional Training Option* are referred to the ERCs through Community Services' Career Planning and Vocational Rehabilitation counsellors after an assessment process. Referrals also come through other agencies and self-referrals. Municipal clients are referred through the usual ERC assessment process. Other agencies involved with SAR clients may also act as referring bodies to the ERCs.

All referrals are reviewed by the ERC counsellors and, if found to meet the *Transitional Training Option* criteria, are referred to the Job Developers for placement. Job Developers verify job readiness but do not counsel clients.

Job Developers: As with the *Work Experience Option*, Job Developers are responsible for identifying employers with the capacity to hire trainees. Only private sector employers

are eligible as partners for the *Transitional Training Option*. Monitoring of the placements occurs regularly and is the responsibility of the Job Developers.

Placements: Up to \$7,500,000 is available under Compass to subsidize training wages. Of this amount, \$315,286 had been utilized as of March 30, 1995.

3.4.3 Enterprise Development Option

Prior to the *Compass Program*, self-employment was not a viable program option for SAR clients. Although a self-employment program has been available through Human Resources Development Canada, the majority of seats are reserved for UIC recipients. As well, SAR clients have had no access to start-up equity prior to Compass.

Compass is breaking ground in presenting self-employment as a viable option for SAR clients across the province. Under the *Enterprise Development Option*, up to \$1.2 million has been allocated to assist SAR clients establish small business/micro enterprises. Of this amount, \$1 million was initially allocated to support the entrepreneurial training stream of the program with the remaining \$200,000 allocated to a Micro- Enterprise Loan Fund. On the basis of the first six months activity, the Enterprise Development Advisory Committee adjusted the allocation (\$800,000 to training and \$400,000 to the loan fund) to more closely reflect the take-up of the two streams.

Under Stream I, clients who have been assessed by the ERC and provincial counsellors as having the potential for self-employment are referred to an approved Compass funded training program to acquire core training in entrepreneurial skills and business development. The training occurs over a 20 week period, the first 4 weeks of which focus on core life skills. A completed business plan is one of the outputs of the training. The thrust of the training is to work with the clients to ensure that their business idea is viable and to provide them with the necessary skills to get their businesses up and running.

Stream I is being piloted to SAR clients in four sites throughout the province (Digby, Halifax County, Middleton and Sydney). Recent changes in the option also allow for individual seat purchases of business courses from private and public trainers anywhere in the province.

Stream II consists of a Micro-Enterprise Loan Fund. The fund is "a loan of last resort" and is intended to provide seed capital of up to \$2,000. In "exceptional cases" the Advisory Committee has the discretion to increase this amount up to \$5,000. The loan is to be repaid over a period of 3 years from the time of signed acceptance of the letter of offer.

Stream II is available to SAR clients province-wide; clients are not required to have taken the Stream I training to qualify for the loan.

Referrals: Referrals to Stream I of the EDO are prescreened and recommended through the ERCs. Clients go through a second and final selection procedure by the trainers.

Referrals to Stream II also come through the ERCs or other agencies working with SAR clients. A client must demonstrate strength in business skills and have a Business Plan in order to meet the referral criteria for Stream II. Participation in Stream I however is not a prerequisite of Stream II.

Economic Renewal Agency/Business Service Centre Officers: Clients who meet the basic criteria for Stream II are referred by the ERCs to one of the 9 Business Service Centres of the Nova Scotia Economic Renewal Agency established across the province. Business Service Centre officers meet with the client to review their Business Plan and, if found to be viable, assist the client in preparing an application to the Micro-Enterprise Loan Fund.

The completed application, with the BSC officer's recommendation, is submitted in turn to the Enterprise Development Option Advisory Committee for a final decision. If approved, a letter of offer is drafted together with a promissory note to be signed by the applicant.

These are sent to the BSC officer who arranges a meeting with the applicant for acceptance and signing.

Follow-up of the client is provided by the BSC officers.

Program Take-up: As of April 30, 1995, some 48 clients were in training under Stream I of the EDO. Of this number, 15 clients were in training at the Halifax County location (Target Training); 14 students at the Cape Breton location (Desktop Computer Systems Ltd.); 10 students at the Middleton Community College campus and a further 9 at the Digby satellite. In addition, 12 loans had been reviewed under Stream II of the EDO with 10 accepted.

3.4.4 Opportunity Fund

Prior to the introduction of the *Compass Program*, ERC staff (with the exception of metro) had limited access to resources to purchase items which would enhance the employability of their clients. The *Opportunity Fund* was established as part of *Compass* to fill that gap. Through *Compass*, funds of up to \$200,000 have been made available to purchase specialty items/services such as textbooks, manuals, course fees, workboots, and safety equipment.

The *Opportunity Fund* is one of "last resort" and can be accessed only when all other options have been eliminated. It can be used both with ERC clients and clients who are involved in provincial vocational training and employment programs.

The ERC coordinator has the authority to draw upon the *Opportunity Fund* for amounts of up to \$300. Amounts over \$300 require approval of the *Compass Program* coordinator.

Program Take-up: As of March 31, 1995, \$29,927 had been drawn upon by the ERCs to assist SAR clients with specialty purchases.

3.5 Program Implementation

The Province responded quickly to the June 1994 announcement of the selection of Compass for funding under the *Strategic Initiatives Program*. An Implementation Committee was put in place and by September 1994 the Compass Program was up and running.

The initial Implementation Committee was made up of 2 senior staff from each of Community Services and HRDC, and 4 ERC coordinators. The ERC coordinators are seen as the municipal presence on the Implementation Committee. Their role, apart from overseeing the delivery of Compass through the ERCs, has been to keep their respective municipal unit informed on Compass and its progress. Responsibility for the hiring of the Job Developers was also given to the ERCs.

The committee was later broadened to include 2 representatives from the Economic Renewal Agency to engage their business expertise in the development of the EDO. Working as a hands-on group and supported by a Compass coordinator, the Implementation Committee was responsible for implementing the Compass proposal submitted to Strategic Initiatives. This entailed the development of guidelines and statistical forms and culminated in the creation of the Compass Manual in August 1994.

The Compass Manual is the blueprint for the *Compass Program* and contains the operational guidelines, referral procedures, allocations by component and region, staff descriptions, financial management procedures and all the forms required by the program. Copies of the Compass Manual have been provided to, among others, all Compass staff, ERCs, Career Planning and Vocational Rehabilitation counsellors.

The Implementation Team is committed to the establishment of a quality management plan for the *Compass Program* so as to enhance service to SAR clients. This is borne out by the group's ongoing meetings (held approximately bi-monthly and more frequently when

required) to review program progress and resolve issues as they arise.

The Implementation Committee has placed considerable emphasis on ensuring communication among all partners and staff involved in Compass.

In September 1994 a one day training/orientation session was held with all Job Developers, ERC coordinators and provincial counsellors concerning program procedures, roles and responsibilities. This was followed by a training session in November 1994 attended by Job Developers and representatives from Career Planning and Vocational Rehabilitation and the ERCs. In March 1995 a one day meeting was held attended by all ERC coordinators, Job Developers and representatives from Career Planning and Vocational Rehabilitation. The purpose of this latter meeting was to assess progress and discuss outstanding issues.

While the first 6 months of Compass were spent in getting the program up and running, the subsequent four months have been spent ensuring the program is being consistently applied across the province, regulations are understood by all involved and facilitating the collection and analysis of program statistics.

Since the present Compass Coordinator's hiring in April 1995, much of her focus has been on establishing mechanisms to tighten communication among the major players in Compass. Job Developer staff development days, for example, have been held at which Job Developers share challenges and discuss innovative practices.

The Compass Coordinator has also initiated the establishment of 5 bi-monthly regional meetings across the province. Attendees include Compass staff, Career Planning and Vocational Rehabilitation counsellors, representatives from the ERCs, HRDC, ERA, FB and MSA.

The Implementation Committee sees one of its main roles to nurture and support the partnerships developed through Compass. These partnerships involve field staff as well as management and are strengthened through the efforts noted above.

CHAPTER

Client Profile

4

4.1 Introduction

This profile of the *Compass Program* clients is based on a telephone survey with 252 clients that were placed in employment — the *Client Participant* group — and 109 clients that were eligible for a *Compass* placement but were not placed at the time they were interviewed for the survey — the *Client Waiting* group. In a real sense, the survey of *Client Participants* was not so much a random sample as an attempt to contact most, if not all, of those persons who had been placed by the *Compass Program* during its early stages.

Both groups include persons from the three program options:

- Work Experience Option;
- Transitional Training Option; and
- Enterprise Development Option.

The distribution of the respondents by group and program option is shown in the following table. The program option was not specified in 54 cases of the 361 completed client questionnaires. Of these 54 cases, 10 were in the *Client Placed* group and 44 in the *Client Waiting* group. To obtain the maximum information from their questionnaires, we imputed the “program option” for these 54 respondents, based on a review of their combined responses to questions such as their age, program stream, employment status before the *Compass Program* and so on.

Table 4.1: Responses by Program Option and Client Status

Option	Clients Placed		Clients Waiting		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Work Experience Option	143	57	43	39	186	51
Transitional Training Option	90	35	60	55	150	42
Enterprise Development Option	19	8	6	6	25	7
Total	252	100	109	100	361	100

This chapter describes several socio-economic characteristics and work history backgrounds of respondents from the first two options of *Client Participants* listed above, along with the *Client Waiting* group. Some preliminary results are included here as well.

The complete set of client characteristics and the responses to each question are provided in the respective questionnaires for both the *Client Participant* and *Client Waiting* groups in Appendix B.

4.2 Work Experience Option

4.2.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The *Work Experience Option* is designed to support youth in receipt of municipal assistance with an opportunity to gain work experience to increase their employability. The survey results indicate that *Work Experience Option* clients have an average age of 26 years. This client group is more likely to be male (62 percent of respondents) than female (38 percent of respondents).

The following table provides the distribution of marital status for this group. As the table shows, about three quarters of this client group have never married. Forty percent of the “single” group, 41 persons, are female. Nine percent or 13 of the 143 *Work Experience Option* clients interviewed reported they were single parents. The distribution of single parents did not vary significantly by gender; 54 percent were females and 46 percent were males.

Table 4.2: Marital Status of Clients Placed in the Work Experience Option

Marital Status	Number	%
Married	18	13
Living Common Law	11	8
Single (never married)	105	73
Separated	5	3
Divorced	4	3
Total	143	100

The average number of children dependents for the *Work Experience Option* client group was 0.5 children; 70 percent of respondents had 0 children. Other dependents reported by this client group are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Dependents of Clients Placed in the Work Experience Option

Respondents with Dependents	# Reporting Dependents⁸	%
Children	43	30
Older person	14	10
Significant other/spouse	22	15
Other (friend, family member, room-mate)	4	0

The educational attainment levels of the *Work Experience* clients who were placed is diverse, but concentrated at the “incomplete high school” or diploma/GED level. These two groups accounted for 68 percent of the 142 persons providing this information. The complete range of educational attainment for the *Work Experience Option* clients is indicated in Table 4.4.

⁸ Note: Since multiple responses were possible, items cannot be totalled.

Table 4.4: Education of Clients Placed in the Work Experience Option

Highest Level of Education	Number	%
Grade school (up to grade 8)	5	4
Some high school	46	32
High school diploma (GED)	51	36
Some trade school	2	1
Completed trade school	12	8
Some community college	2	1
Completed community college	15	11
Some university	7	5
Completed or Post-graduate university	2	2
Total	142	100

4.2.2 Labour Market Background

The questionnaire included four questions designed to obtain background information on the *Compass Program* clients prior to their participating in the Program. These questions were initially developed for the *Compass Program* Baseline Survey. For purposes of comparability, the four questions used in this survey are identical to the Baseline Survey.

The results presented in the following tables, in combination with the demographic profile of clients, reflect the focus of the *Work Experience Option* on those who have not been able to find work due to inexperience.

Table 4.5: Labour Force Activity of Clients Placed in the Work Experience Option, in the Year Prior to Compass

Labour Force Activity	Average Number of Weeks	Percent of Year
Employed full-time	4	8
Employed part-time	4	8
Unemployed and actively looking for work	32	62
Unemployed & not actively looking for work	4	7
Attending school full-time	6	11
Attending school part-time	0	1
Enrolled in a training course full-time	2	4
Enrolled in a training course part-time	0	0
Total	52 weeks	100

Clients responding to the survey were asked about the reasons they were not working before applying to the *Compass Program*. The two major barriers cited by *Work Experience Option* clients were:

- Jobs were available but I didn't have enough experience: 37% of the 143 respondents; and
- No jobs were available: 47% of the 143 respondents.

In contrast, only 31 percent of all 252 "placed" respondents cited the former barrier and 50 percent cited the latter barrier.

To overcome these barriers to employment, the *Work Experience Option* clients undertook a variety of measures to increase their employability. The six main types of

training or counselling services that client respondents had undertaken during the year before applying to the *Compass Program* are shown in the following table. The table indicates the proportion of the 143 *Work Experience Option* respondents who used a particular method in the year prior to their placement; multiple responses were possible.

Table 4.6: Most Common Training or Counselling Services Used by Clients Placed in the Work Experience Option

Training or Counselling Service	Number	%
Training project (combining job search, job training and counselling)	18	13
Job placement	18	13
Job-specific training	21	15
Job counselling	39	27
Job-finding club	23	16
Job search workshop	22	32

Work Experience Option clients were asked if they had received various social support services in the two years prior to their participation in the *Compass Program*. Table 4.7 lists the three most commonly received services among this group, along with the length of time each service was received over the two year period. Interestingly, some 8 percent of respondents indicated that they had not received Social Assistance, although this is an eligibility criterion for *Compass*.

Table 4.7: Most Common Support Services Received by Clients Placed in the Work Experience Option

Received		Less than 6 mos.	6 mos. – 1 year	Over 1 year
Social Assistance	131 92%	55 42%	36 27%	40 31%
Unemployment Insurance	28 20%	7 25%	20 71%	1 4%
Training allowance	18 13%	10 56%	7 39%	1 6%

4.3 Transitional Training Option

4.3.1 Socio–Demographic Characteristics

The *Transitional Training* option is designed to assist skilled job ready individuals obtain work experience to obtain employment. The primary focus of the option is single parents in receipt of Family Benefits assistance, persons with disabilities and displaced fishers/plant workers in receipt of social assistance. A total of 90 participants under this program option responded to the survey. Thirty–eight percent of the respondents were receiving Municipal Social Assistance and 62 percent were on Family Benefits.

The survey results indicate that *Transitional Training Option* clients are 33 years of age on average. In contrast to the *Work Experience Option* clients in the survey, *Transitional Training* respondents are predominantly female (72 percent of respondents).

Table 4.8 indicates the distribution of this client group by marital status. As the table shows, 40 percent of this group are single; an almost equal percentage (39 percent) are

either separated or divorced. Forty-nine of the 73 persons surveyed in the “single, separated, divorced or widow” category — 67 percent of all persons in this grouping — reported that they were single parents. Some 94 percent of all who identified themselves as single parents were females.

Table 4.8: Marital Status of Clients Placed in the Transitional Training Option

Marital Status	Number	%
Married	9	10
Living Common Law	8	9
Single (never married)	36	40
Separated	15	17
Divorced	20	22
Widow or widower	2	2
Total	90	100

The 90 *Transitional Training Option* respondents reported 1.3 children dependents on average; only 28 percent of respondents reported 0 children. Other dependents reported by clients placed under the *Transitional Training Option* are shown in the Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Dependents of Clients Placed in the Transitional Training Option

Respondents with Dependents	# Reporting Dependents⁹	%
Children	65	72
Older person	2	2
Significant other/spouse	11	12

The educational attainment levels of the *Transitional Training Option* clients who were placed is diverse. These clients have a somewhat higher level of educational attainment than the *Work Experience Option* clients interviewed. The complete range of educational attainment for respondent–clients placed through the *Compass Program* is indicated in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: Education of Clients Placed in the Transitional Training Option

Highest Level of Education	Number	%
Grade school (up to grade 8)	3	3
Some high school	16	18
High school diploma (GED)	27	30
Some trade school	2	2
Completed trade school	9	10
Some community college	5	6
Completed community college	16	18
Some university	8	9
Completed/ Post-graduate university	4	4
Total	90	100

⁹ Note: Since multiple responses were possible, items cannot be totalled.

4.3.2 Labour Market Background

The following tables describe the labour market backgrounds of *Transitional Training Option* clients who participated in the survey.

Table 4.11: Labour Force Activity of Clients Placed in Transitional Training Option, in the Year Prior to Compass

Labour Force Activity	Average Number of Weeks	Percent of Year
Employed full-time	6	12
Employed part-time	7	13
Unemployed and actively looking for work	29	55
Unemployed & not actively looking for work	6	12
Attending school full-time	2	4
Attending school part-time	1	2
Enrolled in a training course full-time	1	2
Enrolled in a training course part-time	0	0
Total	52 weeks	100

Clients responding to the survey were asked about the reasons they were not working before applying to the *Compass Program*. The two major barriers cited by *Transitional Training Option* clients were:

No jobs were available: 61% of the 90 respondents; and
Jobs were available but I didn't have enough experience: 26% of the 90 respondents.

Child care arrangements and transportation problems were mentioned by 8 and 7 percent of *Transitional Training Option* respondents, respectively.

The respondents used a variety of measures to increase their employability. The five most common training or counselling services that the client respondents had undertaken during the year before applying to the *Compass Program* are shown in Table 4.12. The table indicates the proportion of the 90 *Transitional Training Option* respondents who used a particular method in the year prior to their placement; multiple responses were possible.

Table 4.12: Most Common Training or Counselling Services Used by Clients Placed in the Transitional Training Option

Training or Counselling Service	Number	%
Training project (combining job search, job training and counselling)	14	16
Job-specific training	15	17
Job counselling	22	24
Job-finding club	17	19
Job search workshop	12	13

Transitional Training Option clients were asked if they had received various social support services in the two years prior to their participation in the *Compass Program*. Table 4.13 lists the three most commonly received services among this group, along with the length of time each service was received over the two year period. Other support services such as disability pensions, workers compensation and student aid were received by fewer than 10 percent of respondents.

As with the *Work Experience Option* clients, 7 percent of respondents indicated that they had not received Social Assistance, although this is an eligibility criterion for *Compass*.

Table 4.13: Most Common Support Services Received by Clients Placed in the Transitional Training Option

Received		Less than 6 mos.	6 mos. – 1 year	Over 1 year
Social Assistance	84 93%	22 26%	21 25%	41 49%
Unemployment Insurance	40 44%	6 15%	34 85%	0 0%
Training allowance	16 18%	7 44%	9 56%	0 0%

4.4 Clients Waiting for a Compass Placement

4.4.1 Socio–Demographic Characteristics

A total of 109 respondents in the survey were clients who were **waiting** for a placement through *Compass*. Our analysis found that these persons did not differ in any major way from clients placed. In part this arises from the fact that many of the “clients waiting” are

moving through the placement process and simply had not been placed when the sample list was prepared. We found that a sizable proportion — possibly up to 10 percent — of our original sample of “clients waiting” had been placed when they were selected for a telephone survey. We included these clients in the appropriate “placed” group and administered the “client placed” questionnaire.

Clients may also be “waiting” because they live in a labour market where jobs are very scarce. This was certainly true to some extent in a number of ERC locations. Some 56 percent of clients waiting were in the Municipal Social Assistance option.

Clients waiting for a *Compass Program* placement are 32 years of age on average. Sixty-two percent of this group are female and 38 percent are male. The clients have 0.9 children on average.

More than half — 52 percent — of clients waiting are single (never married). About 48 percent of all those in the “single, separated, divorced or widow” category are single parents — 42 of the 88 persons in the category. All of those 42 respondents who identified themselves as single parents were females. Table 4.14 gives the distribution of clients waiting by marital status.

Table 4.14: Marital Status of Clients Waiting

Marital Status	Number	%
Married	18	16
Living Common Law	3	3
Single (never married)	56	52
Separated	7	6
Divorced	25	23
Total	109	100

Table 4.15: Education of Clients Waiting

Highest Level of Education	Number	%
Grade school (up to grade 8)	9	8
Some high school	16	15
High school diploma (GED)	26	24
Some trade school	3	3
Completed trade school	18	17
Some community college	4	4
Completed community college	20	19
Some university	7	6
Completed/Post-graduate university	5	5
Total	108	100

4.4.2 Labour Market Background

The following tables describe the labour market backgrounds of clients waiting who participated in the survey.

Table 4.16: Labour Force Activity of Clients Waiting, in the Year Prior to Compass

Labour Force Activity	Average Number of Weeks	Percent of Year
Employed full-time	2	4
Employed part-time	7	13
Unemployed and actively looking for work	31	60
Unemployed & not actively looking for work	4	8
Attending school full-time	2	4
Attending school part-time	2	4
Enrolled in a training course full-time	3	5
Enrolled in a training course part-time	1	2
Total	52 weeks	100

Clients responding to the survey were asked about the reasons they were not working before applying to the *Compass Program*. The four major barriers cited by clients waiting were:

- No jobs were available: 48% of the 109 respondents;
- Jobs were available but I didn't have enough experience: 30% of the 109 respondents;
- Not enough experience: 17% of the 109 respondents; and,
- Unable to arrange child care: 16% of the 109 respondents.

Transportation problems were mentioned by 11 percent of the client waiting respondents.

The five most common training or counselling services that the client waiting respondents had undertaken during the year before applying to the *Compass Program* are shown in Table 4.17. The table indicates the proportion of the 109 respondents who used a particular method in the year prior to their placement; multiple responses were possible.

Table 4.17: Most Common Training or Counselling Services Used by Clients Waiting

Training or Counselling Service	Number	%
Training project (combining job search, job training and counselling)	9	8
Received placement	11	10
Job-specific training	18	17
Job counselling	35	32
Job-finding club	13	12

These clients were asked if they had received various social support services in the two years prior to their application to the *Compass Program*. Table 4.18 lists the three most commonly received services among this group, along with the length of time each service was received over the two year period. Other support services such as disability pensions, workers compensation and student aid were received by fewer than 10 percent of respondents.

Table 4.18: Most Common Support Services Received by Clients Waiting

Services	Received	Less than 6 mos.	6 mos. – 1 year	Over 1 year
Social Assistance	102 94%	29 28%	15 15%	59 57%
Unemployment Insurance	26 23%	5 19%	16 62%	5 20%
Training allowance	20 18%	12 60%	7 35%	1 5%

The results in the previous table indicate that clients waiting tend to have received social assistance or unemployment insurance for a longer period of time than those clients that were placed in the *Compass Program*.

4.5 Preliminary Outcomes and Program Experiences

The primary focus of this evaluation was on the processes related to the design and delivery of the *Compass Program*, rather than the outcomes or impacts of the program. However, the client placed questionnaire includes questions that provide indications of outcomes and impacts. This section presents highlights from a subset of these outcome questions for the client placed group. Appendix B provides details for the entire questionnaire.

4.5.1 The Compass Placement

We asked participants who were placed several questions about the placement process and the results of their placement. These responses should be taken in the context of the date of the interviews during June and July 1995 when about 45 percent of those placed were

still in the “placement” phase of the process. Table 4.19 presents the status of the placement at the time of the interview for *Work Experience* and *Transitional Training Option* clients.

As the table shows, *Transitional Training* clients who have completed their placement are more likely to be hired than *Work Experience* clients, while *Work Experience* clients are more likely to leave a placement for another job. Reasons for dropping vary; a “slow down at work” was noted as the reason for leaving by 21 percent of those 28 persons who left before completion.

Table 4.19: Status of the Placement by Program Option

Placement Status	Work Experience		Transitional Training	
	Number	%	Number	%
Still working on the placement	61	43	43	48
Completed the placement & hired	21	15	20	22
Completed the placement but not hired	40	28	10	12
Left the placement/dropped out before completion	12	8	16	18
Left the placement/dropped out before completion and hired by another employer	9	6	0	0
Total	143	100	90	100

The types of work that the clients have worked at under the program options varies a great deal, but are concentrated in the clerical and secretarial categories, as Table 4.20 indicates.

Table 4.20: Type of Work by Program Option

Placement Status	Work Experience		Transitional Training	
	Number	%	Number	%
Unskilled Labour	31	22	9	10
Clerical/secretarial	47	33	40	45
Trades	24	17	10	11
Personal Service Worker	12	8	6	7
Manufacturing	1	1	4	4
Food Service Worker	12	8	7	8
Retail	12	8	7	8
Janitorial Maintenance	3	2	6	7
Total	142	100	89	100

Some 87 percent of the *Work Experience* clients and 78 percent of *Transitional Training* clients reported that the jobs to which they were referred were well matched to their needs and skill levels.

Table 4.21 lists various activities related to the job placement. The responses are based on a total of 233 *Work Experience* clients and *Transitional Training* clients placed in jobs. As the table indicates, clients placed felt they were trained to do their job, introduced into the organization and given feedback on their performance. In nine out of ten cases, clients had a supervisor to which they could report concerns and questions.

Table 4.21: Compass Program Placement Related Activities

Training or Counselling Service	Count of "Yes"	%
You were trained how to do your job	203	88
You were introduced to the other staff with an explanation of your place in the organization	208	90
There were planned daily activities relating to your training	171	74
You were given feedback on your job performance by your supervisor	197	85
You had a formal evaluation on your job performance every two months	154	66
You had a supervisor to report any concerns and questions	212	91
You had the opportunity to practice new skills	212	91

4.5.2 The Job Developer

Eighty-seven percent of the clients placed under the Work Experience and Transitional Training Options rated their Job Developer as an important part to their getting a placement. In fact, 66 percent rated their Job Developer as "very important".

The four most important ways that the Job Developers helped clients are as follows:

- Helped me get a job/work placement: 91% of the 233 respondents;
- Made sure I was treated fairly by my employer: 75% of the 233 respondents;
- Helped me understand the employer's needs: 70% of the 233 respondents; and
- Provided me with information about the interview: 64% of the 233 respondents.

4.5.3 Improving the Compass Program

At the end of the survey, we asked respondents to give us their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the Compass Program, and ways to improve it based on their experiences. Their responses were not prompted or aided.

The full variety of responses is listed in Appendix B. The most common responses amongst all 361 client responding related to:

- “the chance to get relevant experience”, mentioned by 21%; and
- “the Job Developer was there for me”: 14%.

It is interesting that less than 8 percent of all respondents mentioned that Compass led to a job; less than 12 percent of those placed mentioned this feature of Compass. Some 15 percent were unable to cite a “best” feature of the Compass Program. In addition to the features listed above, the supportive and encouraging aspects of Compass are apparent in the responses: the program boosted the confidence of clients (8%), had someone else encouraging and helping them (7%) and prepared them for the workplace (6%).

Almost half of those 358 clients responding could not give a weakness or “least satisfactory” feature of Compass . The level of pay was mentioned by 12 percent and the waiting time by 12 percent. Other comments mainly related to the administrative aspects of the program in relation to social assistance and unemployment insurance. A similar perspective emerges on improving the Compass Program from a client perspective. Some 55 percent of clients could not suggest any ways to improve the program. “Higher pay” was noted by 10 percent of clients and improved marketing of the program was mentioned, although infrequently (less than 10 percent).

4.6 Summary

The survey of Compass Program clients was a comprehensive attempt to determine the profile of clients in the program, their experiences with various program elements and features, and their perceptions on the program strengths and weaknesses.

The results and findings to date are positive. From a client placed perspective, the results indicate that the demographic profile of the clients in the Work Experience and Transitional Training Options matches the program design and criteria. Clients are pleased with the process, the support they received from their Job Developer and the placement itself.

The survey findings indicate that 45 percent of those Work Experience and Transitional Training Options clients who had completed their placement at the time of the survey were hired by their employer; close to half of those we interviewed were still working on their placement. Subsequent information from the program administrators suggests this result has improved as placements are completed.

CHAPTER

Evaluation Findings and Issues

5

The following chapter presents the major findings of the evaluation including a series of issues related to the Compass Program. The findings are presented by program component - Transitional Training, Work Experience, Opportunity Fund, Enterprise Development - along with an overview of findings on the overall Compass Program.

The evaluation issues are presented under the following headings:

- Communication and Coordination
- The Family Benefits Client
- Background of the Job Developer
- Computer Systems

The analysis is based on the information collected from the surveys, interviews and focus group discussions held with the ERC coordinators, ERC counsellors, Job Developers, Career Planning counsellors, Economic Renewal Agency field officers and members of the EDO Advisory Committee. Further details can be found in the summaries of the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions contained in Appendix A.

Additional information on the responses to the employer, participant and client waiting questionnaires are provided in Appendix B.

5.1 The Compass Program: Overview of Findings

Overall response to the Compass Program 6 months into its operations has been positive. The processes are mostly working and SAR clients are experiencing offers of full-time employment.

For most of the rural-based ERCs, the Compass Program has meant a major enhancement and focusing of the ERC efforts on the placement of the client. The focus prior to Compass had been primarily on job-readiness as there were limited resources for placement-related programming in the rural communities. One of the frustrations that Compass has been able to circumvent has been "bringing a client to the point of employment and not being able to go further."¹⁰

Compass offers these ERCs, for the first time, the tools to locate meaningful employment placements for their clients. It also offers counsellors the flexibility to purchase - through the Opportunity Fund - much needed items that may mean the difference between employment or no employment for a client.

To the metro-based ERCs Compass is viewed more as an additional tool in its work with clients. These ERCs, for example, had a transitional training option in place prior to Compass, as well as a fund similar to the Opportunity Fund, both of which have been funded through the SARs Agreement. The Work Experience Option has provided the only real - and much welcomed - addition to the slate of program options available to the metro ERCs in their work with youth.

The Job Developer function is seen as a major time saver for all ERC counsellors and some Community Services counsellors. The Job Developer reduces pressure on staff and frees them up for more effective counselling. Being co-located in the same offices as the

¹⁰ ERC Coordinator.

ERC counsellors is a great benefit of the program design and, in the opinion of some ERC staff, is the key to the program's success. The Job Developer works on a team basis with the counsellors with both parties having easy access to client information and updates. Some offices have arranged for weekly case conferencing between the ERC counsellors and Job Developers.

The Compass Program has been welcomed by the employer community. While employers have a large variety of program options from which to select employees, many Job Developers report the employers' preference for Compass. In fact, the employer survey found that three out of four employers surveyed rated the service they received from Compass Job Developers as “better” or “much better” than the service received from other training program organizations.

Employers find the subsidized wage element of Compass an important program feature but indicate there are other elements which also add value to the program. These include:

- the type and level of interactions with the Job Developers;
- the quality of service - 55 percent scored service quality as “excellent”;
- the appropriateness of Compass referrals - 93 percent of employers felt these met their needs - reflecting the importance of the client screening process performed by the Job Developer;
- the perception that clients are prepared for their interviews - 95 percent;
- straightforward reporting requirements, noted by 89 percent of employer respondents; and
- program monitoring, enabling trouble-shooting between the employer and the client placed.

It is important that Compass be recognized for what it is - a valuable job placement tool that supplements other employment-related training efforts in place at the ERCs and elsewhere. Compass, designed to fit the Strategic Initiatives Program, is not appropriate for all clients. It excludes the non-job ready (with the exception of youth) and the older client in need of work experience. There is also some question regarding its applicability to

the Family Benefits (FB) client. This latter issue is addressed in a later section of this chapter.

5.2 Transitional Training Option

Response by ERC staff and the Job Developers to the Transitional Training Option varied across the province and appears to be tied to the strength of the local economy. In areas where the economy is stable, for example, there have been fewer difficulties finding employers willing to take on placements. The Bridgewater office has indicated "employers are more interested in putting their training time into an individual who will stay with them after the placement period is over."

In some rural regions, on the other hand, counsellors found that employers were reluctant to accept placements because of the commitment to guarantee employment upon the end of placement. Some regions have also found it difficult to locate placement positions for the FB client, most of whom have only secretarial skills to offer the employer. "There are too many people with the same skill sets (secretarial)."¹¹

The approach taken by various municipalities towards job search by social assistance recipients also seems to have had an impact on the success of obtaining Compass placements. The Job Developer for Annapolis/Digby, for example, observed that Digby has never required its MSA recipients to obtain signatures from employers to verify their job search. Annapolis, on the other hand, has required 5 signatures each week. These bureaucratic requirements have, in her opinion, upset the employer community and resulted in significantly fewer placements in Annapolis than in Digby.

¹¹ ERC coordinator.

Compass is restricted by the Strategic Initiatives Program to the job ready client. Metro-based counsellors are concerned that the Transitional Training Option will mean the end for their own transitional programs which are more flexible than the option under Compass. The older programs accept the non-job ready and multi-barriered client whereas under Compass, the option is only open to the job ready. The metro option has also had the flexibility to enable wage subsidization up to 100 percent. A concern of metro counsellors is that Compass, while attractive to the job ready, will detract from the ability of counsellors to provide placement options to the less job ready component of their caseload.

5.3 Work Experience Option

With youth becoming an increasing portion of the ERC caseload, the Work Experience Option has been a very welcome addition to the available training interventions.

"It opens youths' eyes to the reality of employment. They realize the need for more training and employment. It provides a taste of employment and feeling positive every day. They start to realize that jobs aren't easy to find."¹²

The Work Experience Option provides great value to clients because "work experience still carries weight in the employer community."¹³ Work Experience holds particular value for the 18-24 year old clients who are typically not taken seriously by employers. The option:

- provides a good block of time to explore options;
- provides the opportunity to check out employers without pressure;

¹² ERC Coordinator.

¹³ ERC Coordinator.

- raises client confidence by indicating there is a place in the workforce for them; and
- provides the client with a résumé indicating employment over a six month period and a reference.

"If they (the clients) come out of it with a skill, a good reference and positive feedback, that's success."¹⁴

An unexpected but positive outcome of this option is that many clients placed in Work Experience get hired at the end of their placement. Sixty-one clients had completed their work placement at the time they were interviewed in June and July, 1995. Of these persons, 21 reported that they had been hired - a hiring ratio of 34 percent.

"The employers end up taking them. Six months is a long time. If they like them, they'll keep them."¹⁵

Job Developers are aware of the attractiveness to employers of the Work Experience Option and market the placement to their SAR clients as if "it was a real job."

"I tell my clients when they begin their placement to not only become trained in whatever their placement is but become a valuable employee within the placement so the employer cannot possibly let the person go and [will] hire them upon completion of the placement."

The Career Planning counsellors as well as the ERC staff welcomed the opening up of the Work Experience Option to the FB client. They recognized that in most cases their

¹⁴ Job Developer.

¹⁵ Job Developer.

clients need work experience to make them employable. The real need of many FB clients however is to remove the disincentives to employment. *"Raise the allowable \$200 a month to \$300 or \$400" we were told "and decrease the 75% take of wages over that amount to 50%."*¹⁶ Unless these changes are made, some provincial counsellors remain of the opinion that Work Experience is *"more of a hindrance than a help."*

*"They're not going to become independent on \$160 a week. It will cost them dollars, effort and bother. It will be a sacrifice to get up and do that for so little(sic)."*¹⁷

Most interviewed indicated that the major weakness of the option pertains to the \$160 weekly allowance. While some counsellors commented that *"even that amount is more than a single able-bodied male receives,"* others stated that those clients with dependents and in need of work experience should receive a higher allowance. At least one person interviewed refrains from using the Work Experience Option with individuals who have dependents.

The survey results confirm this finding from a Work Experience client perspective. About 17 percent of the Work Experience clients reported the issue of "pay" as the least satisfactory feature of the Compass Program; this was the second highest item mentioned, following "No problems" at 52 percent of "placed" respondents.

5.4 Opportunity Fund

The Opportunity Fund is one of the most popular components of the Compass Program. Similar to the fund established by the Halifax Employment Support Centre,

¹⁶ Career Planning counsellor.

¹⁷ Career Planning counsellor.

the Opportunity Fund has allowed all ERCs to access up to \$300 to pay for items that clients require to acquire employment. Seldom does the item reach the \$300 figure; most purchases are in the \$40 to \$125 range.

"The Fund really has meant the difference between working and not working."¹⁸

Safety equipment, fees for courses, fees for a taxi driver's license, fees to write the GED - these are the types of expenses covered by the Opportunity Fund. In the past many ERCs had great difficulty accessing funds from General Assistance to cover such expenses. The flexibility of the Opportunity Fund allows the counsellor to purchase the required item almost immediately.

"It has been a blessing as it has been very difficult to access additional dollars from some municipalities."¹⁹

ERCs have the flexibility to use the fund in different ways. Some regions reported restricting use of the fund to Compass clients only; in others, the fund was available to all ERC clients. Regions also reported different uses of the fund. Some would cover travel-related costs to attend training or reach the employment site; others were more restrictive in its use, primarily to enable the dollars to stretch over a longer period.

The only identifiable weakness of the Opportunity Fund concerns the limited amount of dollars attached to that component of Compass. In particular, the rural based ERCs

¹⁸ ERC counsellor.

¹⁹ ERC coordinator.

indicated the need for dollars dedicated to cover transportation costs to enable the placement of their clients.

"We have had an incidence of an employer needing a landscaper ---all of our qualified clients lacked transportation to the job site so we couldn't fill the position."²⁰

The availability of transportation-related dollars would be of special significance to the FB client, many of whom are essentially non-job ready without extra resources to access transportation.

5.5 Enterprise Development Option

The Compass Program has facilitated a new and significant partnership between Community Services and the Economic Renewal Agency. Community Services has drawn upon the expertise of the Economic Renewal Agency in developing and implementing the Enterprise Development Option, a component directed towards encouraging SAR clients entry into small business. The EDO is the first provincial mechanism to assist SAR clients make the transition to self-employment.

While a number of issues relating to enhancing the effectiveness of this option arose over the pilot's first 6 months, the Advisory Committee put in place to oversee the EDO has been able to, with the cooperation of the Core Implementation Committee, satisfactorily resolve the most pressing.

The most serious issue related to the difficulty the Advisory Committee faced in identifying ongoing income support for clients from the time they graduated from Stream I to the point their business could support them. This difficulty has been

²⁰ ERC counsellor.

resolved by the arrangement to use Transitional Training dollars as income during business start-up (for a period of up to 26 weeks).

Concerns were also raised that the size of the loan available through Stream II of the EDO- \$2000 - was limiting:

"What can you do with \$2000? Realistically, it's only appropriate for a business that's home-based and in personal services."²¹

In response to feedback from the field the Advisory Committee has agreed to increase the loan to \$5000 in exceptional cases. The need to increase the flexibility of the EDO Stream II loan was noted as a Compass feature requiring improvement by 24 percent of the EDO participants interviewed in the telephone survey.

Again in response to feedback from the field, the Stream I trainers have built in a small budget (\$300 per participant) to cover the expenses (telephone, photocopying) entailed in developing a Business Plan .

The inability of the loan to act as leverage for other loan programs was another concern noted over the evaluation and presently under consideration by the Advisory Committee.

The responses from the 18 Stream I clients we surveyed indicate the entrepreneurial resiliency of the program participants. Despite the concerns raised above, some 84 percent of Stream I clients indicated that they planned to proceed with their company. This is evidence that the EDO as designed is meeting the needs of participants.

²¹ BSC field officer.

Two thirds of those interviewed felt the training content met their needs; 50 percent felt the training was long enough. The client group appears split on the EDO course. Some 41 percent cited the EDO course as the best feature of Compass. When asked about the least satisfactory feature of Compass, 44 percent of Stream I participants indicated that the EDO course “stressed the wrong elements.” Moreover, 50 percent did indicate that they required additional training, in areas such as accounting, marketing, business management and computers.

5.6 Communication

5.6.1 Linkages between Provincial Counselling Staff and Compass

Interviews with Career Planning counsellors (and confirmed through the ERC coordinator, ERC counsellor and Job Developer interviews) indicate that there is considerable variation in the extent to which Community Services staff are linked to the Compass Program.

In some areas of the province the relationship between the ERCs and Community Services is positive and based on a mutual approach of trust and cooperation (Kentville, Truro, New Glasgow). In others there appears to be limited cooperation or communication. Some areas report real confusion around the FB clients referral process which is compounded by inadequate communication links between the Compass staff and provincial counselling staff. This difference in working alliances is perceived to be tied *“to the leadership in the Community Services offices. It makes all the difference in the world. Without the leadership, we have trouble getting lists of clients.”*²²

²² ERC coordinator.

Greater efforts are required, facilitated by the Compass coordinator, to bring the provincial counsellors into the Compass Program as partners. More workshops are required to explain the purpose and role of Compass and to describe the processes and criteria in place for client referral. The ERC staff need to be encouraged to pursue opportunities for joint consultation with the provincial counsellors and develop mechanisms that will ensure feedback on the progress of all provincial referrals.

Less than adequate linkages between the two bodies have resulted in a lower than expected take-up of Compass by provincial clients. Certainly some structural reasons lie behind this lower participation rate on the part of provincial clients (e.g. high caseloads of provincial workers which impede the referral process). As one provincial counsellor noted:

"With 450 files and a continuous intake it is difficult to do more with the job ready client than mention that Compass exists and suggest they find out more details."

This approach is in contrast to another provincial counsellor who views the job search and employment components of Compass as valuable supplements to her work with clients.

"Finally someone is helping me find the jobs. I didn't have the time before Compass with 400 clients across 5 counties."

In the latter relationship, there is constant interaction between the provincial referral agencies and the ERC staff. The Career Planning counsellor indicated she frequently drops into the ERC offices and exchanges information on mutual clients with the Job Developers (and ERC counsellors). *"We communicate and work together. And not just for Compass. I use the ERCs to help clients draw up resumes; we share funding."*

The examples of Kentville and New Glasgow provide evidence that Compass can work - and does - for many provincial clients. Of the hundreds of FB clients seen on a regular basis by the Kentville Job Developer, about 30 percent, in his assessment, are job ready and appropriate referrals to Compass.

5.6.2 Communication Among Regional Partners

The need to have a forum at which issues relating to Compass can be addressed by all partners was raised by almost all those interviewed. The Regional Compass Liaison Committee established in Annapolis/Digby/Yarmouth/Shelburne has become the model to follow and is in the process of being replicated throughout the province by the Compass Coordinator. Members of the committee include the ERC coordinators, counsellors, Job Developers, ERA field officers, Community Services counsellors and FB and MSA representatives. Through that group's regular meetings, issues of mutual interest and concern are discussed.

5.6.3 Mechanisms to Support Job Developers

All Job Developers indicated the need for regular communication with the Compass coordinator to ensure consistency of the Compass delivery process as well as regular sessions with other Job Developers to share best practices and discuss issues of mutual concern. The regular regional meeting of Job Developers along the north shore of the province (Cumberland, Colchester, Antigonish, Pictou and Guysborough) provides a valuable forum for mutual support and information exchange. A similar forum for the 6 metro-based Job Developers has been established in the metro region. The Compass Coordinator is making arrangements to establish similar regional Job Developer groups across the province.

5.7 The Family Benefits Client

"If they're going to make less than on FB, I don't refer them."²³

The issue of the appropriateness of the Family Benefits client to Compass is complicated. On the one hand, referrals to Compass of FB clients are low and the number of appropriate referrals are lower. Reasons are partially related to the high caseloads carried by the provincial counsellors. Another contributing factor, discussed above, relates to the lack of linkages between the Compass staff and provincial counsellors regarding the Compass Program.

It is not the Job Developers' role to identify the provincial referrals. That role is the responsibility of the provincial counsellors. Despite this, some Job Developers have been proactive in their dealings with provincial workers and have arranged meetings to explain Compass and its relevance to the provincial clients.

Not all Job Developers however believe that Compass, as presently designed, is an appropriate option for the FB client. They find that FB clients are more difficult to place in terms of marketable skills (primarily secretarial) and require, in most cases, a higher wage than \$7.50 an hour (the average provided by employers through Compass) to meet their living expenses. The lack of subsidized daycare seats across the province is a further disincentive to employment for the FB client as is the lack of transportation in the rural areas of the province. The fear of losing pharma card benefits is a third major disincentive.

Some Job Developers also indicated that while the client may present as job ready to the referral agency, the situation is often artificial. When faced with the reality of a job

²³ Job Developer.

the following day - as may be the case when the client meets with the Job Developer - the situation changes. "How to get to work without a car?" "What to do with the children?". Most of the clients do not, in the Job Developers' opinion, have the necessary support systems in place when they are referred to Compass.

This situation leads some Job Developers to the belief that FB clients are, of necessity, "rooted in their social security" and inappropriate as clients for the Compass Program. For many FB clients, participation in the Compass Program may not be a viable option.

The Kentville and New Glasgow experiences, as well as the experience of the Halifax ESC with the pilot Transition to Employment for Single Parents Program, tell us, however, that with a properly coordinated and adequately informed referral process, appropriate referrals from the FB target group can be found.

5.8 The Job Developer

Through the funding of the Job Developer position, Compass has provided the ERCs with a dedicated job placement function and freed up the ERC counsellors to provide enhanced counselling to clients. The Job Developers work as a team with the existing ERC staff and are part of the overall process of providing service to clients. Referrals to the Job Developers come through the ERC counsellors and other provincial counsellors.

The role of the Job Developer is essentially to find work for the client.

"We're job brokers between the employer and client, and catalysts in working with the client to find employment."

The activities of this position have eased the work load of the counsellors; made job placement easier; and raised the profile of the ERCs. The position also allows

monitoring of the job placement and ongoing contact with both the employer and the employee for the first time.

"The role of the Job Developer is to meet with businesses and access employment opportunities. It is the next step to rewarding a client for their work and positive attitude."

5.8.1 Appropriate Job Developer Experience

Discussion arose during the evaluation as to the preferred background and experience of persons filling the Job Developer position — business, social work with an emphasis on counselling or a mixture? The issue was first debated during the hiring of the Job Developers for Compass. Initially program planners had indicated a business background was the appropriate background for the function. The role of job brokerage with employers was seen to require business-related skill sets. The ERC coordinators, however, felt that while business skills were important, they should not totally replace the need for counselling skills and in particular sensitivity in the Job Developers' dealings with and understanding of client issues.

The resultant backgrounds of the 20 Job Developers hired to deliver Compass broke down as follows: business 7; social work 12; both 1.

Having been in the position for over 8 months, Job Developers themselves were well positioned to comment on the relative value of the business versus social work background. Interestingly, a full 90 percent indicated a blend of the two skills sets is the preferred background for the position. Of this percentage, 50 percent opted for a blend with an emphasis on the counselling side while 40 percent opted for a blend with an emphasis on business. As one Job Developer commented:

"I feel it is necessary that a job developer possess the necessary common "business mind" but also have an in-depth understanding of interview techniques, listening skills, mediation, empathy and counselling skills. This is a special group of clientele, with special needs, requiring professional skills."

Additional Training Requirements

With one exception, individuals were hired to fill the position of Job Developer without prior experience in a similar role. Most Job Developers have learned on the job - *"very much a baptism by fire situation"* - with guidance provided by the training sessions held in the fall of 1994 and spring of 1995.

Job Developers have expressed a need for additional training to augment their skills and have suggested a series of topics for future workshops. These include:

- the challenges facing single parents and youth;
- the specific processes to follow in carrying out the Job Developer function, arising from a concern that consistency is lacking both among and even within regions;
- role playing between Job Developer and employers (cold calls, sales techniques);
- how to mediate;
- training on the computer system and statistics, labour standards, and Mod 1 and Mod 2 training for counsellors developed by HRDC for its employment counsellors.

Other Supports

Other supports identified by Job Developers that would be helpful to them in their work include:

- adequate office space to ensure privacy in discussions with clients (Kentville and Sydney);
- individual phones and adequate phone lines (pertinent to Sydney and Windsor office);
- realistic geographic coverage (split the Annapolis/Digby region into two and hire another Job Developer as was the case with Shelburne/Yarmouth); and
- adequate travel expenses (all regions).

The Job Developers indicated the need for professionally written and produced brochures on the program as well as uniform business cards. Most Job Developers ended up developing their own Compass promotional materials. In our opinion, this could lead to problems for the program as the materials lack consistency, and interpretation of processes vary across the province.

5.8.2 Identification of Employers

The process for identifying employers is fairly consistent across the province. Most Job Developers began by doing public presentations to service organizations and business groups. A number of regions worked from a list of employers previously compiled by students. As well the CEC generated a list of employers. The presentations were followed by phone calls and visits to drop off brochures and business cards. Some Job Developers also requested that clients compile a list of employers.

Most Job Developers spoke of the need to get the client actively engaged in the job-seeking process. Clients who do not take a proactive approach have their files closed out as non-job ready.

At this point in the life of Compass, the program is sufficiently well known in the employer community that Job Developers are receiving calls from the employers.

Monitoring

Most Job Developers see monitoring as critical to the success of Compass with one Job Developer commenting that "It (monitoring) is seen as good public relations with the employers." The frequency of monitoring, however, varies. Some Job Developers meet monthly with clients and every two months with employers. Some are in touch monthly by phone and only meet if there are issues to be resolved. Others are less frequent. This latter group thinks that monthly monitoring is "overkill" and worries that too much monitoring of the Transitional placements could potentially discourage employers from following through on their commitment for full-time employment. "We need to respect these employers." "It's important not to interfere." They believe that the more frequent monitoring is more appropriate to the Work Experience Option.

Not all the Job Developers have training plans from the employers although most believe in the value of training plans.

"It's essential to have the training plan to fall back on. If something goes wrong we have it (the plan) to go back to (e.g. mopping floors versus cutting chicken)."

5.9 Computer Systems

The Compass Program agreement between HRDC and the Department of Community Services allocated \$50,000 for the acquisition of computers in the ERCs. These computers were to support the monitoring and evaluation roles of the program.

For many rural ERCs, Compass provided the funds necessary to upgrade their existing computer systems or significantly expand their existing capacity. Several larger ERCs had access to computer systems and associated software prior to the implementation of the *Compass Program*. In Halifax, for example, these database systems were used to manage client caseloads, track client processes, respond to specialized requests for information, and perform other administrative functions.

The TIGER database was developed by an ERC Committee and a computer software consultant to serve the monitoring and evaluation requirements of Compass within all ERCs. The database includes basic data on clients as well as the client baseline information collected through the *Compass Program* questionnaire that clients complete when

beginning the program. This information will be an important data source for the impact evaluation of Compass, provided the data is collected by the ERCs.

The important issue here concerns the overall utility of the program within the ERCs. Related issues are access to the computer by the Job Developers and training in the effective use of the computer resources.

The utility issue relates to the different perceptions and needs of ERC users. For most ERCs, the computer and database are an important resource that significantly enhance their capabilities. The TIGER program is adequate to their needs. More computer-experienced centres such as Halifax and Kentville regard the program as a limitation on their previous capabilities; by itself, it does not meet their management needs.

Discussions are underway to determine whether enhancements could be made to the program to provide the capability required by all ERCs.

CHAPTER

Summary and Recommendations

6

This chapter presents a summary of responses to the key evaluation questions set out in the original *Request for Proposal* (RFP). The chapter is organized by sections following the major headings of the evaluation questions:

- Relevance;
- Project Design and Delivery; and
- Project Success

Responses to the questions summarize the more detailed analyses found in chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this report. Additional backup is found in the Appendices.

A fourth section summarizes a series of recommendations for policy makers and program implementors to consider in their ongoing work with the *Compass Program*.

6.1 Relevance

6.1.1 In what way does Nova Scotia Compass reflect the criteria established for Strategic Initiatives?

Relevancy to Strategic Initiative Objectives

The *Strategic Initiatives Program* was established to identify innovative approaches to social security reform. One of the themes of *Strategic Initiatives* is on employability, "focusing on transitions from welfare to work".

The Compass Program reflects this theme, its overall goal being to assist individuals at risk of long-term dependency on social assistance gain financial independence through viable, long term employment. Its focus is on unemployed youth, single parents and the job ready able-bodied municipal client including laid off fishers/plant workers on assistance.

The following *Strategic Initiatives Program* objectives are directly applicable to the *Compass Program*:

"to enable working age adults who are at risk of long-term dependency to contribute to their maximum potential as productive members of society and by providing ... work experience based on individual needs." (*Work Experience Option, Transitional Training Option, Opportunity Fund*)

"to demonstrate innovative approaches to job creation." (*Enterprise Development Option*)

Innovation Potential

The *Enterprise Development Option* is the first program in Nova Scotia at the provincial level designed specifically to assist social assistance clients establish small business. As such it

holds the greatest potential for innovative programming with the social assistance recipient.

The Job Developer function is an additional innovative feature of Compass. By providing a position dedicated solely to job placement, Compass has enhanced the ability of the ERCs to secure employment placements for clients and freed up counsellors to provide more effective counselling.

Evaluation Potential for Social Reform

The *Compass Program* has paid a great deal of attention to defining the various program options to meet client needs. The program has also devoted resources to the program evaluation function to ensure that the results of the program are measurable. Specifically, the program has developed a baseline client questionnaire, set up a computerized client database and worked to track the progress of clients through the system. A pseudo-control group has been established in order to measure the impacts of the program on client success in finding employment.

These sets of information should enable the final evaluation of the *Compass Program* to provide empirical evidence on the success of the program. The result will thereby contribute to social reform.

6.1.2 To what extent does the project reach the intended target group? Are participants representative of the target group? If not, for what reason do discrepancies occur?

The target group for Compass is made up of youth, single parents and the job ready able-bodied municipal client including laid off fishers/plant workers on assistance.

Youth

The *Work Experience Option* was designed to provide youth (age 18 to 30) in receipt of municipal assistance with an opportunity to gain work experience in order to enhance their employability. This option has been successful across the province in identifying and placing youth in placements.

Skilled Job Ready

The *Transitional Training Option* was designed to assist skilled job ready individuals obtain work experience. Specifically the option was designed to assist single parents in receipt of Family Benefits, persons with disabilities and municipal clients (including laid-off fishers and plant workers). Initially the breakdown between provincial and municipal clients was 80:20.

Approximately six months into the program that split was revised to 60:40 reflecting the high interest on the part of municipal clients in this option and a lower than expected number of referrals of provincial clients.

Family Benefits Clients

Reasons for the lower number of provincial referrals are primarily twofold. One relates to the inadequate linkages between some provincial offices and their respective ERC staff. In those regions where linkages are strong, the number of provincial referrals has been adequate resulting in the appropriate number of provincial clients being placed in transitional positions.

The second reason relates to specific barriers faced by single parents in obtaining employment. The lack of transportation is a major barrier facing FB clients in most rural areas while the lack of subsidized daycare affects single parents equally across the province. The fear of losing the pharma card is a third disincentive to employment for FB clients.

These barriers were identified by ERC staff, provincial counsellors and Job Developers across the province.

While wages under the *Transitional Training Option* can and do surpass the \$7.50 an hour mark in some areas of the province where the economy is strong, the average wage under the option is in the range of \$7.50 an hour. This level of wage appears to be an insufficient incentive for many FB clients to leave the security of social assistance. While this is not true for all clients - there are those to whom self-sufficiency outweighs the importance placed on the wage - the lack of incentives in place to encourage FB clients to seek self-sufficiency is a significant barrier affecting the success of this option.

Municipal Clients

For the municipal client, the *Transitional Training Option* has been a welcome placement tool. There have been no difficulties reported in identifying appropriate clients for this option. Most ERCs reported that they could identify and place as many clients as positions can be made available.

6.1.3 Are the services/interventions provided consistent with the needs of the target group?

Work Experience Option

One of the biggest barriers facing youth in seeking employment is their lack of experience. Under the *Work Experience Option*, youth receive relevant work experience up to a six month period. In the employer community, this experience improves the employability of these youth.

Other employment-related needs of youth provided through the *Work Experience Option* include:

- a "taste" of employment;
- acquiring knowledge of a specific skill;
- growth in self-confidence;
- the opportunity to explore work situations without long-term commitment; and
- a résumé with a positive reference.

One of the unexpected outcomes of this option is the high rate of full-time employment offers made to participants upon termination of their placement period. According to the survey results, 34 percent of the *Work Experience* clients who have completed their placement to date have been hired by their employer. Of these hired clients, 42 percent agreed that "jobs were available, but [they] didn't have enough/ appropriate experience" to get a job before taking part in Compass. These same clients noted that there were "no jobs available" in areas for which they held experience. The survey results clearly indicate the positive role played by the *Compass Program*.

Recent changes in the program policy have permitted FB clients access to the *Work Experience Option*. This change was made in recognition of the need many FB clients have for work experience to enhance their employability.

Transitional Training Option

The opportunity for employment provided through the *Transitional Training Option* is meeting the needs of the municipal clients. About 46 percent of the *Transitional Training Option* clients interviewed are still working on their placement. About 20 percent of clients in this option have left their employers before completing their placement. Most importantly, 67 percent of this client group who have finished their placement have been hired by employers.

The role of Compass in finding client placements and subsequently employment is clear through responses to several survey questions. The most common reason for not working prior to applying to the *Compass Program* was “no jobs available”; 61 percent of *Transitional Training Option* clients cited this barrier. However, the resources provided through the *Compass Program* were able to find jobs for these clients. About 66 percent of these clients stated that the Job Developer was “very important” in helping them get a placement.

The needs of the FB client, on the other hand, for reasons identified in Question 2 above, are less able to be met under the *Transitional Training Option*.

The Opportunity Fund

This option is working as intended, providing ERC staff with ready access to funds to purchase specialized services or items to enhance a client's employability. The dollar amount per draw on average ranges between \$40 to \$150 and goes to purchase employment-related items - safety equipment, second hand tools, fees to cover courses, GED, and driver's license. Having the *Opportunity Fund* in place has made the difference in clients' ability to access employment.

Enterprise Development Option

The *Enterprise Development Option* is also working as intended. Difficulties which arose early on over, for example, ongoing income support during business start-up have been resolved and the size of the micro-enterprise loan has been increased.

There remain some issues which need to be sorted through - for example, how best to assist clients who have not proceeded through Stream I of the EDO in the preparation of their Business Plan.

Overall, the EDO has proven to be a valuable addition to the employment programming options available to SAR clients in Nova Scotia.

6.2 Project Design and Delivery

6.2.1 What are the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot project organizational structure? Are the roles and responsibilities of the various partners and service providers clearly enunciated and carried out?

Strengths

Flexibility and Responsiveness of the Process: The Core Implementation Committee established to monitor the implementation of Compass has been both flexible and responsive to issues and needs that have arisen over the pilot's first 6 months. Changes have been made in various regulations as needs arose - such as enabling FB clients access to the *Work Experience Option*, enabling more municipal clients access to the *Transitional Training Option* and finding solutions to the problem of securing ongoing income security during the period of business start-up for the *Enterprise Development Option* client.

Compass as Integral Part of Range of Service: Much of the success of Compass is due to the design established for its delivery. Implemented through the ERCs, Compass was designed to be part of an integral range of employment training and counselling services available to SAR clients. It is not a stand alone service but rather supports and supplements the counselling and training activities of the ERC staff and provincial counselling staff.

Appropriateness of Referrals: Much of the success of Compass in securing employment for clients is attributable to the appropriateness of the referrals to Compass made by ERC staff and provincial counsellors. ERC staff and counsellors work with their

clients on an individualized basis to ensure they are job ready before referring them to Compass.

Job Developer Function: The Job Developer function is also a key element of the success of the *Compass Program*. An innovative approach to securing placements in the employer community, the Job Developer function is dedicated to matching job ready clients with local employers. The process is client driven and entirely dependent upon ready access to appropriate referrals from the counsellors. By having the Job Developers work out of the same office as the ERC counsellors, the Compass design has assured a team approach between the Job Developers and the counsellors in their work with clients. An added benefit of the Job Developer function is that counsellors are freed up from placement activities to provide more effective counselling to clients.

Regional Compass Liaison Committees: A particular strength of the organizational structure of Compass lies in the Regional Compass Liaison Committees being established throughout the province to facilitate communication and cooperation among the Compass partners and key players. Individual regions identified the need for such a forum to discuss Compass-related matters and share information and are in the process of replicating the structure of the Regional Compass Liaison Committee first established in South-West Nova Scotia.

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of those involved in program delivery are clear with a few exceptions. These include:

The referral process for FB clients: Some confusion has been reported on the part of provincial counsellors as to how the referral process is to work.

The role of the ERA field officer in the preparation of Business Plans for Stream II: The need for some mechanism to assist clients in the preparation of their Business Plans has been confused with the role of the ERA field officer as

impartial reviewer. That is, some Job Developers have indicated they believe the ERA field officer's role is to provide assistance with the development of the Business Plan. This misunderstanding on the Job Developers' part needs clarification.

Feedback on client progress: Provincial referral bodies are interested in being updated on client progress on the *Transitional Training* and *Work Experience Options*. All referral bodies are interested in feedback on client progress on the EDO training.

Consistency regarding the elements of program delivery: Job Developers noted the need for greater liaison between the Compass Coordinator and Job Developers to ensure consistency in the delivery of the program. This need is being acted upon through two initiatives undertaken by the Compass Coordinator: i) the establishment of the Regional Compass Liaison Committees and ii) the establishment of regular regional meetings of Job Developers.

6.2.2 *What tracking/monitoring mechanisms have been put in place to collect information on participants and interventions? Are these adequate for measuring project impacts? Is sufficient information collected? Have control/comparison groups been identified? Using what criteria?*

The *Compass Program* has paid attention to the need to collect information to monitor clients from an evaluation perspective. Work completed to date includes the development of a baseline data questionnaire for Compass participants and the development of a client computer database that encompasses both the client questionnaire and additional administrative program data. These tools provide an adequate basis for measuring the employment impacts of the *Compass Program*.

The database is not developed to a sufficient degree to serve as a complete management information system, with the capability to monitor and provide feedback on clients as they

progress through the Compass system. This information is not required for program evaluation purposes. Refinements to the system are ongoing and require both administrative as well as computer solutions. The former imply a requirement for on-going monitoring of a client; the size of Job Developer caseloads in some ERCs make this problematic.

Basic information is collected on all eligible *Compass Program* clients, regardless of whether or not clients are placed. Those that are eligible but not placed comprise a “client waiting” group. This client waiting group forms a proxy for a control group to measure the employment impacts of Compass.

Several characteristics of the “client waiting” group need to be carefully considered if the group is to serve as a comparison group over the course of the program. The first concerns the difficulty of maintaining contact with persons in this group, particularly in light of heavy caseloads at an ERC. From a Job Developer’s perspective, this updating activity may not and perhaps should not have a high priority, especially if the Job Developer has an ongoing supply of new job ready clients for placement.

Second, the “clients waiting” may be “waiting” because they are not job ready (i.e. they were inappropriate referrals). Interviews suggest this to be the case in a number of ERCs. It is important that any comparisons of “clients placed” and “clients waiting” be undertaken on the same job ready basis.

Finally, and most importantly, the “clients waiting” group needs to be seen as dynamic; Compass clients in this group hopefully are “waiting” for a minimal period of time before they are placed by Compass, find a job on their own or experience some other employment outcome. In fact, all Compass clients are “waiting” for some period of time. Consequently, any listing of “clients waiting” must be seen as a point in time list.

The result is that care must be taken in re-defining the client waiting group. Presumably, the rationale for a comparison group is to determine if there are systematic differences between placed and waiting clients, and whether the *Compass Program* has made an impact on the placement of job ready clients, some of whom will find jobs on their own.

6.2.3 *By what means are applicants recruited and selected? Is the program equally accessible to all members of the target group? Are there variations in the selection process across the province? Between referring agencies?*

Selection Process

The client selection process is described in Chapter 3 in some detail for each program option. Clients move through a process that begins with an ERC or provincial counsellor through to a Job Developer. This process is ultimately based on criteria related to the job ready status of a client and is entirely dependent on appropriate referrals being made. The process is based on a team approach, as noted earlier.

We have not identified any variations in the selection process across the province or between referring agencies.

Accessibility

Compass is accessible to most eligible clients. One exception at program start-up was with the EDO Stream I option which, over the first six months of Compass, was being piloted to only four areas of the province on an experimental basis. The geographic coverage has since been expanded to the entire province through individual seat purchases of private or public (Community College) business courses.

We have noted that Compass is not accessible to all FB clients due to i) insufficient knowledge about Compass on the part of some provincial counsellors and ii) inadequate linkages between some provincial counsellors and the ERCs.

6.2.4 What criteria are applied in assessing training proposals from employers? Do host employers have previous experience consistent with the project requirements for provision of training and services to participants? Previous involvement in other wage subsidy initiatives?

Criteria

Employer training proposals are assessed from the perspective of serving the overall needs of the client. This is a flexible and iterative process, rather than a formal checklist approach. We understand that Job Developers work with the employer to develop training proposals, a process that may require several stages of refinement.

An important part of this process is the job development role of the Job Developer. Slightly more than half - 52 percent of employers reported that they first became aware of Compass as a result of contact by a Job Developer.

Employer Experience with Other Programs

Some 52 percent of employers are contacted by other training program organizations seeking jobs or work placements for their clients. Three out of four employers surveyed rated the service they received from Compass Job Developers as “better” or “much better” than the service received from other training program organizations. About 45 percent of Compass employers have experience in other government employment or training programs and have hired people from these programs.

6.2.5 What are the experiences of the Job Developers in marketing the program to employers? What are the characteristics of participant employers? For what reasons

do employers participate? Do funding arrangements offer sufficient incentive to participate? What do employers like/not like about the program?

Experiences of Job Developers

Job Developers report that the *Compass Program* has been welcomed by the employer community. Reasons include the length of the placements (6 months compared to a few weeks); a wide range of skills to draw upon (from Grade 7 to Trades and University training); the program monitoring (enabling trouble-shooting between the employer and placement); a minimum of paperwork; and, most importantly, the time saved the employer in the client screening process (a function performed by the Job Developer).

Characteristics of Participant Employers

The characteristics of participant employers are based upon a random sample of *Compass* employers. The distribution of employers selected is based upon client placements - ERCs with more placements had more employers selected. In general terms, *Compass* employers are predominantly active in the retail and restaurant sector - 29 percent of respondents were in this sector. Social services, government agencies and non-profit organizations account for 24 percent of those interviewed. *Compass* employers have been in business an average of 13 years.

Reasons for Employer Participation

It might be expected that wage subsidies are the primary reason for employer participation in the *Compass Program*. Although the following table indicates that the wage issue is a critical factor in employer involvement, a real need for an employee and a desire to help the *Compass* client are equally important.

Table 6.1: The Main Reasons for Employer Involvement

	Count	Percent
Subsidized Wages	19	33.9
Helping Client	18	32.1
Needed Employee	16	28.6
Helping Community	3	5.4
Total	56	100.00

While funding arrangements are a definite incentive to participate, these do not overshadow other non-financial reasons. Two additional questions to employers confirm the non-dominant position of funding as key features of the *Compass Program* to employers.

Employer Perception of Program

First, when prompted for the best features of Compass, the following unaided responses were obtained. Non-financial considerations clearly play an important role in the popularity of Compass amongst employers. Secondly, the “funding/wage subsidy” issue was not mentioned at all as a “least satisfactory” feature of the program. Employers did not make any reference to the level of wage subsidy.

Table 6.2: The Best Features of Compass; Employer Perceptions

	Count	Percent
Subsidized Wages	13	23.2
Helping Clients	12	21.4
Pre-screened Applicants	12	21.4
Job Developer Available	11	19.6
Provide one-on-one training	3	5.4
No Answer	2	3.6
Choice of Employee	2	3.6
Helps Community	1	1.8
Total	56	100.00

We did not attempt to test the economic sensitivity of employers to various wage subsidy levels. It may be worthwhile to investigate the impact of different subsidy levels on placements, particularly in the case of those who have other reasons for hiring through Compass.

Popular features of the program are provided in the previous table. Employer dislikes are shown in the following table. It is important to note that close to half of employers responded “nothing” to this question.

Table 6.3: The Least Satisfactory Feature of Compass; Employer Perceptions

	Count	Percent
Nothing	26	46.4
Clients not job ready	8	14.3
Payment time	6	10.7
Not Long Enough	5	8.9
Not Enough Follow-up by Developer	2	3.6
Clients Not Appropriate	2	3.6
Paperwork	2	3.6
Clients Might Not Stay	1	1.8
Wouldn't Let Us Have More Placements	1	1.8
Clients Should Find Their Own Jobs	1	1.8
Small Wages to Clients	1	1.8
Public Perception of Program	1	1.8
Total	56	100.0

Other positive perceptions of the Job Developer's role and the program were noted earlier, as well as employers' perceptions that the payment process needs improvement. Virtually all employers - 98 percent - believe the requirements of Compass are reasonable. Ninety percent stated that the financial reporting requirements are straightforward.

6.2.6 Have any operational/legislative/regulatory/jurisdictional constraints been identified that impinge on the ability of the project to achieve its objectives? How were these handled? Are the project design features consistent with the stated objectives of the project?

Jurisdictional Constraints

The *Compass Program* is being implemented across 60 municipalities in the province each with its own distinct policies regulating SAR clients. Obtaining agreement from all municipalities regarding ongoing income support for clients involved in the *Enterprise Development Option* has been difficult for a variety of reasons put forth by the municipalities. The solution to the income support difficulty was found in an innovative use of the *Transitional Training Option* dollars.

Consistency of Design Features with Objectives

The design of the *Compass Program* has paid attention to the specific needs of the job ready SAR client in today's labour market. In selecting the ERCs as the delivery mechanism, attention was also paid to maintaining the concept of a continuum of service for the client. Compass has also recognized the importance of tailoring programming to meet specific client need. Both of these concepts are critical in ensuring that SAR clients receive a quality service.

6.3. Project Success

6.3.1 How and to what extent has the project succeeded in developing successful partnerships among the various levels of government, employers, and community groups?

Partnerships

The strongest of the partnerships emerging out of the Compass experience is that built between the ERC staff, the Job Developers and the Compass Coordinator. The ERCs have

embraced the *Compass Program* and melded it into their existing operations to provide a seamless service delivery to clients. Compass is a valuable placement-related employment and training tool that has strengthened the ERCs in their work with clients. The partnership that has developed is two-way. The *Compass Program* could not have been as successfully delivered through a mechanism other than the ERCs. The ERCs have applied their experience and knowledge of municipal and provincial clients to Compass and ensured the client-driven nature of the *Compass Program's* delivery.

The Compass Program has forged an important new partnership between the Economic Renewal Agency and Community Services in the development of programming for SAR clients. Compass has provided the first opportunity for the Economic Renewal Agency to become acquainted with the needs and background of SAR clients and provide Community Services with the expertise required to design appropriate business training for SAR clients interested in self-employment.

Employers do see the *Compass Program* as a partnership between themselves, the client and the government agencies involved in Compass; 96 percent of employer respondents held this view.

6.3.2 How satisfied are participants with various aspects of the project? To what extent did participants discontinue before their anticipated completion date? What were the main reasons for discontinuation?

Participant Satisfaction

Responses to the client placed questionnaire implicitly indicate a high level of satisfaction with the program, particularly the Job Developer. The chance to get relevant experience was the most important program feature for 29 percent of clients who were placed. More than

half of these clients - 52 percent - could not suggest a single "least satisfactory" issue. Of issues that were suggested, "Pay" was the most common item, noted by 14 percent of clients placed. However, some 69 percent of those citing this reason were placed under the *Work Experience Option*.

Drop-outs before completion of the placement comprise about 16 percent of all clients placed. The following table indicates the results by program option. As might be expected, the results indicate that *Work Experience* clients do leave their placement if the opportunity for other employment occurs.

Other reasons for leaving before completion are varied. Slowdown at work and medical problems each account for 21 percent; conflict with the owner accounts for 12 percent and poor working conditions a further 9 percent. There does not appear to be any systematic reason for clients leaving their placement before completion.

Table 6.4: Current Situation of Clients Placed by Program Option (Percent)

Placement Status	Work Experience	Transitional Training	Totals
Still working on placement	43	48	44
Completed placement and hired	15	22	18
Completed placement and not hired	28	12	22
Left placement/dropped out before completion	8	18	12
Left placement/dropped out before completion and hired by another employer	6	0	4
Totals	100	100	100

6.3.3 What disincentives to employment and training did the Compass initiative address? What barriers still existed after all means of support were exhausted?

Disincentives to Employment and Training

The most significant disincentive to employment addressed by the *Compass Program* has been the lack of experience many clients (provincial and municipal) face when seeking employment. The *Work Experience Option* has provided counsellors with a potent tool to offer clients experience with an employer of their choice and within a field of their choice. Designed with the municipal and young client in mind, Work Experience has become the option of choice for many ERCs. It has also been expanded to cover provincial clients in need of work experience as well as some older clients.

Barriers

It has been estimated by some Compass staff that perhaps 30 percent of all *FB referrals to Compass* can legitimately be classified as job ready. The remaining 70 percent face barriers which Compass has not been able to overcome. These include:

- the lack of subsidized daycare;
- the lack of transportation; and
- the fear of losing the Pharma card.

6.4 Recommendations

The following section provides a series of recommendations relating to process issues that emerged over the evaluation.

6.4.1 Transitional Training Option

The *Transitional Training Option* under Compass should not replace the already existing transitional programs in place in some ERCs. These latter programs are available to a broader range of clients than the Compass option, specifically the non-job ready client and the older client who make up at least two-thirds of the ERC clientele. The Compass option is an additional tool for the job ready but is limited in its wider applicability because of its design under the *Strategic Initiatives Program*.

ERC counsellors indicate a need for additional placement dollars for their municipal clients. Given the difficulty Compass is facing in finding appropriate provincial referrals, the Core Implementation Committee might consider a further adjustment of the 60:40 ratio.

6.4.2 Work Experience Option

A number of ERC counsellors, Job Developers and Career Planning counsellors indicated a weakness of the *Work Experience Option* lies in the limited allowance attached to the option. Counsellors are reluctant to refer clients who have dependents to this option. This report recommends that the option be revised to provide clients in need of work experience, and who have dependents, with a higher allowance. Dollars for the higher allowance for clients with dependents could be shifted from the *Transitional Training Option*.

6.4.3 Transportation Dollars

The availability of transportation-related dollars was noted as a need by a number of the rural-based ERCs. It is less of an issue in the metro area, as bus tickets are routinely made available to clients on their job search. To alleviate the difficulty of clients being unable to reach a potential placement, it is recommended that a small amount of dollars be made available to the rural ERCs to assist clients with placement-related travel expenses. The fund should be at the discretion of the ERC coordinator and only be used in circumstances:

where, without it, a client would be unable to take up a placement; and

where it appears that the client will be able to make his own transportation arrangements once in the job (car pooling, purchase used vehicle).

6.4.4 Enterprise Development Option

There is need for ongoing income support, up to one year, for individual clients starting up a small business under the *Enterprise Development Option*. This report supports the earlier recommendation from the Advisory Committee for the EDO, that the Core Implementation Committee negotiate with HRDC to provide the required dollars for income support to clients involved in EDO through their *Self-Employment Assistance Program*.

Feedback from the Economic Renewal Agency field officers has indicated that the size of the loan available under Stream II of the EDO is limiting in its ability to provide sufficient capital for business start-up. It is recommended that the loan be increased to \$5000 for all approved applicants - if required - and not just "in exceptional cases" as had been recently agreed upon by the EDO Advisory Committee.

6.4.5 Enhancing Linkages with Community Services

Greater efforts are required to bring the provincial counsellors into the *Compass Program* as partners. Additional workshops are required to explain the purpose and role of Compass and to describe the processes and criteria in place for client referral. Provincial counsellors need to be encouraged to work cooperatively with the ERC staff.

It is further recommended that mechanisms be put in place to ensure feedback from the ERCs to Community Services counsellors on the progress of the provincial referrals.

6.4.6 Disincentives and the Family Benefits Client

ERC staff and provincial counsellors alike have indicated that many provincial clients face specific disincentives to employment which Compass has been unable to overcome. These include the lack of transportation for many, the lack of subsidized daycare and the fear on some clients' part of losing their pharma card benefits. If the Family Benefits client is to be retained as a significant target group of the

Compass Program, the Core Implementation Committee needs to explore avenues to address these barriers.

6.4.7 Background of the Job Developer

Data from the evaluation indicate that the preferred background for the Job Developer's position is a blend of business and counselling skills. In future hirings for the position, a blend of the two skill sets should be the standard criteria.

6.4.8 Training Workshops and Other Supports

In response to the Job Developers' stated need for ongoing training, this report recommends a series of training-related workshops - possibly in conjunction with the regional job developer meetings. Topics should be selected through consultation with the Job Developers.

Not all Job Developers, or ERC staff, have equal access to the supports required to efficiently carry out their job. Office space in some ERCs is limited as are telephone lines. Where possible, resources through *Compass* should be made available to provide the *Compass* staff with adequate office space and telephone facilities. *Compass* should also provide Job Developers with an adequate travel budget for their regions.

Resources are required to develop appropriate literature on the *Compass Program* including professionally written and produced brochures as well as uniform business cards for the Job Developers.

6.4.9 Monitoring

All Job Developers agree that there continues to be a role and need for monitoring of placements within the *Compass Program*. The degree and nature of the monitoring process however should be determined on a case by case basis by the individual Job Developers.

6.4.10 Computers Systems

The TIGER database application is a suitable tool for meeting the program evaluation needs of *Compass*. However, the program does appear limited in its

capabilities to provide Job Developers with a management information system, a capability that exists on some ERC systems. We recommend that the Compass coordinator and the TIGER developers work together to determine the feasibility and costs of upgrading the TIGER system to meet the needs of Job Developers and ERCs. These costs should include training of staff in the use of the system.

6.4.11 Client Waiting Group

This group is meant to serve as a comparison group for the evaluation of the *Compass Program*. The difficulties experienced in the telephone survey as a result of the dynamic nature of this group raise questions about the value of the clients waiting group in its present form.

The program should investigate alternative methods to define this group and obtain the required information. For example, the group might consist only of eligible clients that find their own jobs; this approach requires resources to monitor and track a non-program group. Another approach might be to define the waiting group with a time limit. Clients would not be considered part of the waiting group, for the evaluation, until they had been waiting for more than two months, for example.