

## **SELF-SUFFICIENCY THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED WORK**

Most previous initiatives involving community employment were generally for positions of less than a year. The Community Employment Innovation Project (CEIP) is unique in the length of its eligibility, and hence, in the nature and number of the work placements it can provide to participants. The hypothesis is that the longer eligibility period would provide more significant employment duration as well as a greater range of work experiences in varying positions.

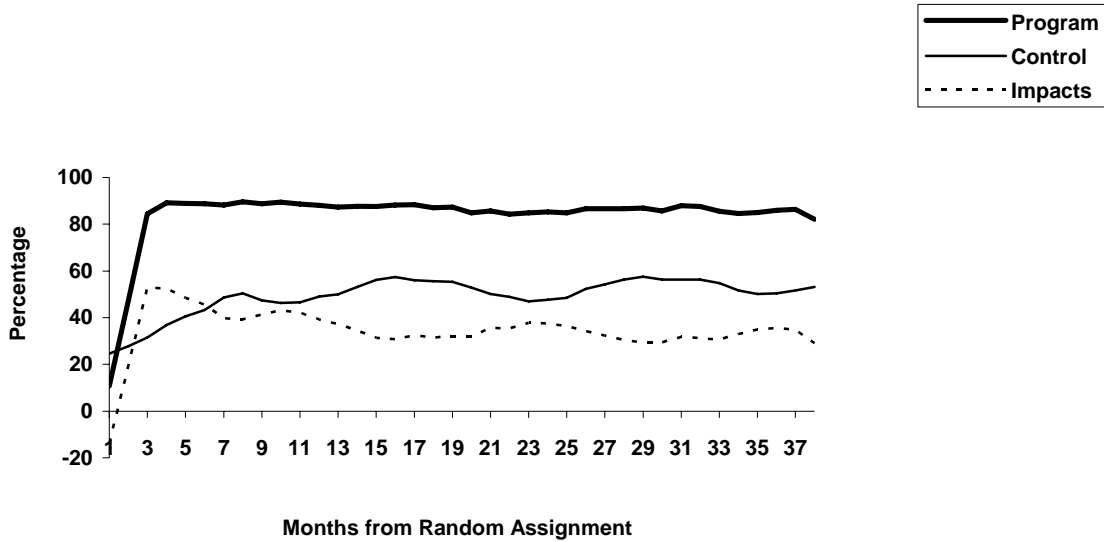
A case, however, can also be made that longer eligibility in a program of low-wage jobs, with little formal training, could make little difference beyond the very short-term on participants' employment status or, worse, could even lead to negative outcomes. For one, many participants could be unable to maintain jobs during the long eligibility period, particularly those with significant employment barriers, and will simply return to receiving EI or welfare. For others, it could simply displace regular market jobs and result in very little incremental effects on employment over and above what would have occurred without the program. The worst case scenario is that this type of a program could actually provide worse jobs than what participants could have held otherwise, which offer fewer opportunities to improve employability, and could ultimately lead to more dependence on government transfers.

Whether or not the CEIP intervention will lead to increased self-sufficiency and less dependence on government transfers can only be answered through time and will be the focus of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation's (SRDC) post-program analysis. Nonetheless, interim results during the eligibility period do shed light on some of these issues and show that the program had very positive effects on participants for the duration of the intervention.

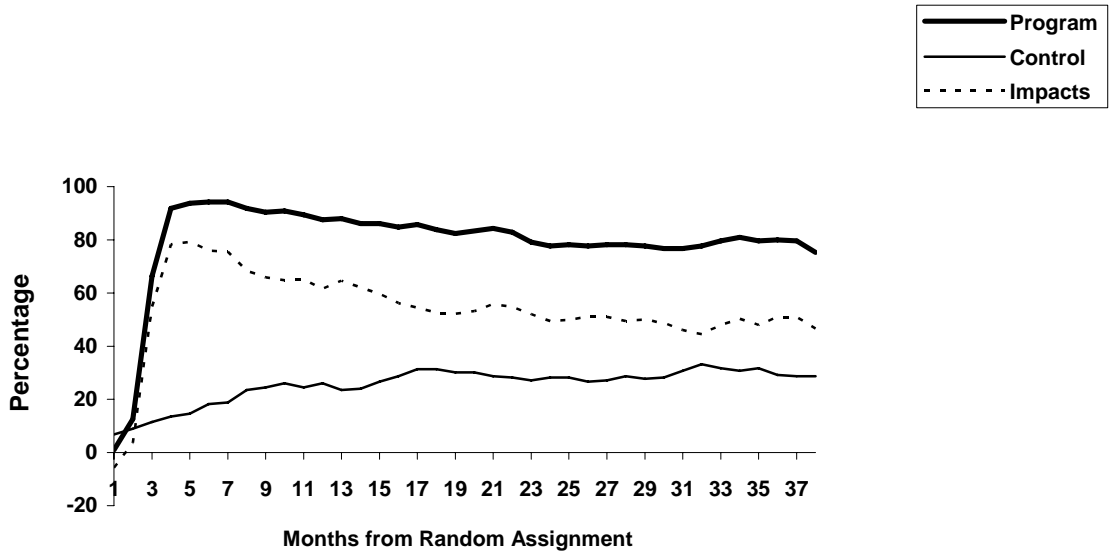
### **CEIP's Effects on Employment and Earnings**

Figure 1 illustrates the monthly rates of full-time employment throughout the eligibility period. The rate among EI program group members remained more than 30 percentage points above that of the control group for most of the follow-up period. Figure 2 presents impacts among the IA sample, which are even larger and sustained at nearly 50 percentage points. This indicates that CEIP led to full-time employment levels among both EI and IA program group members that were not only sustainable over a long-term eligibility period, but which were substantially larger than what would have otherwise been achieved without the program.

**Figure 1: Full-time Employment Rates, by Month (EI Sample)**



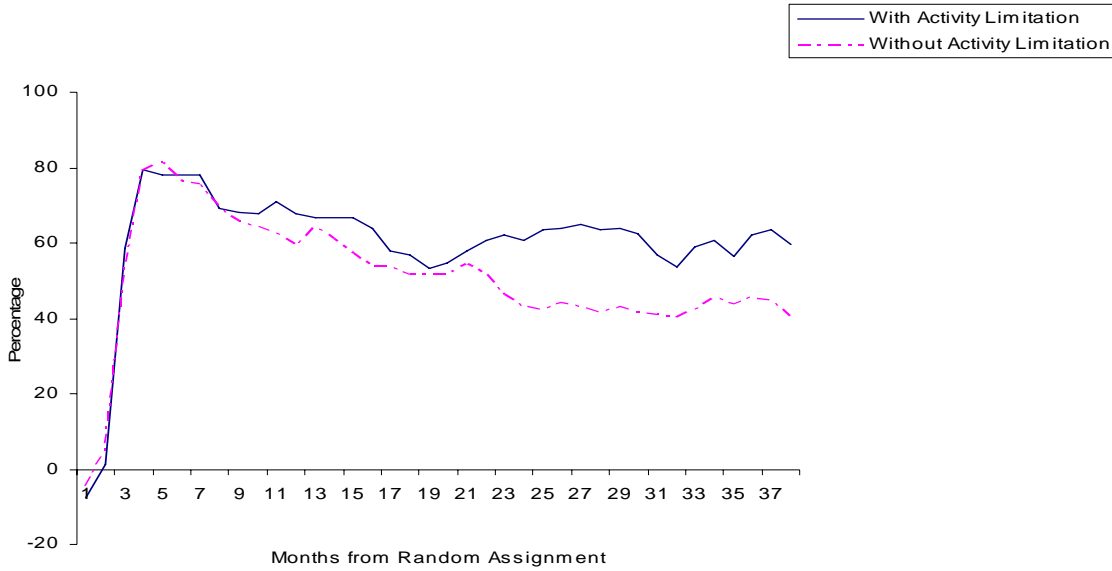
**Figure 2: Full-time Employment Rates, by Month (IA Sample)**



Furthermore, the concern that those with more significant employment barriers might be unable to maintain longer-term, community-based employment appears to be unwarranted. Among those participants with employment barriers arising from a health restriction or activity limitation, not only are their rates of full-time employment increased, but also the impact of CEIP is larger than among those without activity limitations. To illustrate, Figure 3 compares the differences in CEIP’s impacts on those with and without an activity limitation among IA sample members. Similar subgroup differences are also observed among EI sample members. The increase in full-time employment arising from CEIP is similar between those with and without activity limitations in the first half of the project. Beginning around month 23 of eligibility, however, CEIP’s impacts on full-time employment are consistently higher for program group members with an activity limitation. Larger employment impacts

were similarly found for program group members who initially had lower incomes and smaller networks of social supports.

**Figure 3: Impacts on Full-time Employment Rates, by Activity Limitation (IA Sample)**



**Lead to Lower Transfer Receipt**

To maintain continuing eligibility, participants could not receive regular EI benefits or IA. Consequently, in making the decision to take up the offer and remain on the project, participants would have been making a real choice between CEIP employment and receiving further EI benefits or IA. Although this trade-off was expected to produce initially significant reductions in transfer receipt, it was not clear that this would be sustainable over the three-year eligibility period. Another question was whether some participants, particularly in the IA sample, would have difficulty with full-time work and return to receiving welfare.

**Figure 4: Percentage of Those Receiving IA Benefits (IA Sample)**

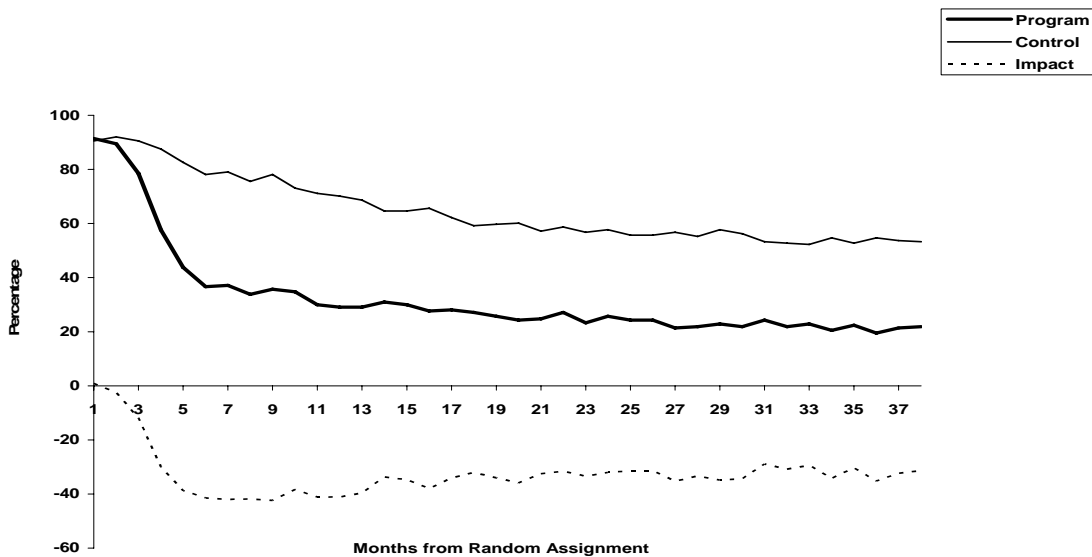


Figure 4 presents the monthly rates of IA receipt among program and control groups. CEIP led to a steadily lower rate of IA receipt (by around 30 percentage points) between months 10 to 38 when compared to the control group. Among EI program group members, the rate of EI receipt was reduced by over 60 percentage points at peak compared to the control group, and had a sustained decrease of about 25 percentage points for most of the eligibility period.

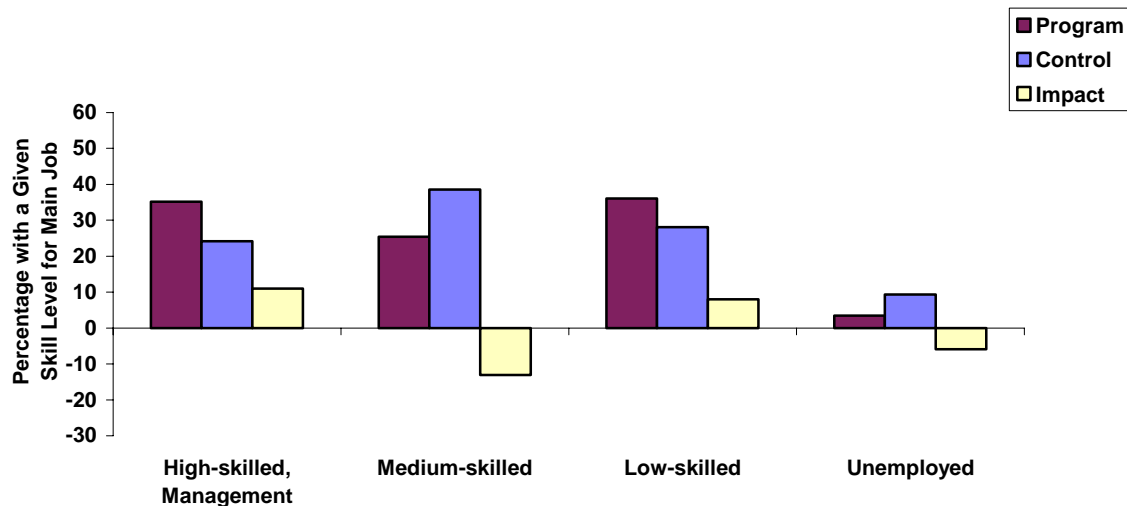
## Providing Meaningful Employment

Although CEIP has produced substantial increases in employment and earnings, accompanied by reductions in EI and IA receipt, this raises a natural question regarding the nature of this incremental full-time work.

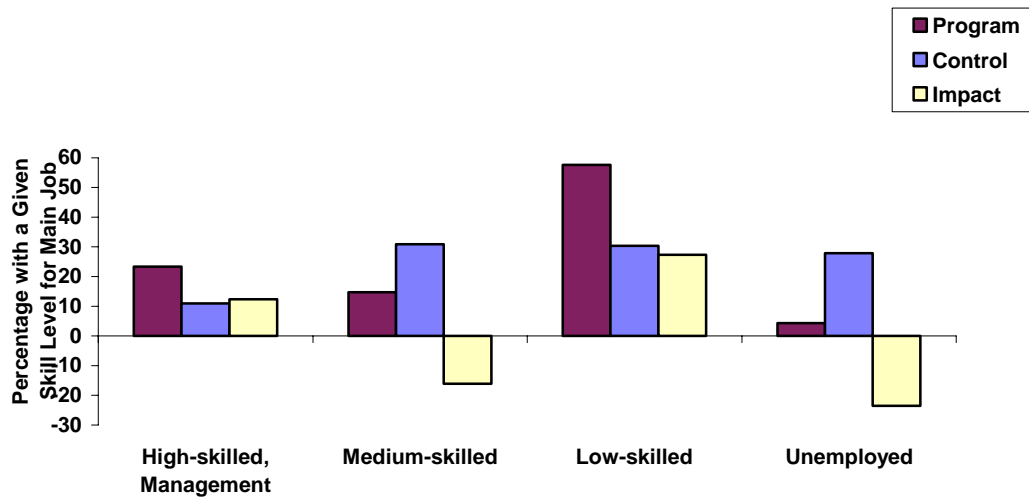
### *Skill Level of Primary Jobs*

Figures 5 and 6 present the impact of CEIP on the distribution of program group members by the skill levels of the main jobs they held during the eligibility period. Jobs have been grouped according to high-skilled occupations (management, professional level and positions requiring post-secondary), medium-skilled positions (intermediate level requiring high school) and low-skilled jobs (elementary level requiring less than high school).

**Figure 5: Impacts on Job Skill Levels (EI Sample)**



**Figure 6: Impacts on Job Skill Levels (IA Sample)**



Among the EI sample, CEIP increased the percentage of program group members with main jobs in both low-skilled and high-skilled positions (both 9.4 percentage points) when compared to the control group. There were accompanying decreases in the percentage who did not work (5.6 percentage points) and those who held medium-skilled positions (13.2 percentage points). Among the IA sample, CEIP had the largest impact on program group members with low-skilled positions (increasing by 28.2 percentage points), followed by a decrease in the percentage who did not work (by 23.6 percentage point). CEIP also increased program group members' employment in high-skilled and management positions by 11.4 percentage points and decreased those who held medium-skilled positions by 16.1 percentage points.

These changes in the distribution of the skill level of program group members' main jobs largely reflect a shift from unemployment to low-skilled jobs and from medium-skilled jobs to high-skilled occupations. Overall, these results demonstrate that CEIP has been successful in not only increasing employment, but also in shifting some program group members into occupations that are higher skilled than jobs they would have otherwise held.

***Duration and Number of Jobs Held***

In addition to the occupation types and skill levels, CEIP is expected to have influenced the number of positions and the duration of jobs that program group members held. The idea was for CEIP to provide varied job opportunities to enhance both skills and social networks, while providing longer-term employment stability.

Between both the EI and IA samples, CEIP has increased the percentage of program group members who held multiple jobs since their enrolment in the study. Along with varied work opportunities, CEIP also appears to have provided significantly longer job durations in a primary position for program group members. Thus for many participants, CEIP was able to achieve a balance between encouraging multiple work opportunities and increasing the duration of the primary position they held during their participation in the project.

## **Summary**

Results from CEIP's interim impact study suggest that such a program can be expected to produce substantially higher rates of employment and earnings. Furthermore, these incremental gains are sustainable throughout a long-term eligibility, with little incidence of return to transfer receipt, even among those with the least employability at the outset. In fact, employment gains were largest among particular disadvantaged groups in terms of their initial lower incomes, lack of social supports, and those with employment barriers that arise from activity restrictions.

These results also support the notion that communities can mobilize their local resources and create projects, largely through the voluntary sector, which provide a range of meaningful job opportunities, including some that are higher skilled than what participants would otherwise have held. Furthermore, the program appears to have achieved a balance by providing varied and multiple job opportunities, while improving the duration of a primary job held, which afforded many program group members varied work experience and more significant job stability.