

**THE JOBS PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAM PILOT:
Pathways, Pitfalls, and Progress
in the First Year**

Process Research

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A. Introduction

The Ministry of Human Resources' mission is to link people with opportunities for success. To achieve its mission, the Ministry has developed and implemented programs and services that help individuals and families move from welfare to work, and improve their economic and social well-being.

Over the years, the Ministry has explored and implemented different approaches to help clients become self-sufficient. When asked about these services, Ministry staff commonly mentioned the "Workplace Based Training" program (WBT), which is targeted at clients who need more assistance to re-enter the labour market.¹ Before January 2000 there was a lack of opportunities for unemployed individuals who had recent employment experience or training and who were job-ready and did not need training, but required help to find employment. The Ministry launched a two-year pilot program called the *Jobs Partnership Program (JPP)*, which represented a profound shift from a focus on the use of service contracts to deliver training programs to a focus on performance-based contracts to deliver a "work first" strategy designed to help job-ready clients into jobs as quickly as possible.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

JPP is a partnership between the government and two private sector agencies: The Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia (Destinations Job Link), and JobWaveBC (headed by the West Coast Group International Consultants Ltd., an IT consulting firm for small business).

The agencies are contracted to deliver JPP, an employment-focused program. JPP provides time-limited employment services and supports to program participants to help them find jobs quickly and to keep them. The agencies will begin receiving payments from the government only when JPP participants become employed and independent of BC Benefits. The program is expected to save the government money and be self-financing. The anticipated savings to the Government will be used to pay the agencies, based on a formula negotiated in the contracts.

The primary goal of JPP is to increase the number of BC Benefits clients who find work. Many informants commonly said the goal is to "link participants with jobs and keep them in jobs." It is expected that doing so will help reduce the number of cases on BC Benefits, and save welfare expenditures.

¹Many informants described WBT in terms of its targeted population, which is participants who need more intensive training (e.g. do not have enough skills or training). Service providers place WBT participants with employers who are willing to provide job training for these individuals. Employers are eligible for up to \$3,000 to help with the training costs for the participants, as well as other employees in the organization.

TARGETED POPULATION

JPP was designed to serve job-ready applicants who are eligible for BC Benefits. In targeting this group, the program works with individuals who typically have higher skill levels and recent work histories. JPP is intended to intervene before these individuals become “trapped” on welfare. Immediate participation in employment activities sends a strong message that BC Benefits is short-term assistance.

The program was designed to refer program participants for two years between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2001; 24,000 referrals targeted in year one and 28,000 in year two. The agencies are expected to find jobs for one in four referrals (6,000 in the first year and 7,000 in the second). However, there is no cap on the number of placements. In fact, this would provide an incentive for the agencies to find jobs for as many participants as possible in order to attain the maximum amount payable that is specified in their agreement.

BACKGROUND

Previously, the Ministry provided a variety of programs and services to help BC Benefits participants find employment. However, many of these programs were not accessible by job-ready people, since the philosophy at the time was that they can find their own jobs and that assistance should not be provided until their independent job search has failed. Thus, under the previous system, individuals would have been on BC Benefits for seven months or longer.² According to one informant, “The program [JPP] was conceived because people realized [that] there was a missing piece in getting people back to work.” In addition, many of the programs focused on serving clients (“counting input”), and there was a move in the Ministry towards “output based” programs, especially ones that would be cost-effective.

An idea that has gained acceptance is that finding and getting a job depends on whom you know (networks) and what you know (skills). JPP provides a new approach to address the network issue. The lack of connections makes the search for work more difficult, even for highly motivated individuals. By the time individuals apply for BC Benefits they are “desperate,” having usually run out of funds and confidence. Individuals who are out of the job market may need help connecting with employers and may require more personalized attention than they can get in other generally available programs, such as job clubs. Getting a job is much easier for individuals with good contacts. The agencies running JPP provide a direct link to employers. Without JPP, many participants would be competing with many other job searchers for the same jobs.

²This waiting period has been phased out. This change, however, was not related to the implementation of JPP.

PROGRAM INNOVATIONS

Both the literature and comments from key informants suggest that the JPP design represents a “first” in many areas of welfare reform and a move away from the old way of programming. The most notable program features include the following:

- **A step toward more active programs.** By implementing JPP, the Ministry demonstrated its shift in emphasis from passive to active social programs. JPP breaks from the passive approach by proactively connecting people to the labour market. People involved in delivering JPP present a message that “a job is better than welfare” and provide services to achieve that goal, and that “this Ministry is not about providing welfare cheques — it’s about providing jobs.”
- **Contracting arrangements that reward performance.** This is the first performance-based contract into which the Ministry has entered. Agencies are paid when JPP participants are placed into jobs and become independent of BC Benefits, for up to a maximum of 19 months in a 30-month eligibility period. The underlying hypothesis is that performance-driven incentives will encourage more creativity and entrepreneurship in the development and delivery of programs. There has been little experience of this kind of contractual arrangement; therefore the JPP pilot implementation experience provides valuable knowledge for policy in this area.

In addition, performance payments play a significant role in helping the JPP partnership work towards the common goal of getting people off BC Benefits, and ensuring that the government is getting value for its expenditures.

- **Creating linkages with the business community by forming a public-private partnership.** The use of private agencies with connections to industries to run employment-focused programs instead of governments is rare and generally small in scale. The JPP agencies are in a unique position to facilitate the involvement of business, especially small businesses and tourism. Agencies indicated that they have more latitude in programming than in other government programs because they are partners and not subcontractors. The JPP contractual arrangements, therefore, remove the government from delivering the program and offer the agencies substantive flexibility to do what they do best.

In addition to the global contributions listed above, JPP also includes some internal features that are considered innovative:

- **Early intervention aimed at employment.** Both Ministry and agency staff had previously seen the need for a program like JPP, in which clients would be assisted immediately, before the experience of being on income assistance affects their confidence and self-esteem. Staff have been saying for years, “Let us touch them at the beginning, and they won’t stay on. The longer they stay on, the less chance they have of getting off.” JPP hopes to help each individual who applies for BC Benefits into a job before receiving a welfare cheque.

- **Building bridges between employers and BC Benefits clients.** Many people who receive BC Benefits have difficulties finding work. The agencies serve to bridge the gap between employers and Ministry, something that may be more difficult for government to do.
- **Creating liaison positions to improve communications.** The contract established one or more liaison positions for accessing the Province's confidential information and assisting with monitoring JPP participants' BC Benefits status. Ministry staff were seconded to these positions and worked out of the agencies' offices. According to agency staff, these liaison positions play a vital role in facilitating and maintaining communications between government and agencies. During the first year of operations, the agencies relied extensively on these individuals to help them gain a better understanding of who welfare applicants are and how the welfare system works.

METHODOLOGY

The JPP partners were committed to giving JPP a full and fair test to learn what works, what does not, and why. In order to meet this high standard, the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) was initially asked to conduct an experimental evaluation, which included a process research, an impacts study and a benefit-cost analysis. However, due to budget constraints, the Ministry subsequently contracted SRDC to conduct only the process research for the first year of program operations.

To achieve this end, from January to March 2001 SRDC conducted field research to learn about JPP. The research was based on a case-study approach, which cannot measure the net impact of JPP on its participants — nor will it provide a benefit-cost analysis of JPP from the perspective of the government. Nonetheless, the information in this study can help policy-makers and program staff to gain insights into some of the factors that might contribute to the program's overall success.

Choosing the Case Study Sites

It was not possible to do an in-depth process research covering all nine Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) administrative regions within the budget and time limitations. Therefore, the study targeted four MHR administrative regions for case study research. In addition, the study profiles two Employment Benefits Centres (EBCs) in each of the four selected regions. EBCs within each region were selected by the researchers in consultation with the JPP Coordinator for each region. The sites were selected on the basis of their representing a range of implementation challenges presented by the mix of labour market types, the specific geographic areas, the populations, and the program delivery, as well as other implementation issues. Thus, the study sites were selected purposively.

Table 1 identifies the study sites and lists some of the reasons the regional JPP coordinators gave for including these sites.

Table 1: JPP Study Sites and Characteristics

Region 1	Diverse population, including many “harder to serve” individuals.
Northside	Serves a more transient and mixed population that may include many hard-to-place clients.
Southside	Serves a population that includes many ESL participants.
Region 4	Opportunity to learn about placement challenges faced by rural areas. Serves a high proportion of ESL and single-parent cases. The selected offices were thought to have been quite innovative in their approaches to delivering JPP.
Langley	Experienced a fair number of implementation challenges (e.g. low number of referrals to Destinations Job Link). Langley is as rural as you can get in an urban setting. Office has undergone substantive organizational changes. Serves a high proportion of single parents.
Whalley	Primarily a YouthWorks office, and thus would profile a very “employable” group of participants. Developed and implemented some vigorous procedures around JPP, specifically regarding tracking, monitoring, and compliance.
Region 5	Slow in implementing JPP, but now has a steady flow of referrals and placements. Presents possibilities for studying urban/rural challenges and opportunity to study sites served by only one agency. Region divided into two sub-regions, which have been divided between the two agencies.
Cranbrook	Destinations Job Link operates in this site, which has a population of roughly 25,000 and provides a sufficient client base for the study.
Nelson	JobWaveBC subcontractor is located in Ashland and must travel to Nelson once a week to conduct initial assessments and other JPP services.
Region 8	Provides an opportunity to explore challenges facing resource-based communities.
Campbell River	Slow in getting JPP into the field, and the number of referrals has been low. The economic situation in Campbell River is poor.
Nanaimo	Has a relatively high JPP caseload.

The Case Study Approach

A case study approach is an appropriate research technique for conducting process research. This method allows the study to investigate the program’s characteristics and its implementation, and factors that may affect its success. The research design was heavily influenced by Zeke Hasenfeld’s model for understanding service outcomes, and placed a lot of emphasis on observing and understanding the worker and participant encounters such as the JPP screening and referral process (or what Hasenfeld calls “technology-in-practice”).³ Therefore, in addition to the depth interviews with key informants, the study observed the program and noted the worker and participant interaction at two key junctions: JPP information and referral sessions at the orientation session or intake meeting; and initial assessment at the agencies.

Information Collection and Analysis

Once the study sites were selected, SRDC contacted regional Ministry and agency staff to inform them about the evaluation and to make arrangements to interview relevant staff

³Zeke Hasenfeld is known for his work in the application of organizational theory to implementation research. In addition to several books and papers he has written on this subject, his views here are captured from a seminar he conducted for staff from both Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) and SRDC in December 2000.

members and to observe the selected junctions. The study used a number of information-gathering techniques and sources, including

- **Depth interviews**
Detailed interviews (with pre-designed interview protocols) with key informants who were knowledgeable about JPP at all levels of JPP implementation and operations. This process included 46 interviews with Ministry and agency staff at the field, regional, and headquarters locations.
- **Observation of orientation sessions**
The researchers observed orientation sessions in sites where individuals were referred to JPP from the orientations. We attended two orientations at Northside and one at Southside.
- **Ministry JPP screening and referral interviews**
We were able to observe, on average, several screening and referral interviews in each study site.
- **Agency assessment interviews**
We were able to observe assessments at JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link in most study sites.
- **Observation of JobWaveBC Call Centre**
We observed telephone marketers at the JobWaveBC call centre contacting potential JobWaveBC employers and marketing the program to them.
- **Program information**
SRDC received information about referrals, placements, and receipt of financial supports from the agencies and the Ministry. SRDC used this information to inform our analysis of the program.

The researchers produced memos for all depth interviews and program observations, which are the primary data source for the study. These memos were reviewed and analysed by the three SRDC field researchers.

This report compiles the “voices” of 46 Ministry and agency staff at the regional and senior management levels. A list of the people interviewed is provided in Appendix A.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report focuses on JPP and its implementation. It describes the program as it exists going into the second year of the pilot, any procedural changes that may have taken place, and any remaining implementation challenges and opportunities. It is organized according to three main categories of discussion. Sections B and C present an overview of the program, followed by a more detailed description of the service delivery. Section D looks at program governance, which refers both to the program in practice and to aspects such as such as communication, the public-private partnership, and job satisfaction. Section E presents an overall assessment by informants about various program elements — what works, what needs work, and what lies ahead. The report ends with Section F, which provides some conclusions based on our experience in conducting this study.

B. The Jobs Partnership Program

This section provides an overview of the project organization and program model.

PROJECT ORGANIZATION: THE JPP PARTNERSHIP

The organizations that came together to design and to implement the Jobs Partnership Program (JPP) and their roles and functions, are as follows:

The Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) is responsible for the overall program delivery and contracts. The Labour Market Attachment Branch (LMAB) of MHR acts as the contract managers and regional staff deliver the program. The program cost is expected to be totally offset by the expected savings from JPP. MHR will identify and refer potential JPP candidates to the agencies, and participate in the general oversight of the program through committees established for this purpose (e.g. Program Management Committee meetings). The province is divided into nine MHR administrative regions. Each region has a Regional Executive Officer and regional staff that are responsible for the region and Employment and Benefits Centres (EBCs) in the region. Staff in the EBCs are responsible for making referrals to JPP.

The West Coast Group International Consultants Ltd. (JobWaveBC) and The Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia (Destinations Job Link) are the two agencies contracted to coordinate and develop procedures for delivering the following JPP benefits and services for individuals accepted into the program:⁴

- Assess referred participants for their suitability for participation in JPP.
- Refer participants assessed as unsuitable for JPP back to the Ministry for a more appropriate program or service.
- Notify the Ministry of the agency's decision about participants who have been accepted into the program.
- Provide up to 90 days of job-search support following enrolment in JPP, and "whatever pre-employment services the agency believes, and the participant agree" are needed to help the individual obtain a placement.
- Assist participants to obtain a placement with a suitable employer and assist unemployed (previously placed) participants in obtaining a placement with another suitable employer.
- Refer all participants in the following categories back to the province: those assessed as being unsuitable for JPP; those determined unsuitable subsequent to enrolment in JPP; those unsuccessful in achieving a placement within the 90 days of pre-employment services; or those who have advised the agency that they no longer wish to participate in the program.
- Send representatives to the Program Management Committee meetings and other committees established to manage the program.

⁴These are the services stated in the service agreements between the agencies and the province.

PROGRAM MODEL

The agencies use different organizational structures to deliver JPP. Both agencies made several new hires. Destinations Job Link uses its own staff to deliver the program, while JobWaveBC uses a mixed approach. Initially JobWaveBC subcontracted with local agencies to deliver the program. It now uses a mixed strategy. JobWaveBC staff operate the “Job Stores” in Victoria, Vancouver, Kelowna, and Nanaimo; subcontractors continue to be used in all other areas.

The following section describes the key program parameters of JPP, which were arrived at mainly through negotiations between the Ministry and partners, and fell within budget and program constraints.

Key Program Parameters

- Ninety days of assisted job search with an agency. This period allows agencies to work solely with the participants, but also limits the time that agencies can spend with them.
- Participants who find work within the 90 days are entitled to a maximum of 30 months of JPP supports and services in order to achieve up to 19 months of independence from BC Benefits.
- Agencies receive performance-based payments only for participants who find work within the 90 days and become independent of BC Benefits. The agencies receive a maximum of up to \$4,865 per placement in front-loaded increments for individuals who remain off of income assistance (IA) for up to 19 months over a 30-month period. (Appendix B shows the JPP payments to agencies for achieving set milestones.) In past contractual arrangements the Ministry simply paid for “seats,” and there was no financial incentive to ensure that participants became independent of BC Benefits, which is a primary goal.
- Both agencies provide pre-employment support services during the 90 days, such as resumé preparation, interviewing techniques and skills, and use of equipment (e.g. computers, fax, phone, and voicemail). Employment counsellors are available for advice and support.

The major benefits and services JPP offers are as follows:

- **Job Placements.** The agencies provide participants who are unemployed or who want to change jobs with individualized job-search assistance. Destinations Job Link’s employment counsellors find work for their JPP participants by using their connections to the industry. JobWaveBC finds work for their participants by providing opportunities available in the job bank, job leads, and assisted job search. To ensure that participants inform agencies about employment secured, JobWaveBC offers participants who find work (either from the job bank or on their own) \$50 and Destinations Job Links provides small non-financial incentives (e.g. lottery tickets).
- **Pre-employment financial supports** are available from both agencies to cover employment-related expenses. In general, JobWaveBC contractors can issue up to \$100; anything over that amount requires authorization from the neighbourhood

coordinator. Amounts over \$250 go to the regional coordinator for approval. Destinations Job Link can issue up to \$50 per participant. There is, however, discretion at both agencies to spend more to help place participants.

- **Post-placement support services and incentives.** Employers who hire JobWaveBC participants are eligible for a \$1,000 incentive if they keep their employees for six months. Destinations Job Link uses retention and training dollars (up to \$3,000) to divert or prevent job loss and subsequent welfare recidivism. Both agencies provide post-placement supports such as follow-up calls and ongoing access to agency resources to help participants keep their jobs.

The Ministry has not implemented a program of this large scale or magnitude for some time. The literature provides examples of good ideas that went amiss when they went from program design to program implementation.⁵ While this study cannot determine whether JPP is an effective program, it does indicate that JPP is operational in all regions in the province. Many Ministry and agency staff thought JPP was well implemented despite there being several major implementation challenges, including

- Governance, encompassing issues such as regional variations, organizational communications, and the public/private partnership.
- Payments to agencies.
- Data management for maintaining participant data.

The challenges that the above areas created will be discussed in later sections. More importantly for some informants, JPP provided an opportunity to learn more about implementing a public/private job placement program and testing a performance-based contract, features that are important for modern labour market policies.

⁵Source: Brock, T. et al., 1997. *CREATING NEW HOPE: Implementation of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare.*

C. JPP Service Delivery

The Jobs Partnership Program (JPP) was announced to senior regional management at the Ministry of Human Resources' Regional Executive Officers' meeting in December 1999. Representatives from the agencies were also present to meet with the regional executive officers (REOs). At this meeting, the REOs were empowered to go back to their regions, work with Ministry staff and agencies, and design and implement the procedures required to launch JPP in January 2000. Although the start-up period was short (and was referred to as the "ramp-up" by field staff), the authorization gave each region a lot of flexibility and discretion to implement JPP in a way that "works" for their area and clientele.

This section provides a detailed description of how JPP works in the study sites. It also describes the process by which program participants interact with and use the program, from their application to BC Benefits to the types of supports offered by the agencies after participants have been placed in a job. Special challenges faced and the responses to those challenges by the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) and/or agencies will also be discussed. The program experienced constant changes over its first year of operations, and the description presented here is of the program as it looks going into its second year. It focuses on four critical junctures in the program:

1. Ministry intake and referral to JPP;
2. Agency intake and assessment for JPP;
3. Agency pre-placement and placement supports; and
4. Agency post-placement supports.

1. MINISTRY: INTAKE AND REFERRAL

During the program's planning stages, program designers made a number of decisions that affected referrals to JPP. Two of the most important decisions are the targeted number of participants that will be referred to JPP by the Ministry and the targeted number of placements. In order to meet the targeted number of placements, the Ministry had to refer a minimum of 24,000 individuals to the agencies in the first year (10,000 individuals to Destinations Job Link and 14,000 to JobWaveBC) and 28,000 in the second year (14,000 per agency).

Since the agencies do not actively recruit program participants, the Ministry has the critical task of "opening the door" for individuals to get into JPP. Referrals take place continuously throughout a two-year period. MHR staff responsible for screening and referring potential JPP candidates (hereafter called "JPP referral officers") will primarily identify prospective candidates from individuals applying for BC Benefits, and refer them directly to the agencies. Referral officers do not assess whether or not these individuals are suitable for JPP; this decision resides with the employment counsellors at the agencies. (Referrals from the caseload will be discussed later.)

This section describes the Ministry intake and referral process at the study sites.

The Service Delivery Model

While there are variations in the procedures across Ministry regions and Employment Benefits Centres (EBCs), the key difference is the model used to refer individuals to JPP — the pre-intake and post-intake models. In the pre-intake model, potential participants are referred to JPP from the orientation session before they attend the BC Benefits application meeting, and in the post-intake model individuals are referred to the program at or after the application meeting, once BC Benefits eligibility has been established. Figure 1 provides a schematic overview of the referral process.

Program Entry: At the Pre-Application Meeting

All individuals who apply for BC Benefits at the Ministry intake or integrated offices are scheduled for a half-day orientation session (the Early Intervention Program, or EIP), and a BC Benefits application or intake meeting. The orientation session is scheduled for the next available date, usually one or two business days later, and the intake meeting is about one week later. Community-based agencies have been contracted to deliver the orientation sessions in most regions. However, individuals *must* attend the orientation session (by law) before they can attend the intake meeting; otherwise, both appointments are rescheduled for later dates. The orientation session consists of three steps:

1. BC Benefits orientation video;
2. labour market and job-search information; and
3. job placement registration.

As previously mentioned, the Ministry regions are using either the pre- or post-intake model to refer potential candidates to JPP. The initial message perceived by field staff when JPP was rolled out was that the program was supposed to use a pre-intake model because the idea was diversion, that is, get participants jobs before they receive their first BC Benefits cheque. This model did not work in all regions; several study sites changed to a post-intake model after their early experience.⁶

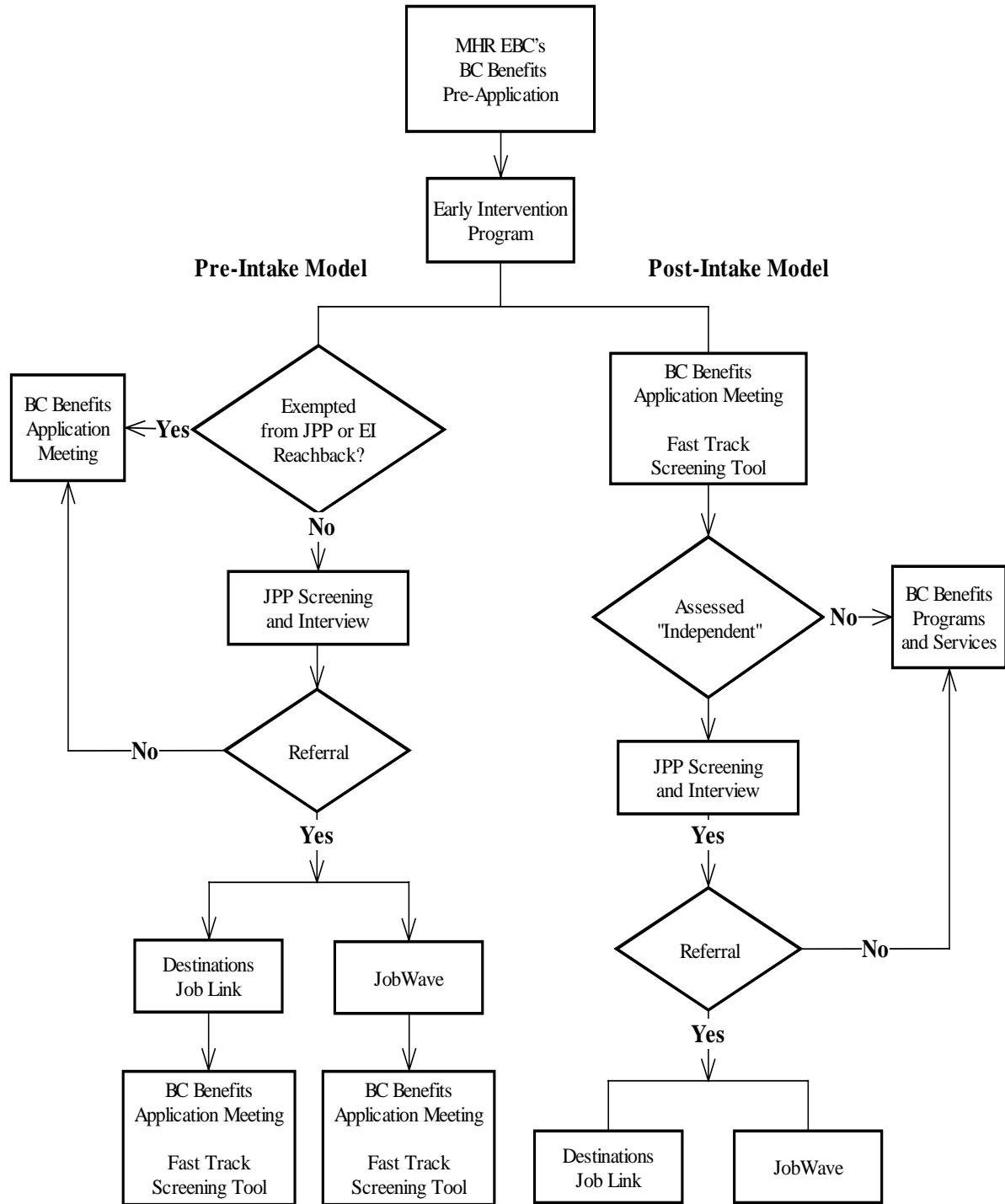
The program designers believed that JPP would be suitable for some participants, but not for all. Thus, JPP was not made a mandatory program, which would require people to participate in order to receive BC Benefits. However, most EBCs made JPP mandatory for all referrals, that is, all individuals who are referred to JPP must attend the initial assessment interview.⁷ JPP, however, does not affect the applicant's eligibility for BC Benefits. In mandatory sites, the JPP referral officer talks to all potential referrals, and since everyone is not motivated to work or can work, the referral Officer may need more time to determine an individual's suitability for JPP. In the voluntary sites (which are rare), only volunteers are referred to JPP. The referrals in the study sites are all mandatory, except in Northside.⁸

⁶A reviewer of the draft report noted that “[the pre-intake model] worked for the partners.”

⁷In most cases, referrals are individuals who have been assessed as “independent” by the Ministry service screening tool.

⁸Since the Job Registration step in the orientation session was mandatory and legislated when JPP started, it was inserted into this step. When Step 3 was dropped from the EIP sessions in Region 1, JPP became mandatory in sites where Step 3 had been removed, and voluntary in sites where it was still being offered. It is interesting to note that in the voluntary sites in Vancouver, the EIP is serving a population that may need more intensive interventions to help them find employment.

Figure 1: Overview of the JPP Referral Process



Exemptions and Exclusions from JPP

Before describing the referral process, an important feature in the target population needs to be discussed. The Ministry does not require individuals to search for employment or participate in employment programs if they are single parents with at least one child under the age of seven or with a child who has a condition that prevents the parent from leaving home for employment. These individuals are excused from the orientation after viewing the BC Benefits orientation video. In addition, individuals who may qualify for disability benefits are also excused from participating in employment-related activities while receiving BC Benefits. Therefore, most individuals from these two groups may not even hear about JPP at the orientation session and are not in the pool of potential JPP referrals. They can, however, be referred to JPP later, if they are interested, and volunteer for the program.

The program design established a targeted mix of JPP placements based on the mix achieved in the WBT program, and JPP has had problems meeting these targeted proportions. This group of applicants, or “new starts,” after exempting the above groups, is the population in which the Ministry can select most of its prospective JPP candidates. Table 2 shows the targeted and actual mix of JPP participants, and the actual mix of new starts and non-exempted new starts (excludes Disability Benefits I [DBI] and DBII cases, and single parents with children under the age of seven) in December 2000. The mix in both groups of new starts varies from the targeted mix. For example, the targeted mix for single parents was set at 28 per cent. The actual proportion of single parents is 13 per cent, which falls in between the 17 per cent in the total new starts and nine per cent in the non-exempted new starts.

Table 2: Family Type Breakdowns

Family Types	Targeted Caseload JPP (%)	JPP Actual Caseload (%)	New BC Benefits Cases in December 2000	
			Total Cases (%)	Non-exempted Cases (%)
Single men	41	54	50	56
Single women	18	15	22	24
Couples	4	6	4	4
Two-parent families	9	12	7	7
Single-parent families	28	13	17	9

Notes: JPP Actual Caseload is for the period of December 16, 2000 to January 15, 2001.
Non-exempted cases are determined by excluding the DBI, DBII, and single parents with at least one child under the age of seven from the total new BC Benefits cases.

In addition, many EBCs will not refer individuals to JPP who are Employment Insurance (EI) reachback clients⁹ or awaiting EI benefits. Individuals who are “temporarily excused” (e.g. confirmed employment or recently lost a child) may also be excused from participating

⁹EI reachback clients are individuals who have received regular EI benefits in the past three years or maternity or parental benefits in the past five years. EI reachback clients may be eligible for other federal or provincial programs, and are referred to program referral officers to explore these other options. Unlike many other offices, the Northside office signs up clients for JPP even if they are eligible for other programs under EI because the program referral officer who manages reachback clients will refer individuals who express an interest in JPP back to the JPP referral officer.

in JPP if these reasons are disclosed to the Ministry referral officer.¹⁰ The individuals who are not exempted or excluded from participating in JPP will be referred to as “eligible JPP referrals” in the rest of this section.

The two JPP referral methods in the eight study sites are detailed below.

Pre-intake Referrals

The Southside, Northside, and Cranbrook study sites are using the pre-intake model. JPP is mandatory in Southside and Cranbrook and voluntary in Northside. Orientation sessions are held daily in Vancouver and three times a week in Cranbrook.

Forms

The referral process in the pre-intake sites revolves around a screening form and the JPP referral officer telling participants about JPP at the orientation session. There are variations in both the types of forms used and the process across the study sites.

In Southside all eligible JPP referrals complete a short JPP screening application at the beginning of the orientation session. In Northside only volunteers complete this form.¹¹ Cranbrook uses a different form; clients complete the service screening tool at the time of their initial pre-application. The screening form is set aside for the Ministry staff who handle JPP referrals to consider later, when the client attends the orientation session.

Screening for Eligibility for BC Benefits

Because JPP participants must be eligible for BC Benefits, the referral officers need to assess potential participants’ eligibility. In Vancouver referral officers rely on the short screener to do this; at the same time, they try not to say too much about eligibility since this could raise issues for participants and distract them from the JPP message. According to the referral officers, it is difficult to tell for sure whether people are eligible for BC Benefits or not based on the pre-screening form. In Cranbrook eligibility is assessed at the intake session, after the orientation session.

Screening

In Cranbrook and Northside meetings with potential referrals take place in a group setting. These meetings tend to be very short, and are conducted within full hearing range of other participants. We did not observe any probing about the participants’ job readiness. However, this was noted in the one-on-one interviews. In group settings, the questions tend to focus on work experience and the referral direction since there is more sensitivity about the types of questions that can be asked in front of a group of people and people are less likely to disclose personal information. The individual interviews (both at the orientation and at intake), although short, still allow the worker to go over the screening form in more depth and ask further questions.

¹⁰In addition, one referral officer mentioned excluding people who already have jobs but are eligible for a top-up or who are waiting for their first paycheck.

¹¹The JPP Referral Officer in Northside thought that the partners accepted more participants for JPP from voluntary sites since individuals from these sites tend to self-select.

The Referral Decision

In the Vancouver offices the referral officer will review the pre-screening application form with each individual. In the Northside office all individuals who volunteer are referred. They meet with the employment planning officer (EPO) briefly when they hand in their forms. Some of the observed meetings lasted between 15 seconds to two minutes. In Southside the referral officer meets with the potential referral individually for about 10 to 15 minutes and decides whether or not to refer the individual to JPP.

In both Vancouver agencies appointments for agency assessments are usually scheduled within the same or next day. Potential participants receive a form that provides the appointment date and time, agency address and phone number, and a map. They are also asked to bring a resumé if they have one. Once an individual is referred to JPP, the decision to go to JobWaveBC or Destinations Job Link is usually made by the participant.

In Cranbrook individuals who scored a 9 or less on the service screening tool are automatically referred to JPP. Referrals meet the employment counsellor from Destinations Job Link, who also attends the orientation session to make appointments immediately after the referral. The employment counsellor will reject some participants at the orientation session who are clearly not suited for JPP, which saves them from having to attend another appointment.

Keeping Track of Referrals

Following the orientation session the JPP referral officer returns to the EBC and opens a Jobs Partnership (JP) file for all individuals referred to the agencies. The list of referrals, containing client names, social insurance numbers, phone numbers, JP file numbers, and appointment dates and times, is faxed to the agencies.¹² In Cranbrook this process is not necessary since the Destinations Job Link employment counsellor attends the orientation session. If the employment counsellor misses the session, the Ministry will fax the referral information, including the JP file numbers, to the employment counsellor. The agency staff calls clients to schedule an appointment; participants do not call the agency.

In theory, referrals would attend their assessments at the agency before their scheduled intake meeting. In practice, however, many referrals do not show up at the initial appointments. There is considerable effort made by the referral officers to track these individuals — especially those who become eligible for BC Benefits — and to ensure that they follow up with the referrals or that they get connected with a different program or service. Before JPP was implemented BC Benefits recipients who were required to search for employment had to demonstrate from time to time that they were doing so. However, according to one informant, tracking and monitoring this requirement may not have been as effective as it could have been. The individual said that this became evident when JPP was implemented, and the agencies demanded to know where the referrals were. Monitoring and compliance affect all steps in JPP, and will be further discussed in later sections.

¹²At the time of the field research the Ministry and agencies implemented a system that would electronically transmit a file of daily referrals to the agencies. However, many sites continue to use the manual system of faxing the files.

Post-intake Referrals

Five study sites make referrals at or after the intake meeting: Langley, Whalley, Nelson, Campbell River, and Nanaimo. Under this scheme, individuals attend the intake meeting after the orientation session. They meet with the financial assistance worker (FAW) or intake worker to determine their eligibility for BC Benefits, and it is at this time that they are referred, or not, to JPP.

Screening

The individual completes the service screening tool, which is part of the intake process, to determine whether the individual is “independent” or “assisted.” All study sites rely on this tool to screen out not-job-ready individuals. In most offices the FAW will consider referring the individual if his or her score was 10 or less, and if the individual is not exempted from searching for work or participating in employment programs or is otherwise excluded from JPP. A couple of FAWs estimated that JPP has added roughly 10–15 minutes to the intake meeting.

In most study sites the intake worker is responsible for telling potential candidates about JPP, and possibly for interviewing people to glean more information in order to determine whether or not they would be suitable candidates. There is discretion to override the independent assessment and not refer an individual to JPP. Thus, referrals in these offices can come from many different workers. For example, in large offices there could be up to a dozen workers referring to people JPP. Once the decision is made to refer, the individual can choose between JobWaveBC or Destinations Job Link, and the worker intervenes only if the choice appears inappropriate. Most participants are given the contact information for the agency in which they had been referred, and are asked to call the agency directly to make an appointment. In Nelson participants are asked to attend the weekly group assessment interviews.¹³

The procedures in the Region 4 study sites differ from the above procedures. In Whalley the FAW completes the intake meeting and refers eligible JPP referrals to a dedicated JPP worker in the office, who conducts the screening interview and completes the referral immediately after the intake meeting. The JPP Contact has participants fill out the screening tool, determines their suitability, shows them a job list so they can see the types of jobs offered, and explains the JPP services and their obligations to it should they choose to participate. Thus, only one person is involved in the referral process. The referred participant is also expected to call the agency to make an appointment, and is expected to do so within 10 business days.

Initially, the Langley office referred potential JPP participants to the Surrey office for assessments. Many clients had problems getting to Surrey due to transportation issues.¹⁴ This problem was solved when JobWaveBC contracted with the local Salvation Army to deliver JPP. The low number of referrals to Destinations Job Link was also an issue. Therefore, Langley agreed to change the referral process (more specifically, the agency referral) in an attempt to increase the number of referrals to Destinations Job Link. The FAWs send all

¹³In Campbell River the referral is delayed further since it cannot happen until the first cheque is ready to be issued, which can take up to five days after the intake meeting.

¹⁴According to an agency staff person, it took clients four hours by bus to get from Aldergrove to Surrey.

“independents” to the Destinations Job Link employment counsellor who is in the Langley EBC every Wednesday,¹⁵ who determines their suitability for Destinations Job Link *first*, before being considered for JobWaveBC. If the individual is not accepted for Destinations Job Link, the employment counsellor determines whether or not the individual should go to JobWaveBC (or even to WBT or to the training consultant), and sends the recommendation back to the FAW. Individuals referred to JobWaveBC by the employment counsellor are expected to call JobWaveBC to make an appointment for the assessment. However, JobWaveBC could still reject them for JPP.

Worker-Participant Interactions

The JPP Presentation

Although the study sites use two different referral models, the JPP presentations and message are similar in both models. The researchers observed the screening and referral interviews and noted the content, message, message delivery, and participant response. The following discussion is based primarily on these observations.

Most individuals at the orientation session do not already know about JPP. The facilitator may initially introduce JPP at the orientation session, but in a limited way; often JPP is introduced in just a few sentences. In some post-intake sites participants are told to ask their workers about JPP if they are interested. Later, applicants receive a brief introduction to JPP during the screening and referral session. These presentations vary across sites as referral officers develop their own presentations. Some of the more detailed presentations cover the following points:

- It is a relatively new program created by the Government last year.
- It involves two partners: describes Destinations Job Link as “tourism and hospitality” and JobWaveBC “as everything else.”
- It helps find jobs for participants.
- It provides some additional money for supports, such as transportation.¹⁶

One presenter ends the JPP presentation by enthusiastically telling participants that the program has found jobs for over 5,000 people. This outcome seems to resonate with many individuals. Often, people are surprised to hear this fact. In addition, mentioning the agency job banks or showing the job lists ignites further interest in JPP. In contrast, one FAW simply lays out the same information and does not try to glamorize it.

One referral officer notes that many clients attending the orientation sessions are often distracted (they may be hungry), and some workers thought that the JPP presentation must be delivered in a positive way in order to get people to listen better.

¹⁵The procedural change was implemented in the late fall of 2000, and had started out with the Destinations Job Link employment counsellor going to the Langley office three times a week.

¹⁶One EPO told us that she created her presentation by talking about the similarities between Destinations Job Link and JobWaveBC, rather than giving a more detailed description of both programs. She does not mention the various services in her presentation, simply because she is not there to sell their services, but to promote JPP.

The Message

The observations suggest that most Ministry staff who are directly involved in JPP are delivering a “work first” message. “We are not about income assistance anymore. It is work over welfare.” While this is not always stated explicitly, workers let individuals know that there is an alternative to welfare — and that is work — and the Ministry will help them, but they are expected to be actively seeking employment with the aim of returning to full-time work. They are told that if they are “job-ready,” JPP will send them to interviews and help them with tasks such as resumé preparation, and provide other employment-related services and supports. If they are not referred or accepted for JPP, they will be connected to another program or service.

Unfortunately, it may be difficult for eligible JPP referrals to “hear” the “work first” message because they are foremost interested in whether or not they are going to be eligible for BC Benefits and when they will get their first cheque. The Referral Officer in the Whalley office talked about program expectations, compliance, and consequences, and provided clients with a lot more details about the program in comparison with the other sites. In addition, there is a lot of information covered at both the orientation session and at the intake meeting, making it possible for clients to tune out new messages because of an “information overload.” From SRDC’s observations, it is not clear how much participants understood the program after being referred to JPP, even in sites where the presentation was more detailed.

Not all referrals are ready to hear the message, but the feeling is that the majority will do whatever it takes to get a cheque, and JPP may be the least of their worries.

Participant Response to JPP

While many participants exhibited an initial distrust or wariness about JPP, researchers observed that they became more interested when they heard about the job lists and placement support offered by the agencies. Most individuals are open to having someone help them find work; it is rare to hear participants say that they do not want to go. We heard some typical responses to new programs that are still being established, such as “It sounds too good to be true!” and it is “. . . about time the Ministry did something like this.”

There are, however, some individuals who are resistant to the program. Some are concerned about the impact of JPP on their BC Benefits. One worker mentioned there were some individuals who questioned the Government’s motivations; they may harbour bad feelings about government programs, especially if they have been referred to mandatory programs in the past. Workers also thought that a few individuals may be “working under the table,” and may not be willing to go to JPP since they would be unable to look for a job full time.

Overall, staff believe that “Most clients react really well. Some are a little apprehensive, but afterwards are very happy about it.” One client in the Whalley office said that it was not what he expected to find when he came in for income assistance. He thought he would get money right away. When asked whether this was better or worse, he said it was “good” because it would help him find a job. The majority of participants at the orientation sessions and intake sessions observed by SRDC appeared to view JPP favourably.

Several Ministry staff members told us that they do not know what happens to clients once they send them to the agencies (e.g. how assessments are done and what happens during the 90-day period for accepted participants). “The honest truth is I don’t know what goes on. I know that they have funds available to assist the client. They can send the client to job interviews. They can help them with bus passes where we [Ministry staff] can’t access anymore.” This knowledge is important, as the referral officer needs to be confident about how potential participants will be assessed at the agency, and this gives the referral officer confidence in make the referrals. However, while having this knowledge may not help increase the number of referrals, it may increase the quality of the service.

Referring Criteria

When JPP was launched, there were two basic eligibility criteria for referrals to JPP: that individuals be eligible for BC Benefits and be legally able to work in Canada. The JPP referral officers use these and other criteria for referring to JPP, such as aspects from an individuals’ work, income assistance (IA) and EI experience, and their personal situation.

Who Does the Screening and Referrals?

The job titles of the JPP referral officers vary across offices. The referrals are done by employment planning officers (EPOs) in Region 1, financial assistance workers (FAWs) in Region 4, FAWs in Region 5, and FAWs in Region 8.¹⁷

JPP referral officers use the information collected on a form (either the short pre-screening tool or the service screening tool) commonly combined with a short interview, to decide whether individuals who are required to search for work should be referred to JPP.¹⁸ Neither form was developed specifically for JPP. For example, the service screening tool was introduced to help individuals who needed help to get services immediately after the application instead of waiting seven months. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear that many Ministry staff feel that the tools are very basic and may not be suitable for JPP.

Because some people who are assessed as independents may not be employable, it is important to screen out those who will obviously be rejected by the agencies (e.g. pending criminal charges and court; alcohol and drug issues). It is better to screen out these individuals “. . . because it is a lot of running around for the client — they go in to apply for BC Benefits, then all the way to [the EIP] — a long way for a lot of them. A lot of them walk because they don’t have money to get there. Then they are interested in JPP and we send them down with bus tickets . . . but that’s a third place they have to go to, and then they have to go back to BC Benefits as a fourth place and, if not eligible for JPP, then they shuffle off to WBT or to training consultants (TC).” Thus, almost all referral officers conduct a short interview to do further screening before referring individuals to JPP.

¹⁷PROs handle reachbacks and mutuals, and refer to JPP if appropriate.

¹⁸The Vancouver study sites use the short pre-screening form, while the other study sites use the service screening tool. The short pre-screening form consists of four questions. The first two collect information to determine whether or not the individual is eligible for BC Benefits. The other two questions ask about interests and previous work experience and are used to determine whether the individual should be referred to Destinations Job Link or JobWaveBC. The service screening tool is part of the intake process. This form consists of eight questions, and the score from this questionnaire determines whether the individual is classified as “independent” or “assisted.” Independents are considered to be job-ready and not eligible for further training. Basically, individuals who score 10 or less on the service screening tool are considered independent and are referred to JPP.

Factors Affecting Referrals

The information or results contained on the form provide a launching pad for the worker to get into a more in-depth discussion with the client. Some workers base their referral decision mainly on the assessment from the service screening tool, while other workers, including those using the short pre-screening form, feel that it is really through the interview that they discover whether or not the participant is job-ready. Individuals may look good on paper, but during the interview they may disclose emotional or medical problems that make them unsuitable for JPP. However, these interviews are affected by how open clients are, and on the worker's ability to draw out such information.

Most referral officers inquire about the individual's previous work experience and current personal circumstances, and ask questions to determine how job-ready the participant is (e.g. "How is your health?"). Although it is difficult to be thorough in a short interview (clients tend to self-disclose more when workers spend more time with them individually), several workers believe that the interview is necessary to help weed out inappropriate referrals, and to allow participants time to understand the referral process and to feel that they have been consulted.

Ministry staff thought that the majority of people they screen are job-ready and so most are referred to JPP.¹⁹

Despite many workers' concerns about their inability to do a thorough assessment, many understood that they do not do assessments, just referrals, and that participants will go through a more comprehensive assessment interview at the agencies.

Inconsistencies in Referrals

There are a few inconsistencies in the way in which some participants with no or minimum experience are treated by referral officers. Some referral officers told us that they would refer, and leave it to the agency to determine whether participants are suitable for JPP. Others do not refer, as they believe the agencies do not want these types of clients, so they try to reduce the number of "hops" for these individuals. On the other hand, workers said they would refer someone who has no skills or work experience, but has a good attitude. As one worker said, it is a constant "judgment call."

In summary, most referral officers use a screening form to do the initial screening and then conduct an interview to look at one or more of the following factors for referring to JPP:

- Not exempted or excluded from program participation.
- No significant barriers to employment (since these individuals would be rejected by the agency anyway). For example, people with literacy problems and single parents who do not have immediate daycare available are generally not referred to JPP.²⁰

¹⁹In the Vancouver Southside area, the Ministry referral officer thought that on average, roughly half of the individuals at the orientation session are potential candidates, and about 9 out of 10 of these individuals are referred to JPP. This is consistent with another worker's estimate.

²⁰Although individuals have 90 days to find daycare, previous experience indicates that they do not do well if they need to find daycare before being able to work. Single parents who are interested in JPP are told to get child care set up first. However, if there is no systematic follow-up to help these individuals find child care and connect to JPP, they fall through the cracks.

- Work experience and interest.²¹
- Not involved with another program or service (WBT, or with a training consultant).

JobWaveBC or Destinations Job Link?

Participants cannot sign up for both agencies. The choice is made by either the participant or worker, based on the individuals' work experience. Many workers believe that most clients choose JobWaveBC for two reasons: It covers "absolutely all employment outside [the] hospitality and tourism industry," and has higher wages than do jobs in tourism. Even workers hold a similar view: "Destinations Job Link is more for tourism. JobWaveBC has got wider variety of trades, childcare. It is more open to people's interests. Unless you've already been in hospitality, you would choose JobWaveBC."

The Numbers

The referral statistics presented in this section were provided by the Ministry. They may differ from other referral statistics presented in later sections, which come from the agencies.

Table 3 shows the number of referrals by agency and region for the period of January 4, 2000 to December 31, 2000. The Ministry made 37,364 referrals to the agencies during the first year of operations, exceeding the targeted number of 24,000. Overall, between 6 and 7 out of every 10 individuals were referred to JobWaveBC, which is consistent with the targeted referrals for each agency. Destinations Job Link, however, received more than half of the referrals in Regions 5 and 6.

Table 3: Ministry Referrals to JPP by Region and Agency

Referrals	Regions									Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Destinations Job Link	1,213	842	1,617	1,106	2,612	1,845	937	1,498	1,800	13,470
JobWaveBC	3,071	2,338	3,611	2,550	1,949	1,577	1,853	3,234	3,711	23,894
Total	4,284	3,180	5,228	3,656	4,561	3,422	2,790	4,732	5,511	37,364

Source: Activity report for Year 2 for JPP: December 16, 2000 to January 15, 2001, Economic Analysis Branch, MSDES.

Table 4 shows the number of monthly referrals in the eight study sites. It shows that most sites, except Cranbrook and Nelson, started referring a steady number of participants by March 2000. The study sites in Region 5 did not get going until late summer.

²¹Nineteen-year old applicants who may be leaving their family's GAIN file and starting one of their own may not have a lot of work experience, but could score as independent. One FAW thought it would be better for these individuals to go to a training consultant since they were being rejected by agencies. It is debatable whether these individuals would be better served by getting into an entry-level position and gaining experience on the job, or by getting more training. (A reviewer of this report noted that this, however, does not preclude referral, as a general rule.)

Table 4: Monthly Ministry Referrals to JPP by Study Sites in 2000

District Office	Total	Year 2000											
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Region 1													
Northside	153	-	6	4	11	10	17	21	16	21	18	21	8
Southside	1,406	29	106	135	114	155	118	82	107	143	131	143	143
Region 4													
Langley	652	4	31	50	42	41	44	29	48	42	205	77	79
Whalley	783	18	32	91	30	106	75	79	81	77	73	74	47
Region 5													
Cranbrook	72	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	13	12	8	13	23
Nelson	177	3	1	5	1	2	1	1	31	39	42	30	21
Region 8													
Campbell River	387	-	30	45	34	39	28	23	31	30	50	32	45
Nanaimo	1,628	9	69	217	252	295	199	114	108	92	112	73	87

Sources: Economic Analysis Branch and MSDES.

Challenges and Opportunities

This section discusses the ways in which informants thought there were challenges in the current process that affected their ability to deliver the program and discouraged participants from following through with their JPP referrals.

Intake and Referral Model

Pre- or Post-intake Model

A pre-intake model was not feasible in many regions. Some of the reasons given by informants included the lack of resources to cover the orientation session, geographical challenges, and the need to confirm eligibility for BC Benefits. Because of the latitude given to the regions to implement JPP *their way*, several regions selected to incorporate the JPP referral process into their intake process.

Some Ministry staff using the pre-intake model thought that it would be a good idea to switch to a post-intake model, largely because it is possible to do a more thorough screening at post-intake. On the other hand, Ministry staff also raised a number of issues about using a post-intake model. For example, it would increase the number of Ministry staff making referrals and that may make it harder to manage the referrals. Also, it would save less money as the pre-intake model is *deflecting* a substantive proportion of people from receiving BC Benefits.

In the post-intake model, only “independents” are considered for JPP. There are some circumstances (but they appear to be rare) when individuals who score above 10 on the service screening form are referred to JPP. It is important to note that individuals who are referred from the orientation sessions may be assessed “assisted” (score 10 or higher on the service screening tool) later at the intake meeting. In the pre-intake models the information from the service screening tool is not available before the referral, thus “assisted” individuals are referred.

Targeted Mix of Clients

The flow of clients to JPP comes mainly from the pool of new applicants. After exempting and excluding selected individuals from JPP, the mix does not look similar to the targeted mix, which was based on the WBT caseload.

Referral Process

JPP Presentation

Many potential candidates hear about JPP for the first time in the orientation sessions. The description of JPP is very limited. It is important that the description is accurate and gives the right message, no matter how short the description is or whether or not participants remember it later. (For example, one facilitator used the wrong acronym, and called it an entitlement.) One strategy for getting more people to come to the agencies quickly is to give an upbeat presentation to sell the program, and to get potential participants excited about the program by focusing on the outcomes of JPP (employment).

Referrals From the Caseload

Although JPP is targeted for new starts it will also accept referrals from the caseload, but this type of referral has been extremely low. Several workers thought that individuals who have been on IA for long periods (a year or more) may have other issues that need to be addressed, and for them, other supports may be more appropriate. On the other hand, we also heard that individuals on the caseload who asked to be referred are extremely motivated. Most clients, however, may not know about JPP.

At any given time, there may be people becoming job-ready who have been receiving BC Benefits for several months. For example, individuals completing training programs are likely to be more motivated and could be referred to JPP. People at intake or orientation sessions may have a lot on their mind at that point; many may have hit rock bottom and it may not be the best time for them to think about employment. But after intake, they may be ready to work and to be referred to JPP. Other than a pilot in the Langley office²² and JPP referrals at annual reviews, we did not hear about other systematic ways to target individuals from the caseload for JPP.

Number of Referrals Is Down

Although the Ministry met the targeted number of referrals in the first year, we heard, especially from Destinations Job Link staff, that the low number of referrals is an issue. It is important to keep in mind that while the number of referrals is important, the focus should be on employment, or the number of placements.

²²When questioned about their low number of referrals, the Langley EBC undertook a local audit of their caseload to learn why there were so few referrals when there appeared to be so many employables on the caseload. The estimate was that while about 1,200 people on the Langley caseload seemed to be employable, there were roughly three referrals going to agencies each week. The PRO reviewed the cases from three caseloads and found that the majority had temporary excuses for not going to JPP (e.g. medical illness).

Tools and Procedures

Screening Forms

The screening forms that are used were not developed specifically for JPP, thus it is not surprising to hear workers question their effectiveness for screening potential JPP participants. A few informants mentioned the need to change the forms, but did not provide any suggestions as to how to do so.

JPP Repeaters

In the pre-intake models in Vancouver, the referral officers do not have any information at the orientation sessions to identify whether the person has already been referred to JPP, or whether the person is an “active” JPP participant. It may be helpful to have a list of active and inactive JPP participants at the orientation session, either by downloading the information from the JP System and loading the file onto a laptop, or by using a printout. In one study site the referral officers were not checking whether or not the individual had already been referred to, or even accepted by, JPP. If the check for prior JPP involvement were incorporated into the pre-application process, it would ensure that this information was systematically reviewed before each referral.

Referral Direction: Destinations Job Link or JobWaveBC

In the referral process, Ministry staff tend to differentiate between the two agencies by describing Destinations Job Link as tourism and hospitality, and JobWaveBC as everything else. While this description is simple and, on the face of it, accurate, there is some concern that this is an inadequate description of what the tourism and hospitality sectors can offer — for instance, that entry-level wage jobs can quickly lead to better paying positions, and that the types of jobs include administrators, ski lift operators, accountants, computer experts, electricians, and plumbers. Those concerned suggest that a better description may help participants make a more informed decision about which agency to choose.

Tracking, Monitoring, and Compliance

Ministry staff created various manual systems to support the tracking functions beginning at the referral stage. Some of these systems are still in use despite additional features available on the JP System. There needs to be an effective method for monitoring and tracking participants who are referred to agencies. (There will be more on this issue in later sections.)

Information About the Participants

It is important to obtain some basic information about the participants. Ministry and agency staff were asked to describe their participants. A few provided detailed profiles of the people they see, but most were unable to provide any statistics to support these descriptions. For example, in Southside, the EPO provided a comprehensive description of her participants. She thought that a high proportion of the people she interviews for JPP have a trade, are employable, and have a work history, so sending them to JPP would be easy because of their higher prospects for finding work. Most are single individuals and couples with no children. She finds many of her clients to be educated. Many had worked in

computers, accounting, construction, and general labour. She also thought that half of the applicants had been on BC Benefits in the past.

Some descriptive information can be obtained from the administrative records, such as age, family type, and family size. In general, however, there does not appear to be any information about education or work experience or perceived barriers to employment, which would provide a better understanding of the environment in which JPP is operating.

The program designers may wish to consider administering a short questionnaire during the referral process to obtain selected background information about the characteristics, interests and perceived barriers of participants. Combining this information with acceptance and placement information will provide a profile of participants who are referred, who are accepted by the agencies, who find placements within the 90 days, and who maintain employment over a longer period.

2. AGENCY: INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT

Once participants have been referred to JPP, they are expected to attend an assessment interview at the agency. This section provides a description of the intake and assessment procedures used by the agencies in each of the study sites. It includes an overview of the service delivery models that are currently in place, the assessment criteria that are employed by the agencies, and a review of the available statistics on the referral acceptance rates. This is followed by a brief discussion of some of the implementation challenges that have arisen, specifically in the areas related to intake and assessment. Again, a primary focus throughout will be on the differences between the two agencies, as well as the variations across study sites in regions 1, 4, 5, and 8.

Service Delivery Model

A description of the service delivery model, as it pertains to intake and assessment procedures, covers several important processes. First, the logistics of coordinating assessment interviews for all JPP referrals is discussed. This includes the scheduling and intended timeframes for assessments following the referral date. Second, the various approaches to conducting the assessment interview are reviewed, including variations in the interview structure, its length, and the messages that are delivered throughout. These are a prelude to a more detailed look at the assessment criteria guiding the acceptance or rejection decision, which is presented in the subsequent section.

A brief review of the organizational structure of the agencies serving each of the study sites is an appropriate starting point for discussing variations in services and procedures.

Agency Structure

An important organizational feature that can affect the provision of services and the ongoing operations of the local JPP partner is the nature of their staffing and contracting arrangements. Essentially, there are two models observed across the province. The first model is of a centralized office staffed by agency employees who provide a full range of job placement and job-search support services. The second is one where local community-based agencies have been subcontracted to deliver JPP services. These services are similar to those of the more centralized

office but may be less exhaustive (e.g. access to computers to review the job banks online). Furthermore, the local contractor may serve a smaller number of participants.

JobWaveBC employs both models throughout the province.²³ In some areas there are centralized offices, known as Job Stores, which may cover a wider geographical area and a higher number of referrals. There are also areas that exclusively use local subcontractors to provide JPP services, while others use a combination of the two. Some informants feel that it is important to have local individuals there who understand the participants and employers in their neighbourhood. Having several agencies based throughout a community also means that participants have less distance to travel. This may have implications not only for a participant's compliance with initial referral, but also with the extent of his or her ongoing service utilization.

Destinations Job Link offices are based primarily on the centralized model, although some subcontracting arrangements are also made. As one key informant stated, they prefer to use their own staff as employment counsellors rather than use subcontractors. Given that their focus is on the tourism and hospitality industries, some feel that it is important for the employment counsellors to have a background in these fields. It is easier to ensure that this requirement is met when Destinations Job Link is using their own staff to deliver the program. They do not necessarily lose the close connection to the community by not subcontracting. Most Destinations Job Link offices are small and community-based, yet are staffed with Destinations Job Link employees.

Table 5 presents a breakdown of the organizational structure, with respect to the contracting and staffing arrangements, for agencies serving each of the study sites.

Table 5: Contract and Staffing Model for Study Sites

EBC Case Study Site	JobWaveBC	Destinations Job Link
Region 1		
Northside	Job Store serves all of region 1	Main Destinations Job Link office with Destinations Job Link staff
Southside	Job Store serves all of region 1	Main Destinations Job Link office with Destinations Job Link staff
Region 4		
Langley	Community-based subcontractor	Destinations Job Link satellite office with Destinations Job Link staff
Whalley	Community-based subcontractor	Main Destinations Job Link office with Destinations Job Link staff
Region 5		
Cranbrook	JobWaveBC is not in this area	Community-based subcontractor
Nelson	Community-based subcontractor	Destinations Job Link is not in this area
Region 8		
Nanaimo	Job Store	Local office with Destinations Job Link staff
Campbell River	Community-based subcontractor	Local office with Destinations Job Link staff

²³Initially, JobWaveBC used the second model (subcontractors) to deliver JPP.

Scheduling and Co-ordination of Assessment Interviews

There are differences in the procedures used by agency staff and the Ministry referral officers in coordinating assessment interviews across study sites. For example, there is no standard in terms of the frequency to which the agencies can accommodate assessment interviews. The allowable timeframe for interviews subsequent to the date of referral also differs and the procedures for scheduling appointments vary across sites.

Although there are some differences between JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link in this regard, most of the variation in these procedures and parameters is found across EBCs and regions rather than the two agencies. For example, both agencies serving study sites in Region 1 can accommodate referrals on a daily basis. (Destinations Job Link handles intake during business hours from Monday to Thursday; JobWaveBC handles intake Monday to Friday, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) Their goal is to see participants for assessments within 48 hours of their referral date. The referral officer handles the scheduling of interviews with the participant during the pre-screening and then faxes a list of appointments to the agencies.

In contrast, participants in the Region 4 study sites are responsible for initiating contact with the relevant agency to schedule an assessment interview. Although both agencies handle intake on a daily basis in this area, participants are allowed 10 business days to contact the agency and make an appointment. This differs for most referrals made in the Langley office, where participants are seen first by a Destinations Job Link counsellor who comes to the office every Wednesday to conduct assessments. If the participant is unsuitable for Destinations Job Link and is referred to JobWaveBC, the participant must call the JobWaveBC office. Thus, participants in the Langley office need to go through two assessments — one within a week of their referral with a Destinations Job Link counsellor, and a second with JobWaveBC.

EBCs in Region 8 use a similar procedure where participants are required to initiate contact with the agency subsequent to referral. In Nanaimo, depending on the referring FAW, participants are advised to call the agency within anywhere from 24 hours to a week. Destinations Job Link will schedule assessments on a daily basis as needed, while JobWaveBC handles intake two days per week. In contrast, participants referred from offices in Campbell River are required to visit the agency in person within a week of the referral to schedule an assessment. JobWaveBC schedules intake assessments once per week, but will add additional days if a backlog occurs. Destinations Job Link handles referrals on a daily basis, as needed.

Study sites in Region 5 also use a unique approach to coordinating assessments. The Destinations Job Link employment counsellor in Cranbrook attends most EIP sessions and schedules follow-up assessments with appropriate participants. Assessment interviews are scheduled on a daily basis, with an attempt to book participants within a week of their referral date. When Destinations Job Link staff is unable to attend the EIP, the Ministry's referring officer will fax a list of candidates to the agency and the employment counsellor will call participants to arrange an appointment. Nelson uses a different model, with JobWaveBC scheduling assessments once a week, every Monday. Given that there is only one appointment date each week for the area, the referring officer can advise the participant where and when to attend.

Table 6 summarizes the various timeframes and procedures for coordinating assessments for each agency serving each of the study sites.

Table 6: Timeframes and Procedures for Coordinating Assessment Interviews

EBC Case Study Site	Responsibility for Scheduling	Frequency of Intake Assessments	Intended Timeframe From Referral
Region 1			
Northside	Referring officer books with participant	JobWaveBC — Monday to Thursday Destinations Job Link — daily	48 hours
Southside	Referring officer books with participant	JobWaveBC — Monday to Thursday Destinations Job Link — daily	48 hours
Region 4			
Langley	Destinations Job Link employment counsellor at EIP and/or participant calls JobWaveBC	JobWaveBC — daily Destinations Job Link — Weekly	Within a week
Whalley	Participant calls agency	Daily	10 business days
Region 5			
Cranbrook	Destinations Job Link employment counsellor at EIP or calls participant	Daily	Within a week
Nelson	Referring officer advises Participant of next session date	Weekly Monday session	Within a week
Region 8			
Nanaimo	Participant calls agency	JobWaveBC — twice a week Destinations Job Link — daily, as needed	From 24 hours up to a week
Campbell River	Participant visits agency in person	JobWaveBC — once a week Destinations Job Link — daily, as needed	Within a week

Structure of Intake and Assessment Interviews: Where, Who, and for How Long?

Intake, on the agency end, generally refers to not only the assessment interview but also to any activities related to the participants’ initial introduction to agency services. The primary purpose of intake and assessment interviews does not differ significantly across agencies or regions. The purpose of the interview is to give the participant a more detailed introduction to what the agency has to offer, and to conduct a thorough assessment of the participant’s suitability for the program.

For the most part, intake and assessment occurs in a one-on-one setting with an employment counsellor or coordinator at the agency office. They can last anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour depending on the participant’s work experience, personal situation, and work issues. There are a few offices that conduct part, or all, of the intake process in a group setting. For example, JobWaveBC offices in both Nanaimo and Campbell River begin their intake with a 45-minute group orientation session in which participants are introduced to JobWaveBC services in extensive detail. Each session is generally kept to maximum of 10 participants. The session is followed by a series of one-on-one assessments similar to those conducted in other offices. The JobWaveBC contractor serving the Nelson area

conducts the entire intake and assessment in a group setting. The session takes place each Monday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. An introduction to JobWaveBC is provided, applications are completed, and a brief one-on-one assessment between participant and moderator is conducted at the front of the room. This approach was implemented in December 2000, due to the difficulty posed by the fact that the contractor does not operate in Nelson.²⁴

Although the structure of most one-on-one assessment interviews varies widely depending on the counsellor and the participant issues, the broad areas discussed are similar. A participant's previous work experience, education and training, and current personal circumstances are explored. The end result of the process is an acceptance or rejection decision by the agency representative. If the participant is accepted, followed by a review of the agency services and of the participant's rights and obligations to the program follows. A more detailed look at the assessment criteria and acceptance or rejection decision is considered in the section below.

Criteria

This section discusses the criteria used by the agencies in determining whether or not to accept a participant into the program, and the variations across the study sites. The various assessment forms and tools that assist in this process are also reviewed. The apparent job-readiness of participants in each of the study sites is then discussed, as are the primary reasons for the rejection of particular participants.

The Assessment Criteria

Key informants in agencies throughout each of the study sites were asked to describe what they thought were important criteria for assessing job-readiness and determining acceptance into the program. Although there is some variation in the responses (even within the same office) with regards to the relative importance of some of these attributes, there is a consensus in that most consider the following to be relevant to a participant's job-readiness:

- Attitude: positive frame of mind, motivated, willingness to learn
- Presentation and image: proper hygiene and attire
- Relevant work experience and skills
- Relevant education, training, or certification
- Transferable skills (e.g. Conference Board of Canada skills: listening, teamwork, communication, etc.)
- Realistic expectations about suitable positions and salary
- Availability (e.g. available for full-time employment; childcare issues resolved)
- Absence of health problems that would prevent employment

Although it may be difficult to rank the above attributes, more often than not the top criteria, which key informants at both agencies identify as important to their assessment are

²⁴Initially, the JobWaveBC contractor used a local agency to conduct the assessments. However, complaints about the significant delays in getting appointments, which were often up to three weeks after the referrals, necessitated the contractors making changes to their schedule and delivery.

the participant's attitude and his or her relevant work experience and skills. Variation in opinion exists among employment counsellors in that some tend to favour work experience and skills, while others rely more on attitudes.

There appear to be some differences between JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link in the application of these criteria. Although Destinations Job Link may prefer participants with experience in tourism and hospitality, several informants have advised that attitude and presentation are more important because these industries tend to be based on image and attitude. Some employers in these industries tend not to care if participants have experience or are trained, as long as they have a positive attitude and are willing to learn. A few JobWaveBC offices appear to focus more on work experience, due to the wider range of industries that they cover. In fact, some staff focus only on experience. However, many other key informants also spoke of the primacy of a positive attitude. If participants have no work experience but have a positive, flexible attitude, JobWaveBC will still accept them, as long as they have realistic expectations about the type of work that they can secure.

Application Forms and Assessment Tools

Both JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link have provided local offices and subcontractors with standardized tools and protocols for conducting assessment interviews. The use of these tools varies somewhat, again because of the particular employment counsellor's style.²⁵

The standard application and assessment tools for Destinations Job Link include

- **Employment Program Application:** a standard application for all Destinations Job Link participants. Generally, it is completed at the Destinations Job Link office while the participant is waiting for the interview. In some locations they may be completed at the EIP.
- **Control Form:** provides guidelines for the Destinations Job Link interviewer. Includes 22 questions that counsellors can ask prospective participants, along with an additional six-item evaluation section that includes areas for overall assessment and reasons for acceptance or rejection.
- **Acceptance Agreement Form:** completed if the participant has been accepted into the program. Lists participant benefits and obligations.

The standard application and assessment tools for JobWaveBC include

- **JobWaveBC Application:** again, a standard application for all JobWaveBC participants, which gets faxed to Headquarters for data entry.
- **CBC Employability Skills Profile:** used as a guide to determine a participant's employability.
- **Supplementary list of questions:** contains 11 questions that will support the CBC profile, including items such as last job and barriers to work.
- **Commitment Form:** completed if the participant has been accepted into the program. Lists participant benefits and obligations.

²⁵Forms have also been modified slightly in particular offices to better suit their participants' situations.

Once participants have been accepted into the program they are provided with a kit containing additional brochures and documents. These materials may vary across sites and agencies but always include documentation describing JobWaveBC or Destinations Job Link services, participant benefits and obligations, details about the agencies' respective industries (e.g. Destinations Job Link provides information on the BC Hospitality and Tourism industry), and various issues regarding job-search methods and resources.

In addition to these standardized forms for intake and assessment, additional tools have been developed in various agency offices to support intake, either in conducting the assessment, providing introduction to agency services, or in tracking assessment results and other participant information. Examples include:

- **Overhead slides:** The Job Store in Nanaimo has developed a group presentation that offers a local flavour, using overhead slides and handouts.
- **Brochures and circulars:** are similar to those available in the Destinations Job Link kit. Used in many offices as visual aids during assessment or introduction to the program.
- **Job orders, advertisements, or printouts of job listings:** are often used during an introduction or overview of placement services.
- **Electronic versions of assessment tools:** A JobWaveBC contractor in Region 4 makes use of an Access database during the assessment, which captures similar information to the Control Form.
- **Contact or tracking sheets:** In Region 1 a contact sheet is completed for all participants once they are accepted into the program. This document tracks their phone calls and visits to the office, and their attendance at Job Access Meeting (JAM) sessions. Other tools related to tracking and monitoring participant service utilization are discussed in a subsequent section.

Job-Readiness and Participant Suitability: A Continuum

When asked about job-readiness, most informants said that the majority of referrals are in fact job-ready, which is consistent with the referral officers' perception of their referrals' job-readiness. Although a minority, there is still a significant portion of referrals that may not be suitable for JPP. This group, however, is on a continuum, as was described by one informant. Some are clearly not prepared for employment — or even a job search — and would likely be rejected by the agency, while others appear to be more functional but still have special challenges. It is this latter group of participants that poses challenges for the agencies in their assessment and subsequent supports if they are accepted. As one might expect, it is also with this group that differences in agency treatment both across and within study sites are more likely to arise. Both of these groups are discussed in more detail below.

There is some consensus among agency informants when it comes to identifying the primary reasons for rejecting a participant from the program. These reasons include

- Mental health issues: drug or alcohol problems, unresolved domestic issues
- Poor attitude: not co-operative, belligerent, or extremely unmotivated
- Physical health problems

- Literacy problems: inability to read or write
- Necessity for skills upgrading
- Availability issues: (e.g. daycare arrangements have not been made)

However, participants can present complicated situations, and as one informant states, there are no hard and fast rules. As a result, there may be some inconsistency in the relevance of these factors for particular participant situations and for certain employment counsellors. For example, some counsellors will not reject a participant on the basis of a literacy problem or a need for skills upgrading, if other work options are available. Others may accept participants who have not completed their daycare arrangements as of the assessment date.

For participants who are more job-ready, yet with special challenges or other job-readiness concerns, there is less consistency in the relevance of these factors. For this more functional group of participants, agency staff mentioned the following key challenges to their job search:

- Problem with references: References are often difficult to obtain, as many participants have not worked in awhile or have had transient work. There is a struggle with obtaining good references.
- Some mental health issues: They have depression or poor motivation, for various reasons.
- Language barriers: Often immigrants are struggling with language and have no Canadian work experience.
- Low confidence levels: This can make it challenging to continue working with participants.
- Gaps in employment: This can make it challenging to create a resumé and to talk to employers about the participant.
- Other pre-employment barriers (e.g. shoes, interview clothes, and transportation).
- Lack of awareness of employer expectations: What it means to be a good employee (e.g. avoiding problems with lateness).

Procedures Following Acceptance or Rejection: What Happens to These Participants?

Once a decision has been made by the agency, generally they fax the referral form back to the referring officer or JP contact,²⁶ indicating the decision. Destinations Job Link also faxes a copy to their respective regional offices for data entry, and JobWaveBC faxes a copy to their central office in Victoria.²⁷

When referral officers are notified about the participant's acceptance into the program, they will update their participant's Guaranteed Available Income for Need (GAIN) file, along with any other tracking tools that the worker may employ. The participant's acceptance activates his or her eligibility period, which runs for 90 days from the date of acceptance.

²⁶This is how they are generically referred to in this report.

²⁷JobWaveBC's new data management system has automated this function.

When participants are rejected from the program, agency staff enter a rejection code on the participant's referral form and fax the form back to the Ministry. In most study sites, the referring officer or FAW will contact participants in order to make arrangements for a subsequent program referral. For some, the referral is a direct one to another program like WBT. In other cases the participant is referred to a TC for a more thorough review of his or her needs.

This re-referral procedure varies in some areas, with agency staff becoming more involved in the process. For example, in Campbell River agency staff may refer a participant directly to other community agencies rather than send them back to the referring officer. They simply advise the Ministry of the action. In areas where agencies have contracts for both JPP and WBT, agency staff may reject a participant from JPP and accept them directly into WBT.

Numbers

Accurate statistics on referral rejections and “no-shows” were difficult to obtain for most study sites. For example, some of the aggregate regional data contains details on acceptance rates but does not distinguish rejections from “no-shows.” As a result, it is difficult to present an accurate picture of the extent of these phenomena. Nonetheless, Tables 7 and 8 present aggregate data obtained from each agency on referrals and acceptance rates. This data is contrasted below with the verbal reports of perceived acceptance and rejection rates of many key informants.

Most informants estimated the acceptance rates to be in the range of 75 to 90 per cent of the referrals that show up for assessments. This estimate is relatively consistent across study sites. One notable point, however, is that in particular EBCs, there seems to be an inconsistency in what Ministry informants and agency staff perceive the rates to be. For example, in Region 8 some Ministry informants seemed to feel that the rejection rate is in the range of 50 per cent, while agency informants reported lower rejection rates and fewer concerns with job-readiness.

Referring to the aggregate acceptance rates in the above two tables, JobWaveBC appears to accept fewer referrals than Destinations Job Link does in several of the study sites. Given that these referral numbers include individuals who fail to show up for their assessments, we cannot say whether the above differences are related to higher rejection rates by JobWaveBC or the fact that they may experience a more serious problem with no-shows. It is also important to remember that referral officers refer participants to Destinations Job Link if they have experience in that area, so this additional screening for experience may explain the higher acceptance rate at Destinations Job Link.

Table 7: JobWaveBC Referral Acceptance Rates by Region*

Region	Referred From Ministry	Registered/Accepted by JobWaveBC	Acceptance Rate (%)
1	4,070	1,934	47.5
2	not provided	not provided	not provided
3	not provided	not provided	not provided
4	3,213	1,483	46.2
5	2,570	843	32.8
6	not provided	not provided	not provided
7	not provided	not provided	not provided
8	3,886	1,460	37.6
9	not provided	not provided	not provided

*Data reported as of March 31, 2001

Table 8: Destinations Job Link Referral Acceptance Rates by Region*

Region	Referred From Ministry	Registered/Accepted by Destinations Job Link	Acceptance Rate (%)
1	1,293	879	68.0
2	929	552	59.4
3	1,803	677	37.5
4	1,284	655	51.0
5	3,162	1,127	35.6
6	456	303	66.4
7	1,541	455	29.5
8	1,595	1,123	70.4
9	2,908	2,078	71.5

* Data reported as of March 31, 2001.

Tables 9 and 10 present a breakdown of the number of referrals that show up at the agencies in the weeks following their referral date. Although this referral data is not comparable to that reported above, nevertheless it helps to elucidate the apparent gap between the acceptance rates for JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link reported above.

Table 9: JobWaveBC Referrals That Attend Interview in Weeks Following Referral Date

Region	Referrals	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5+
1	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided
4	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided
5	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided
8	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided
Total	3,773	2,603 (69.0)	601 (15.9)	257 (6.8)	148 (3.9)	164 (4.3)

Table 10: Destinations Job Link Referrals That Attend Interview in Weeks Following Referral Date*

Region	Referrals	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5+
1	1,291	1,278 (99.0)	11 (0.9)	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
4	1,279	1,099 (85.9)	77 (6.0)	30 (2.3)	21 (1.6)	52 (4.1)
5	2,102	2,077 (98.8)	15 (0.7)	7 (0.3)	2 (0.1)	2 (0.1)
8	1,123	1,021 (90.9)	86 (7.7)	5 (0.4)	6 (0.5)	5 (0.4)
Total	5,795	5,474 (94.5)	189 (3.3)	44 (0.8)	29 (0.5)	59 (1.0)

* Data reported as of March 31, 2001.

If one takes this data at face value, it appears that for all study sites as whole Destinations Job Link has referrals showing up for assessments at a faster rate than JobWaveBC (94.5 per cent of Destinations Job Link referrals and 69.0 per cent of JobWaveBC referrals attended assessments in the first week following the referral date). This may partially explain the differences in acceptance rates between JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link shown above. JobWaveBC may not only reject a higher proportion of participants, but they may also have a more serious problem with clients failing to attend assessments in a timely fashion. Again, without further data that identifies rejections and clients who fail to attend assessments, one cannot draw any concrete conclusions in this regard. Furthermore, the reader is cautioned that these statistics were provided by the agencies and that the comparability is questionable, as different dates are involved and possibly different methods of compilation. In addition, there are missing and incorrect data, which may lead to errors in the above numbers.

Challenges and Opportunities

This section provides a brief outline of some of the challenges and opportunities for improvements that have arisen, specifically with respect to the areas of intake and assessment.

Lack of Consistency in Program Parameters and Procedures for Assessment and Intake.

Several Ministry and agency informants expressed concerns over the inconsistencies in program parameters, guidelines for decision-making, and tools and procedures. Although these informants place great value on the flexibility that the approach to program implementation has offered, many informants mentioned that there are some areas where more standardization or clarification in procedures may be appropriate:

- Acceptable timeframes between referral and assessment
- More consistent JPP message, instructions, and compliance initiatives to encourage referrals to attend assessments from the Ministry

Agency informants thought that the provision of a more consistent and thorough introduction to JPP, either at the EIP or during Ministry pre-screening, as well as more consistent instructions and follow-up procedures, may help encourage participants to attend assessments more quickly, and reduce the efforts needed to reschedule no-shows.

- More consistent decision-making guidelines for agency staff in assessing participants with particular job-readiness issues (e.g. unresolved daycare issues, need for skills upgrading)
- Clarification of the appropriate start date for 90-day JPP eligibility period

Although confusion in this area appears to be resolved in most districts, with the start date being assigned as of acceptance rather than as of referral, some Ministry staff are still unclear about the start of the 90-day eligibility period.

Problems of Participant Compliance With JPP Referrals: No-Shows

In the early implementation of JPP, many districts experienced serious difficulties in ensuring that participants followed through with their referral, by either booking an appointment as instructed or by attending a prescheduled interview. Adequate tracking and monitoring systems were not in place. This problem was magnified by the initial absence of a JPP management information system. Various districts began to implement tailor-made tracking and monitoring solutions.

Key informants report that the problem of referral compliance has improved somewhat in Regions 1, 4, and 8, with many of the new monitoring and participant follow-up initiatives as well as with the implementation of the JPP system. However, problems with compliance persist in many areas, even where monitoring efforts have been implemented. Program participation is an important operational challenge. Achieving high rates of participation requires a commitment of staff time and resources to reach out to referred or accepted participants and to monitor progress.²⁸

Tracking No-Shows: Unclear Responsibilities, Duplication of Effort, and Heavy Workload

Although recent monitoring efforts have improved compliance to some extent, these new initiatives bring challenges of their own:

- **Responsibility for tracking and follow-up with initial referrals can be unclear**
Informants report confusion over who is responsible for monitoring and follow-up with initial referrals. In most cases it appears to be Ministry staff — either a JPP worker or an FAW — yet in others, it is an agency responsibility. Even when the responsibility is clear, many informants are unsure what activities are taking place on

²⁸Expecting 100 per cent of all referrals to show up is not realistic. The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation studies show that typically less than half of those referred to the program attend their first scheduled orientation or activity. Moreover, between two thirds and three fifths of those scheduled eventually attend a session. The Self-Sufficiency Project experienced a higher success rate but made substantive efforts to get people in the door by utilizing various procedures.

the other end and simply assume that some follow-up is being performed.²⁹ (MHR is actually responsible for tracking individuals before they are accepted by the agencies.)

- **Duplication of tracking efforts**

Some informants report a duplication of efforts within the same office (e.g. using the GAIN system, the JP system), and various other spreadsheet approaches.

- **Extensive resources and work effort required to track and follow-up with no-shows**

Many informants mention a need to streamline the approach to tracking and follow-up, as it requires a great deal of time, effort, and resources. This is particularly true in areas that do not have a dedicated JPP worker performing these functions. Smaller rural offices, often single-staff agency locations, report workload challenges in this regard.

Rejecting Participants From JPP

Many of the early implementation concerns over the number of inappropriate referrals and rejections have been reduced, as both Ministry and agency staff become more experienced with the program and communications between the partners improves. In addition, some areas have tightened up their referral criteria (e.g. reducing the required score for referral on the pre-screener from 10 to 9, or not sending people they thought the agencies would reject), which has led to fewer rejections.

Some challenges remain in that there are still informants, both from the Ministry and agencies, who report inappropriate referrals and rejections. Some Ministry staff report feeling that the agency acceptance criteria are too high. On the other hand, some agency informants state that Ministry screening is inconsistent at times and inappropriate referrals occur. This is an issue that may never go away under the current program, where referral officers are responsible for referrals and not assessments.

3. AGENCY PRE-PLACEMENT AND PLACEMENT SUPPORTS

Once participants have been accepted into the program, the agency has 90 days to work with them. The ultimate goal during this period is to help participants find work before the end of the 90-day eligibility period. This section takes a detailed look at the services offered by each of the agencies in support of this goal. It includes an overview of the service delivery models for job-search support, as well as the types of services that are offered. This is followed by a brief discussion of some of the implementation challenges that have arisen in the areas of pre-placement supports and placement services.

²⁹Program participation in one large Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation evaluation (California's Greater Avenues for Independence Program) differed by as much as 20 percentage points between counties. These differences can be attributed to the local supply of services, as well as to the extent to which case managers and administrators emphasized enforcement of penalties for non-participation, or on the other hand, give personalized attention to individuals.

Service Delivery Model

Job-Search Support Services

The service delivery model of job-search support revolves around the following key services: resumé development services, job banks and other job leads, financial supports, counselling and instructional support, and other administrative support services. This section describes these services and examines the standards of care and variations that may exist among these services between agencies and offices. It is followed by an overview of the expectations that the agencies have of their participants, such as participation in JPP program activities and other job-search efforts.

Key Agency Services

Resumé Development

As it is a basic requirement to conduct a job search and to take advantage of other agency support services, resumé development is generally the first service that many participants use. SRDC heard that the majority of participants arrive at the agencies with either no or inadequate resumé, even though they have been told by the Ministry referral officers to bring a resumé, if they have one. Many participants either do not have a resumé, or have ones that are poorly designed or outdated. Given the importance of an appropriate resumé to a successful job search, all agency offices offer some form of assistance in this regard, although the extent of this support does vary.

Most agency sites have employment counsellors or staff who provide resumé editing and typing services. Participants without resumé may be asked to complete worksheets, which assist the worker in developing appropriate resumé for the participant's area of interest. Differences in the degree of support across offices are generally linked to staffing and resource issues. Offices with resource constraints may only offer limited in-house assistance, providing a few suggestions for improvement along with a referral to other community organizations with more extensive services. One agency location has opted to contract a resumé development specialist to provide complete in-house services. The JobWaveBC Job Store in Nanaimo offers complete, two-hour resumé workshops every Monday. Shortly after the workshop, the resumé specialist also works with participants intensively in a one-on-one setting. According to an informant, participants are required to pay \$40 for these services, which comes out of their pre-placement support funds. Agency staff or subcontractors in other study sites provide resumé development services to participants at no cost.

Job Banks, Job-Matching, and Job Access Services

Participants can find jobs at any time during the 90-day period, either by job placements provided by the agencies or through their own or assisted job search. Most JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link offices maintain listings of local job leads as well as some out-of-province contacts. The means by which the agencies develop these leads is discussed in a later section. The purpose of this section is to look briefly at the differences in the availability of job banks throughout the study sites, and to consider variations in the approach the agencies take to assist participants in accessing these leads and in submitting resumé for particular positions.

As one would expect, offices located in more urban areas with more active labour markets tend to have more job leads available for participants. In fact, in these areas there are more job openings than there are participants to fill them. JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link offices in regions 1 and 4 and, to an extent, Nanaimo in Region 8, maintain extensive databases and catalogues of job leads for their participants. Other study sites in regions 5 and 8 maintain some job leads, but to a much lesser degree.

The approach that agency sites take to giving participants access to job leads and assisting them in the application process varies widely. Some offices allow participants to browse job-order catalogues and choose positions of interest, and then submit resumés on their behalf if that has been requested by the employers, or provide them with the employer information so they can call for an appointment. For example, the JobWaveBC Job Store in Region 1 maintains job order catalogues on site for participants to browse (available on computers or hardcopy in the resource centre). Participants are told they can come and use the resource centre and review the job orders. They are allowed to select up to five positions weekly that they want to apply for and submit these job orders to the employment counsellor, who then reviews them to ensure they are suitable for the participant. The process for making contact with the hiring employer depends on the instructions on the job order (e.g. fax resumé to employer and follow-up call by employment counsellor on the participant's behalf, or give employer name and phone number to participants to call directly for an appointment). Sometimes, the role of the employment counsellor as a go-between between the employer and participant is key in helping the participant secure the job. In addition, employment counsellors do some job matching when advised about new job orders from Victoria, although it is unclear in how systematic a manner this is conducted.

JobWaveBC Nanaimo provides job-matching services, with suitability searches conducted on a SAMS database using the job description and participant qualifications. An employment counsellor compiles a list of suitable candidates then reviews their resumés in more detail. After identifying a handful of participants, the counsellor contacts each one and offers to fax each participant's resumé to the employer. If the participant agrees, the resumé is faxed to the employer. The counsellor tries to complete this whole process within 24 to 72 hours of receiving new job orders.

Destinations Job Link in regions 1 and 4 and JobWaveBC in Langley have all developed a different approach for participant access to job leads. Participants are required to attend weekly group sessions, which are known as Touchback sessions at JobWaveBC and JAM (Job Access Meeting), or DEN (Destinations Employment Network) sessions at Destinations Job Link.

At Destinations Job Link, the session moderators read the job order details aloud, highlighting the job title and description, location, duties, and, usually, wages. Participants come prepared with several copies of their resumés, or make note of positions of interest and submit them to the moderator. The participant's employment counsellor makes arrangements for the participant's resumé to be forwarded to each of the selected potential employers. This method was partly necessitated by the larger number of participants that counsellors see in these areas. Several informants who are proponents of this approach felt that the sessions help motivate participants and keep their job search on track. Other informants, however, thought some counsellors may not be reviewing the participant's suitability for each position before submitting the resumé in this type of setting, which can lead to less "solid" placements

and poor job retention. At JobWaveBC, the employment counsellor sees each person individually to review the participant's selection from the job orders and to provide him or her with any leads the counsellor thinks may be appropriate for the individual.

Pre-placement Financial Supports

In addition to the monthly BC Benefits cheque, informants find that most participants need extra financial assistance to help them in their job-search efforts. The agencies can use whatever resources are required to address these pre-employment issues within the agency limits: up to \$100 for JobWaveBC participants and \$50 for Destinations Job Link participants. These funds are administered to participants at the discretion of their employment counsellor. The most common pre-employment *need* is for transportation (bus tickets or passes), haircuts, and interview clothing.

Informants at both agencies have some flexibility in the dollar limits and use of funds, especially for participants whom employment counsellors consider to be “good risks.” For example in region 4, JobWaveBC subcontractors can request approval for additional funds from the neighbourhood coordinator for amounts over \$100 but under \$250. Expenditures over \$250 go to the regional coordinator for approval. Similar arrangements apply in other regions as well. Several Ministry and JobWaveBC informants said that JobWaveBC is very flexible in its approach to pre-placement support funds. Several examples of creative uses of funds were offered. They include costs for various certification tests, criminal record checks, or licensing fees. Destinations Job Link also appears to demonstrate some flexibility in their use of funds. One informant gave an example of a participant that had the cost of a translator for a job interview covered by Destinations Job Link. Another example involved buying a bulletproof vest for a participant who had obtained a security guard position.³⁰

In addition to these pre-placement discretionary funds, both agencies have additional funds available for when participants have secured full-time employment. Various informants referred to these monies as transition funds, incentives, or “tools of the trade.” These incentive or placement support funds are discussed in a subsequent section, as they are only available when a participant has secured employment.

Although the limits on pre-employment expenditures are standard across the province in that these funds are available to all participants accepted into the program, there appears to be some variation in the administration of these funds across agency offices. Some counsellors are clearer with participants about the availability of these funds and appear to be more generous with their provision. Although most offices have some restrictions due to invoicing and petty cash constraints, some locations appear very rigid, restricting the release of funds to small instalments and requiring notice for requests.

Counselling Support and Instruction

Both JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link offer various forms of job-search counselling support and instructional services. These services generally include assistance with job-search techniques, interviewing skills, and approaches to networking, but is not limited to these subjects. Destinations Job Link also tends to offer more specialized

³⁰Interestingly, SRDC heard about individuals placed in security guard positions in both Destinations Job Link and JobWaveBC. Although the work settings would differ, the skills of the placed security guard should be similar.

information that is specific to the hospitality and tourism industry (e.g. customer service skills). One informant thought that the availability of employment counsellors to talk to participants about their job-search issues is a valuable support service for participants and helps them feel that “someone is in their corner.”

The format for much of this support is more often not group session instruction, but informal one-on-one counselling with employment workers. Many informants state that casual one-on-one support occurs quite often, with many participants simply needing to touch base and receive moral support to continue with their job search. The accessibility of employment counsellors does tend to vary throughout the study sites, again, being influenced by resource constraints. Some offices seem to make more of an attempt at accommodating their participants. Some counsellors allow unscheduled appointments and enhance their accessibility by providing their local, long distance, and pager numbers. Many counsellors are willing to work with participants outside of regular business hours if the need arises.

Larger offices in more urban areas tend to complement the one-on-one participant support with more group session training. Many offices also provide weekly in-house group information sessions, where job-search techniques are discussed, as well as other specialized topics. These weekly sessions have another important purpose related to placement services and will be discussed in further detail below.

Administrative Support Services

Most offices provide administrative supports to their participants. This support includes access to phones, photocopiers, and fax machines. JobWaveBC also provides voice mail services. Smaller community-based offices, or those in rural areas, may not be able to offer a similar comprehensive set of administrative supports due mainly to a lack of resources.

Program Participation: Participant Obligations

Participants are advised of their obligations to the program at the intake and assessment interview, after being accepted into the program. The employment counsellor reviews these issues in the one-on-one assessment interview and participants sign an acknowledgement or commitment form demonstrating that they understand the requirements of the program.

Participant obligations range from simple administrative responsibilities, such as advising the office of an address change, to more specific job-search requirements. Of the more significant obligations, JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link highlight similar ones for their participants:

- Be willing and available for full-time work.
- Conduct an independent job search in conjunction with agency services.
- Submit resumés, attend interviews, and conduct follow-ups as appropriate.
- Be accessible and co-operative with agency staff (e.g. returning phone calls and accepting reasonable feedback).
- Inform the agency if employment is found, even if the agency did not make the referral.

Where particular offices differ is in the implementation of some of these requirements and in the monitoring of their fulfillment. For example, the requirement to submit resumés is monitored in several offices, where participants are expected to use job leads and apply for a particular number of positions in a given period. Some offices also make attendance at their weekly support sessions mandatory for participants. JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link both monitor participant job-search activities to some extent. However, some locations offer a much more independent job-search support environment, without requiring participants to demonstrate their compliance with the above obligations. Once again, this appears to depend on available resources, with under-staffed or more constrained offices demonstrating less proactive involvement with participants.

Table 11 presents a summary of some of the participant obligations for service utilization imposed at the agency offices in the study sites.

Table 11: Participant Obligations: Monitoring Participation in Program Activities

EBC Case Study Site	JobWaveBC	Destinations Job Link
Region 1		
Northside	Sign-in sheets for individuals using the resource centre. Unclear to extent this is monitored	Mandatory JAM sessions. Weekly attendance monitored.
Southside	Sign-in sheets for individuals using the resource centre. Unclear to extent to which this is monitored.	Mandatory JAM sessions. Weekly attendance monitored.
Region 4		
Langley	Mandatory Touchback sessions. Weekly attendance and employer contacts monitored. Job-search log monitored.	Mandatory DEN session. Weekly attendance monitored.
Whalley	No Touchback sessions. Resumé submissions monitored.	Mandatory DEN session. Weekly attendance monitored.
Region 5		
Cranbrook	JobWaveBC is not in this area.	Touchback session forthcoming; unclear whether mandatory. No job-search log monitored.
Nelson	Touchback sessions Mandatory weekly phone contact with employment counsellor. No job-search log monitored.	Destinations Job Link is not in this area.
Region 8		
Nanaimo	No Touchback sessions. No job-search log monitored.	No JAM/DEN sessions. No job-search log monitored.
Campbell River	No Touchback sessions. No job-search log monitored.	No JAM/DEN sessions. No job-search monitoring.

Job Placement Support

One of the key features of JPP is the link to employers that agencies provide to participants. This section looks at the various efforts that are made by agencies to develop employer contacts and job leads. The types of positions available through JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link are discussed. This is followed by a brief review of the procedures that

take place when a participant has been successfully placed, including the availability of additional support funds for his or her transition to work.

Employer Outreach

Differences in outreach efforts exist between JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link, as well as throughout the districts in study sites. The primary difference between the agencies is that JobWaveBC has a dedicated call centre, based in Victoria, for the purpose of employer outreach. The call centre maintains networks of employers in order to accumulate repeat job orders. They also make “cold calls” to new employers, and market JPP and participants to potential employers. Contacts are made throughout the province. The call centre is not limited to outbound calls; they receive job order requests directly from employers. Once job orders are received, they are forwarded to a customer service department for verification. Once the details have been confirmed, the orders are distributed to the JobWaveBC field teams throughout the province. Job banks and catalogues are generally updated on a weekly basis.

Destinations Job Link has a less centralized approach to developing job leads. A significant part of the responsibilities of each employment counsellor or coordinator is to develop relationships and job leads through local employers. For example, at Destinations Job Link in Vancouver, employment counsellors are assigned to various communities within the region and are responsible for maintaining employer relationships as well as developing new employer contacts in this area. Participants are assigned to particular employment counsellors within the office, based partly on the location of the employers that the participant is interested in working for. Participants may be reassigned to other counsellors throughout their job search depending on these employer relationships. Key informants advise that this model is important to the success of the program, as dedicated employment counsellors can develop trust from employers that can lead to repeat business.

Destinations Job Link also seems to employ creative approaches to developing employer relationships and job leads. For example, Destinations Job Link Vancouver has recently implemented a new pilot project known as the Whistler Job Fair. They have gathered a group of employers based in Whistler and will facilitate a three-day job fair where participants will be able to submit resumés and be interviewed for various positions. Apparently, there are many employers in Whistler looking to hire individuals, but there is a housing crisis. Some employers are willing to offer a premium wage to individuals who are willing to commute on a daily basis from Vancouver. Destinations Job Link has made arrangements to provide any interested participants with free transportation to and from Whistler by means of a daily bus service.

Outreach efforts by employment counsellors are certainly not limited to Region 1 or to Destinations Job Link. Employment workers throughout the study sites, at both agencies, develop contacts throughout their community. Although agencies in rural communities may have a harder time developing job leads due to lack of economic activity, this does not limit their outreach efforts. In fact it often may necessitate it.³¹ Many employment workers have

³¹The JobWaveBC subcontractor in the Langley office said that most of the placements in that office come not from positions in the job bank, but through jobs leads that the agency provides or the assisted job search. Because transportation is an issue for many of the participants served by the Langley office, many of the positions listed in the job bank are not suitable.

been in their communities for some time and have established employer links or knowledge about their local labour markets that the telemarketers in Victoria do not have, which makes this outreach effort easier. Most employment workers at the field level attend some official industry functions, market at local chambers of commerce, and use informal approaches to developing job leads, such as scanning newspapers and making phone calls or in-person visits to local employers.

Types of Job Opportunities Available

Job leads through JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link differ for the obvious reason that Destinations Job Link is focused on hospitality and tourism while JobWaveBC targets small businesses in a wide range of industries. Most opportunities through JobWaveBC involve positions in business services (e.g. administrative support and computer-related positions), labour (e.g. general labour or trades), and the retail sector (e.g. sales and customer service). Although most of Destinations Job Link's job leads are based in food and beverage services (e.g. restaurants and bartending) and hotel and accommodation, there is a wide range of other positions available. Informants say that Destinations Job Link covers an additional six industry sectors, including transportation, adventure tourism, travel, trade events and conferences, tourist attractions, and tourism services. Some informants report wages for many positions that are considerable higher than minimum wage. However, these are the exception rather than the rule, as the majority of wages appear to be in the range of \$8.50 to \$11.00 per hour. Several informants thought that people do not consider tips when they think about wages in the tourism industry. Tips can add significantly to the wages or salaries of some positions.

Successful Placements: Eligibility for Incentives and Post-Placement Support

Following confirmation of employment, the agency employment worker completes a placement form, as well as other internal tracking tools for their office. This information is generally forwarded to the agency's regional office or headquarters, and in some cases to the local Ministry office. The regional or centralized office proceeds with data entry into the agency system, recording the date of the placement, and effectively activating the participant's longer-term eligibility period for JPP. The agency will continue to work with the participant for a period up to 30 months in an effort to help them achieve long-term job retention and independence from income assistance. This support is available to the participant until he or she has achieved at least 19 months of independence from income assistance, within 30 months of the date of his or her initial placement. These post-placement job retention supports are discussed in more detail in a subsequent section.

With confirmed employment, participants also have access to transitional support funds through the Ministry. Both agencies send forms on behalf of their participants to request these additional support funds from the Ministry. In addition to Ministry transition funds, additional monies are available from the agencies once employment has been confirmed. JobWaveBC provides \$50 to participants who have successfully obtained a full-time position. As there are no restrictions on participant's use of these funds, some informants refer to them as incentives rather than transition support funds. The \$50 is a standard amount throughout JobWaveBC sites, but once again, differences are observed in its administration. Generally, the funds are provided only for those who have found full-time employment.

However, some employment workers pro-rate the \$50 when participants have found part-time work.

Few Destinations Job Link informants referred to financial incentives or transition funds other than to reiterate the \$50 in job-search support funds that are available from Destinations Job Link pre-placement, or to discuss post-placement supports. There appears to be some overlap between placement transition funds and post-placement supports in that both agencies will make some creative uses of what are normally post-placement support funds. Expenditures may be made sooner than they normally would be in order to secure employment for participants facing particular situations. Regional agency coordinators would normally need to authorize these types of expenditures.

The Numbers

This section presents selected placement statistics for each agency and study site. The timeframes in which placements occur are contrasted, as are the use of pre-placement job-search supports.

Table 12, below, shows the number of individuals in the study region who were referred from JPP to the Ministry, accepted by each agency, and placed by each agency, as well as the month in which this placement occurred. The numbers in parentheses represent the proportion of referrals who found placements within the eligibility period in the study region.

Several interesting variations in placement rates across the regions and between the agencies can be noted. First, the placement rates for all study regions combined are virtually the same for JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link: approximately 40 per cent of those accepted by the agencies are placed within the 90-day eligibility period, or with an extension (42.9 per cent and 40.5 per cent for JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link respectively). Second, for Destinations Job Link, Region 1 has the highest placement rate with 51.2 per cent of those accepted placed, while for JobWaveBC Region 4 has the highest rate, at 49.7 per cent. Third, most placements are achieved within the first month of the 90-day eligibility period. This is observed consistently across all regions and for both agencies. Furthermore, the rate of placement generally continues to decline, with the least number of placements occurring in the third month. However, it should be noted that the number of placements made in an extension period is certainly non-trivial, reaching almost five per cent of those accepted in Region 8 for JobWaveBC. Finally, one can note that Destinations Job Link has a slightly higher rate of placement in the first month of the 90 days compared with JobWaveBC (26.7 per cent versus 20.9 per cent for Destinations Job Link and JobWaveBC respectively), even though their overall rates are similar. JobWaveBC manages to place a higher percentage of participants in the second and third month than Destinations Job Link, thereby arriving at similar overall placement rates for the case study regions.

Table 12: Number of Referrals, Acceptances, and Placements Within 90 Days**JobWaveBC**

Region	Referred From the Ministry	Accepted by the Agency	Placed in Month 1 of 90 days	Placed in Month 2 of 90 days	Placed in Month 3 of 90 days	Placed With Extension to 90 days	Total Placed
1	4,070	1,934	363 (18.8%)	202 (10.4%)	127 (6.6%)	32 (1.7%)	724 (37.4%)
4	3,213	1,483	356 (24.0%)	206 (13.9%)	124 (8.4%)	51 (3.4%)	737 (49.7%)
5	2,570	843	189 (22.4%)	91 (10.8%)	45 (5.3%)	16 (1.9%)	341 (40.5%)
8	3,886	1,460	288 (19.7%)	158 (10.8%)	134 (9.2%)	70 (4.8%)	650 (44.5%)
Total	13,739	5,720	1,196 (20.9%)	675 (11.5%)	430 (7.5%)	169 (3.0%)	2,452 (42.9%)

*Data reported as of March 31, 2001. Percentage of those accepted in the region and placed in each month is in parentheses.

Destinations Job Link

Region	Referred From the Ministry	Accepted by the Agency	Placed in Month 1 of 90 days	Placed in Month 2 of 90 days	Placed in Month 3 of 90 days	Placed With Extension to 90 days	Total Placed
1	1,293	879	299 (34.0%)	100 (11.4%)	31 (3.5%)	20 (2.3%)	450 (51.2%)
4	1,284	655	130 (19.8%)	42 (6.4%)	35 (5.3%)	—	207 (31.6%)
5	3,162	1,127	356 (31.6%)	104 (9.2%)	42 (3.7%)	21 (1.9%)	523 (46.4%)
8	1,595	1,123	226 (20.1%)	72 (6.4%)	96 (8.5%)	—	394 (35.1%)
Total	7,334	3,784	1,011 (26.7%)	318 (8.4%)	204 (5.4%)	—	1,533 (40.5%)

*Data reported as of March 31, 2001. Percentage of those accepted in the region and placed in each month is in parentheses.

Table 13 below presents a summary of the percentage of placed and non-placed participants who make use of pre-placement support funds for both JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link.

There are several noteworthy differences across case-study regions and between JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link with respect to the use of pre-placement supports. First, although one cannot compare JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link for most regions due to missing data, it can be noted that for Region 1, JobWaveBC had a higher percentage of placed participants who used pre-placement supports than did Destinations Job Link (80.6 per cent versus 70.0 per cent for JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link respectively). In fact, even among non-placed participants JobWaveBC had higher percentages using pre-placement funds. The average amounts are generally higher as well.

With respect to regional variations in the use of pre-placement support funds, one can see that the placed JobWaveBC participants in regions 1 and 4 had higher rates of pre-placement fund usage. Relating this to the earlier results regarding overall placement rates, one may be inclined to argue that this contributed to the superior placement rates for JobWaveBC Region

4. However, JobWaveBC Region 1, with the highest rate of pre-placement fund usage (80.6 per cent), had the lowest placement rate among JobWaveBC case study regions.

Finally, it can be observed that across all study sites, placed participants are more likely to have made use of pre-placements support funds from the agency than are non-placed participants. This is consistent for all study sites in both the number of participants accessing pre-placement supports and in the average dollar amount used. For example, for all study sites, 71.8 per cent of JobWaveBC participants who were placed made use of pre-placement supports, with an average amount of \$127. The percentage among non-placed participants as 35.2 per cent with an average amount of \$54.

Table 13: Use of Pre-Placement Supports for Placed and Non-placed Participants*

JobWaveBC

Region	Total Placed	Placed Who Received		Total Non-Placed	Non-placed Who Received	
		Pre-placement Support Funds	Average Amount		Pre-placement Support Funds	Average Amount
1	738	595 (80.6%)	\$97	1,196	434 (36.3%)	\$48
4	770	589 (76.5%)	\$107	713	358 (50.2%)	\$32
5	364	241 (66.2%)	\$143	479	78 (16.3%)	\$67
8	714	432 (60.5%)	\$185	746	233 (31.2%)	\$96
Total	2,586	1,857 (71.8%)	\$127**	3,134	1,103 (35.2%)	\$54**

* Data reported as of March 31, 2001. Percentage of placements in each region that received funds is in parentheses.

** Weighted average of above four study sites

Destinations Job Link

Region	Total Placed	Placed Who Received		Total Non-Placed	Non-placed Who Received	
		Pre-placement Support Funds	Average Amount		Pre-placement Support Funds	Average Amount
1	450	316 (70.0%)	\$91	827	244 (29.5%)	\$16
4	244	not provided	not provided	1,044	357 (34.2%)	\$21**
5	523	not provided	not provided	604	208 (34.4%)	\$32
8	394	not provided	not provided	652	62 (9.5%)	\$34
Total	1,611	not provided	not provided	3,127	871 (27.9%)	\$24***

* Data reported as of March 31, 2001. Percentage of placements in each region that received funds is in parentheses.

** Weighted average of nine EBCs

*** Weighted average of above four study sites

Challenges and Opportunities

Following are some of the challenges and opportunities for improvements that have arisen, specifically with respect to the areas of pre-placement job-search supports and placement services.

Challenges With Pre-placement Job-Search Supports

- **Special situations may require higher pre-placement funding**
Several agency informants — in particular, with Destinations Job Link — feel that the level of funds for pre-placement job-search support is too low. They described situations where participants with even a few barriers may need more support.
- **Inconsistent presentation of supports, services, and availability of funds**
Some informants suggest that particular agency employment workers may not be as clear with participants about the services, supports, and funds that are available to them.

Volume of Jobs Orders: High in Urban locations, Low in Rural Areas

Some informants in regions 1 and 4 reported early administrative challenges in dealing with the large number of incoming job orders for the area. Moving to an electronic system in some areas (an Access database) has improved this situation somewhat. As noted earlier, these areas have more jobs than there are participants to fill them, although, as later sections will show, many participants do not get placed within the 90 days. In contrast, rural areas in regions 5 and 8 report either an insufficient number of job orders or highly seasonal fluctuations in volume.

Challenge of Maintaining Program Participation and Participant Service Utilization

Improvements have been made in maintaining participant contact and program participation with the recent implementation of monitoring initiatives in some sites in regions 1 and 4. These efforts include the monitoring of mandatory weekly sessions and job-search activity logs. Furthermore, in some areas the Ministry has become more involved in and works jointly with agency staff to monitor the use of post-referral agency services. However, many informants state that a poor level of participant participation is still a major concern and is one of the primary reasons for the lack of a placement during the 90-day eligibility period.

When Participants Fail to Obtain Employment Within the 90-Day JPP Eligibility Period

Two major concerns that informants raised regarding unsuccessful JP participants relate to the tracking and treatment of their JP file and the status of the post-90-day participant.

- **Problems with JP file closures**
Difficulties in coordinating the appropriate closure of JP files have been reported by numerous Ministry and agency informants. During the early period, prior to the implementation of many of the monitoring initiatives, the issue was a backlog of open files. Although this challenge remains in that some participant files remain open long after the 90-day eligibility period, a new challenge has arisen: inappropriate JP file closures. Numerous scenarios have been reported where placements have occurred

but files have been closed, which affects payments to agencies. Several agency staff thought that this was a Ministry issue in that staff need to be trained on how to case-manage the JP files and how to use the JP system; Ministry staff explain that these problems are caused by delays with data entry on the agency side.

- **Program status of unsuccessful JP participants, post-90 days**
Both Ministry and agency informants raised concerns about what to do with participants who are unsuccessful with JPP. There is the need first to ensure that participants are not “falling through the cracks” and being left without another program option, and second to ensure that appropriate program referrals are made. One agency informant expressed frustration with the fact that there was no real mechanism for her to communicate her opinions of the participant’s needs following an unsuccessful JP period or a rejection from the program (other than a rejection code). A scenario was given of a participant who could greatly benefit from a particular course and certification test, but whose needs were a little out of scope for JPP. A few weeks later, to her frustration, the worker heard that the participant was re-referred to another job-search club.

When Participants Successfully Obtain Employment Within the 90-Day JPP Eligibility Period

- **Need for guidelines regarding unusual placement situations**
Some agency informants raised scenarios where participants find unusual or very short-term employment and they are uncertain whether placement forms should be completed. Examples include situations where participants find very brief periods of employment (e.g. a single day or less), are hired on-call and are yet to work, or find brief employment obtained through another placement agency.
- **Participants who fail to report that they have found work**
Many participants are successful in finding employment through their own independent job search but fail to report this to the agency. The agencies have made efforts to raise participant awareness of this issue, but it remains a concern.
- **Participants who fail to report earnings to the Ministry**
Some placed participants (especially families) often continue to be eligible for a BC Benefits “top-up” after they find work. SRDC did not observe or hear employment counsellors informing participants about their responsibilities to report earnings to the Ministry. This is not part of the employment counsellors’ job. It would, however, reduce some of the issues with agency payments or participant overpayments if the agencies tell participants during the placement meeting or call that they need to report their earnings to the Ministry unless they are independent of BC Benefits.³²
- **Confusion over the post-placement JP eligibility period**
Most informants remain unclear about or mistakenly assume that the post-placement period is 19 consecutive months rather than 19 months of independence in a 30-month period.
- **Very little Ministry tracking of the post-placement JP period**
Most Ministry informants responsible for tracking participant files state that they

³²Reviewers of the draft report noted that statistics do not suggest that there is a problem with undeclared earnings.

either do not track the post-placement JP period at all, or they have just started to input “Bring Forwards” on participant files recently. As a result, future program referral options, after the post-placement JP period, may be neglected for participants who experience job loss and do not report back to the agencies, or for those who have never achieved independence from income assistance.

4. AGENCY: POST-PLACEMENT SUPPORTS

Once a participant has successfully been placed during his or her 90-day eligibility period, the initial contract requires the agency to continue to support them for up to 19 months. This section describes the services and supports that are offered by each of the agencies during this post-placement period to help participants maintain employment or to find new employment. It includes an overview of the current service delivery model for post-placement support, as well as some recent innovations and pilot projects in this area. This is followed by a discussion of program challenges in the areas of post-placement support, welfare exit, and job retention.

The Service Delivery Model

During the first year of operations, the Ministry and agencies focused largely on getting the program up and running and developing the upfront program components such as referrals, pre-employment services, and placements. In the second year of operations, the focus has now shifted more towards post-placement support services, and to providing services to an increasing number of participants who are seeking post-placement support now that the program is referring and placing a steady number of participants. (Thus, the SRDC field research took place when the post-placement services in selected sites were undergoing reviews and changes.)

Participants are told at various points in the process about the types of supports they can expect to receive from the agency if they are successful in finding work within the 90 days (e.g. at the assessment interview and at placement). Participants are told that they can continue to use the agency services to look for new opportunities or new employment in the event of job loss and that the agency will support them for the “next 19 months” (which is not consistent with the payment schedule to the agencies). Participants are entitled to similar job-search supports that they had prior to their placement.

This section describes the types of support and services that the agencies offer to participants once they have been placed, including job retention funds, career planning, employment counselling, and mediation and conflict resolution.

Job Retention Funds

Both JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link use job-retention funds to help participants secure and retain employment. There are differences in the amount of money each agency allocates for job retention, as well as some restrictions on how this money can be used. JobWaveBC can provide \$1,000 directly to the employer if it keeps the participant for six months of full-time employment. Employers can use the funds in any way they choose, as there are no restrictions in this regard. Most JobWaveBC informants refer to these monies as employer incentives. Destinations Job Link can offer up to \$3,000 in job retention funding —

\$1,500 for both the employer and participant. The funds are accessible over a 10-month period, invoiced in intervals of 3, 6, and 10 months if the participant is working full time. There is flexibility in the acceptable use of these funds, but they must be used in support of job retention for the participant. The retention supports available from both agencies are summarized below.

JobWaveBC

- \$1,000 incentive provided directly to the employer
- Available after participant has worked full time for six months
- No restrictions on use of funds

Destinations Job Link

- \$3,000 available to the employer and participant; \$1,500 to each, to support training to ensure job retention
- Available in instalments after 3, 6, and 10 months of full-time employment
- To be used in support of job retention for the participant

Although these supports are standard across the province for both agencies, there appears to be some flexibility in the use of funds and in some cases in the dollar amounts available. For example, informants advise that in some cases the JobWaveBC employer incentive is used for participant training rather than going directly to the employer. Many employers are satisfied with this approach.³³ There also appears to be flexibility in the duration of employment before the funds can be released. One person said that JobWaveBC occasionally releases partial incentives after three months of full-time employment.

Destinations Job Link has similar flexibility in the provision of their retention supports. Informants advise that the employer/employee division of funds is not mandatory. If the employer chooses not to use any of the funds, the participant can have access to the full \$3,000. The acceptable use of funds is also very broad. The employer could claim expenses incurred to train the participant, even if no outside institution is used. For example, if another staff member dedicates a particular number of hours to train the participant, the employer can claim this time under his or her employer portion. Furthermore, the employer is not limited to spending his or her portion of the funds directly on the participant. As long as the participant is employed full time, the employer funds may be spent to benefit the entire staff (e.g. a Food Safe) course. Participants can use their portion of funds with a lot of flexibility as well, as long as it goes toward supporting their longer-term job retention. This is not necessarily limited to retention in their current position, either; it can support career development. Although in many cases the money is used for skills upgrading, it is not limited to training. In fact, many informants state quite clearly that these are not training funds, but rather job retention supports, implying a much broader use.

³³Another example of JobWaveBC's flexibility in the use of retention funds is in a situation where the participant was provided with training which was thought to be coming from the employer incentive. When the employer disagreed, JobWaveBC provided the full incentive to the employer, as well as covering the costs of the participant's training.

As specified in the contract, the agencies appear to be taking steps to do whatever they can to keep participants employed.

Career Development Planning

Employment counsellors at both agencies provide interested participants and employers with assistance in career development. This assistance is generally offered in conjunction with the use of the retention funds discussed above. Many participants and employers may be interested in using the funds but have no idea how to proceed. Counsellors assist them in focusing their goals and developing long-term career strategies. Destinations Job Link has formalized this approach through the use of what they call “Tourism Career Plans.” A counsellor will meet with the participant and employer to coordinate the development of a strategy for using the available support funds. Goals are clarified and development strategies are formulated over the short and longer term, with an accompanying plan for the invoicing of any required retention funds. JobWaveBC counsellors will also provide this type of support if the need arises. As mentioned above, many employers are willing to use the incentive funds for participant training. Counsellors work with the participant and employer in coordinating these activities.

Employment Counselling

Informants indicate that many participants find the transition to full-time work a challenge. Some participants experience frustration, worry, and anxiety with their new circumstances. As a result, in addition to the more strategic assistance discussed above, employment counsellors offer participants individual guidance and support with any number of their concerns. Informants find that it is generally the first few weeks that are the most difficult for participants and many look to counsellors for moral support. Others want to use counsellors as a sounding board to obtain feedback on various work-related issues.

Mediation and Conflict Resolution

Informants report that occasionally situations arise in which participants and employers experience conflicts or other difficulties. They can occur for various reasons, such as participant performance issues, miscommunication, or misunderstandings related to employer expectations. Counsellors can play a mediating role in resolving conflicts between employers and participants. The exceptional rapport that many counsellors have with their employers makes this task easier. One informant gave an example of situation where the employer had fired the participant. The counsellor intervened and was able to resolve the situation and the employer re-hired the participant.

The Implementation of Job Retention Supports

Although the service delivery model for post-placement support appears to be standard throughout the province in that most sites provide, to some extent, each of the services discussed above, the marketing and implementation of these supports varies widely. This section discusses this implementation by reviewing the agencies’ procedures for post-placement contact with participants and employers. This is followed by a look at the circumstances under which job retention is unsuccessful. The reasons for job loss are explored and the participant’s next steps with JPP are discussed.

Post-Placement Contact With Participants and Employers: Procedures in Transition

JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link use different approaches to post-placement follow-up and contact with their participants and employers. Procedures also vary somewhat within each agency across the study sites.

For the most part, JobWaveBC currently uses a more centralized approach than Destinations Job Link, with a department in their Victoria headquarters handling all post-placement monitoring and follow-up. One key informant advised that participant follow-up generally occurs after approximately four weeks and then every three months thereafter, if appropriate. However, most JobWaveBC informants at the field level report that they are unclear as to what type of monitoring and follow-up is taking place in Victoria. Many reported that they do very limited post-placement follow-up on a local level themselves. Others said that they do contact some participants shortly after placement, but they leave it to the participant to dictate the level of their involvement thereafter. In contrast, all post-placement follow-up contact with Destinations Job Link participants and employers occurs at the local level. Some employment counsellors report that they contact participants and employers on a monthly basis, after placement occurs. Others advise that they may contact participants very frequently in the weeks shortly after placement and from then on only at the invoicing intervals of 3, 6, and 10 months. Again, for many the degree of contact depends on participant and employer needs.

Post-placement follow-up appears to be a “work in progress,” in particular, with JobWaveBC. While some informants feel that their centralized approach to post-placement monitoring allows for more efficiency, they acknowledge that the lack of a local touch may be problem.³⁴ Several post-placement pilot projects are currently being implemented to address this issue. In regions 1 and 4, local JobWaveBC staff have taken on the responsibility of conducting follow-up contact with participants and employers. The plan is to have two such “customer loyalty” workers in each region — one for the participant and one the employer. Another recent post-placement initiative involves JobWaveBC sending congratulatory cards to all participants who have recently obtained employment. The goal is to remind participants that JobWaveBC is still there for them in the event of job loss.

Job Loss: Why Does It occur? What Happens Next?

Informants report various reasons for participant job loss, ranging from labour market issues to participant-centred problems. One of the primary reasons for job loss was reported as being the seasonal nature of many of the agency positions. Although it is an issue for JobWaveBC, it may be a more serious concern for Destinations Job Link, given the high seasonality in many of their sectors. Some informants feel that although this is a concern, participants can still maintain full-time employment by moving between seasonal industries (e.g. ski hills and golf courses). In many instances, participants who experience job loss may have had employment issues prior to coming into the program. Either their counsellors were unaware of the extent of their problems, or the added stress of the new employment situation has made them worse. In other cases, it may not be an industry- or participant-related issue but simply a poor job-match.

³⁴One JobWaveBC subcontractor mentioned instances where, when she saw them in the community, she found out that participants who were previously placed were no longer working.

In summary, some of the more common reasons for job loss that were mentioned by agency informants include

- the seasonality of the industry that the participant's job is based upon;
- lack of participant interest or motivation;
- poor work attitudes (e.g. absenteeism and lateness);
- mental health issues (e.g. drug and alcohol);
- health problems (e.g. hepatitis); and
- poor physical fitness (e.g. in labour-intensive positions).

The Numbers

This section provides summary statistics on the use of post-placement job retention and incentive supports in the case study regions.

Table 14, below, presents a breakdown of the percentage of placed participants who make use of post-placement support funds for both JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link. The percentages of placed participants using pre-placement support funds are also reproduced in these tables for comparison purposes.

There are a couple of noteworthy differences between JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link, as well as regional variations in the use of post-placement supports. First, although the average dollar-used-per-placement is quite similar, Destinations Job Link may have a higher percentage of their placed participants accessing post-placement supports in the case study regions (For all four study sites, 26.1 per cent and 8.6 per cent for Destinations Job Link and JobWaveBC, respectively.) However, this is difficult to determine exactly as the participant supports for regions 4, 5, and 8 in Destinations Job Link were not split by pre- and post-supports, although it is true that in Region 1, the proportion of Destinations Job Link placements accessing post-placement supports is higher. Second, the use of post-placement supports appears to be considerable higher in Region 8 than in the other study regions. This is true for both JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link, with the proportion being twice as high for each agency, relative to their own counterparts in other regions. Third, the average dollar used per placement appears to be higher in regions 1 and 4 for JobWaveBC, while for Destinations Job Link, it is regions 4 and 8. Again, the reader is cautioned that these statistics may not be comparable, as different dates are involved and possibly different methods of compilation.

Table 14: Placements, Retention Funds, and Pre-placement Supports*

JobWaveBC

Region	Total Placed	Placed Who Received Incentive Funds	Average Amount	Non-placed Who Received Pre-placement Funds	Average Amount
1	738	20 (2.7%)	\$1,002	595 (80.6%)	\$97
4	770	34 (4.4%)	\$945	589 (76.5%)	\$107
5	364	24 (6.6%)	\$695	241 (66.2%)	\$143
8	714	143 (20.0%)	\$639	432 (60.5%)	\$185
Total	2,586	221 (8.6%)	\$725**	1,857 (71.8%)	\$127**

* Data reported as of March 31, 2001. Percentage of placements in each region receiving funds is in parentheses.

** Weighted average of above four study sites

Destinations Job Link

Region	Total Placed	Placed Who Received Retention Funds	Average Amount	Placed Who Received Pre-placement Funds	Average Amount	Placed Who Received Pre-placement OR Retention Funds	Average Amount
1	450	106 (23.6%)	\$675	316 (70.2%)	\$91	—	—
4	244	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	42 (17.2%)	\$946**
5	523	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	113 (21.6%)	\$663
8	394	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	160 (40.6%)	\$983
Total	1,611	not provided	not provided	not provided	not provided	421 (26.1%)	\$816***

* Data reported as of March 31, 2001. Percentage of placements in each region that received funds is in parentheses.

** Weighted average of nine EBCs

*** Weighted average of above four study sites

The Economic Analysis Branch of MHR provided an analysis that showed a substantive proportion of JPP placements who were referred to JPP between January 2000 and March 2001 did not receive a BC Benefits cheque prior to their initial placement in the 90-day eligibility period. It was close to 30 per cent.

Challenges and Opportunities

This section provides a brief summary of some of the challenges that the program faces specifically with respect to the areas of post-placement support and follow-up.

Post-Placement Monitoring and Follow-up Contact

- Local Ministry staff report being unfamiliar with post-placement initiatives of JobWaveBC headquarters.

- JobWaveBC’s centralized approach to monitoring may be improved with more follow-up efforts by local JobWaveBC staff. This was being tested at the time of the field research.

Job Loss: The Ongoing Challenge of Improving Job Retention

Key informants report that job retention continues to be one of the more significant challenges facing the program. Reports are that job loss occurs between six and eight months after placement and in many areas is largely caused by seasonal fluctuations in employment.

Job Retention and Incentive Support Funds

- **Use of job retention supports and incentives could be increased.**
Some informants advise that the use of job retention and incentive supports could be improved. There is some suggestion that awareness may be lacking and improved marketing may be a partial solution.

Welfare Exit

Many key informants advised of the ongoing difficulties agencies have in assisting particular participants to achieve independence from income assistance even after placement. Informants offered several explanations:

- They do not have access to the GAIN information that would enable them to know when a participant has returned to income assistance or remains eligible for a BC Benefits “top-up”
- Single-parent participants with dependants are still eligible for partial IA support, even while working full time
- Low wages and part-time employment
- Participants who do not declare income with the Ministry and FAWs fail to monitor declarations post-placement³⁵
- Delays in GAIN-file closure (e.g. due to a time lag between when the job is reported and the participant receives his or her first paycheque) or the FAW maintaining the open file inappropriately

Informants offer several possible solutions. They include re-working contracts to allow partial payments so the agencies can be compensated accordingly for cases of single participants with dependants, or implementing verification initiatives to deal with undeclared earnings.

DATA MANAGEMENT: TRACKING AND MONITORING COMPLIANCE

Each of the four steps described above has its distinct features. The steps are linked by a common need by both the Ministry and agencies to maintain participant data to ensure that those who should be taking advantage of the program are doing so in the best way to achieve

³⁵See Footnote 34.

the goal of employment, and those who are not serviced by JP are redirected to more appropriate programs and services. As described above, tracking participation highlights the important operational challenge of implementing JPP, and can focus the attention of administrators and staff on meeting this goal. In addition, the agencies have a vested interest in monitoring participant placements and ensuring that participants remain employed.

Our understanding from Ministry field staff is that the Office of the Comptroller General audit report gathered a lot of details about data management issues; thus, we will not go into too much detail on that subject in this study.

The JP system was not available before program implementation and many manual systems and databases were implemented to support operational requirements. While they have been functional, they have caused other problems (e.g. data inconsistencies across various systems) that affected accurate reporting and invoicing and required a lot of manual checking. While the JP system is now up and running, it still has special challenges that need to be resolved. This is common in the early months of the implementation of a new system.

Participant mobility presents a special challenge for agency follow-ups, especially during the 90-day job-search period. When asked, Ministry staff have been helpful in sharing any new address and telephone information with agencies. If possible, some form of technology should be considered to address this issue systematically so that participants do not fall through the cracks (e.g. updates that will automatically send address and phone information to agencies). Staff also mentioned the need to be able to transfer the JP file, with all the attached history, to the receiving office; a process similar to the transfer of GAIN files.

Although Ministry staff raised concerns about the JP system — they continue to struggle with its implementation and data accuracy, as well as understanding what information it can or cannot provide — they nevertheless credited the system with reducing their workload and facilitating tracking, and could see its potential. Many told us that more training on the system is needed.

D. Program Governance

Ensuring a smooth service delivery is in very large part dependent upon effective program governance. In this round of process research, informants were asked to comment on the following elements that can pose challenges to program governance: regional economic, geographical, and administrative differences; the public-private partnership; program organizational structure; issues of communication; and the need for staff buy-in. Informants were asked to consider the following kinds of questions:

- What issues emerged in terms of regional- and/or neighbourhood-specific challenges, such as population served, labour market conditions, geographic spread, and rural versus urban procedural challenges? How do those working in the program react to the notion of increased standardization?
- What kind of criteria guide JPP staffing decisions? What qualities do existing staff bring to their assessment decisions? Do staff feel that their efforts are appreciated and their concerns are addressed? Do they like their jobs? What supports might make their tasks easier?
- What is the current status of the relationship between the public and private partners? What practices improve this relationship?
- How widespread is support for the program? Where does resistance occur and what factors affect buy-in?
- How effective are current communication channels and practices? Is program information disseminated to staff in an efficient and timely fashion?

Where relevant, information in this section will include references to concerns or goals expressed by those who took part in the formative research in the summer of 2000.

REGIONAL STRUCTURE

When implementing a province-wide pilot program like JPP, there is a need to be responsive to regional and neighbourhood characteristics while still providing as seamless and consistent a service as possible. This is no mean feat. The nine regions and several hundred Ministry and agency offices that are part of the JPP service network pose vastly different contexts and challenges for the program. These challenges include having a transportation system to support travel for employment, and economic realities that can mean few jobs or, at least, few jobs that match the skill sets of participants.

Although for a variety of reasons, implementation did not occur simultaneously in all regions, at this point the program is offered in all nine of the Ministry-designated regions of the province. Areas where JPP is not available tend to suffer from geographical constraints, or to have small populations and few staff resources, and/or labour market constraints. One of the regions targeted for this study, Region 5, has the distinction of having an area — the Kootenays — which has been divided into east and west, with each geographic section served by a different partner: JobWaveBC in the east serving our Nelson study site, and

Destinations Job Link in the west serving our Cranbrook study site. This single agency solution brings its own special challenges.

The fact that the program has actually been implemented province-wide, however, is an event in itself. This is the first time this has occurred with a program of this magnitude. It is an even greater feat considering that the Ministry has accorded regional management the authority to decide, within certain broad parameters, how the program can best be implemented in their area, including whether participation is voluntary or mandatory, and whether the referral occurs before or after the in-depth intake interview to determine BC Benefits eligibility. This flexibility has been extended to employment benefits centres (EBCs) as well so that what results is a patchwork of service delivery interpretations.

In the beginning we had to figure out really basic things like just how to get people from the Ministry to the partner agency, and every region had a different idea about how that could best happen — whether it would be mandatory and, if it was, how to handle that three strikes and out versus zero strikes and you're gone We had all kinds of latitude. So the flavour of each region is what came down. (JobWaveBC Coordinator)

An agency coordinator in Region 4 said she felt it was important to have flexibility in designing the practices and procedures for her region for the kinds of reasons cited earlier — that her region faced quite different challenges from others. The region is not only very spread out geographically; it is home to many low-income residents. She felt, for instance, that it was preferable to proceed with a post-intake referral model as opposed to the pre-application process because she felt the clients' interests would better be served by meeting their financial needs before referring them on for employment. According to her, with their immediate survival needs met, participants would be more motivated to seek work.

In fact, as one senior-level informant pointed out, regional flexibility did not arrive with JPP; it has always been a feature of this Ministry. This person described her experience when she moved from one region to another:

It was horrible. It was absolutely different. The language was different. They were talking on about OFTRs and OFRs and it's an SS, and it's an OTI and I thought, "I don't know what this is." Even policies could be administered differently. What worked in Nelson and Trail and Castlegar didn't work in Victoria.

Similarly, the partner agencies tend to leave local decision making up to their regional coordinators and staff. According to one coordinator, "there's real openness to change and coming up with better solutions."

The Destinations Job Link Coordinator for Region 8 explained that while the basic procedures involved in the three steps of intake and assessment, pre-placement, and post-placement are similar in his region to other regions, "each office manager certainly has their own style." For instance, Destinations Job Link makes presentations at the Early Intervention Program (EIP) in some areas of the region but not others, with the difference laying primarily in availability of staff resources. And, as we have heard, in Region 4 Destinations Job Link has an employment coordinator who spends one day a week handling referrals in the Langley EBC. According to the Destinations Job Link Regional Manager for regions 3 and 4, the freedom to innovate in this way is a feature of the Destinations Job Link structure. While

respecting regional autonomy it is also functional — Destinations Job Link headquarters management would not have the time to pay this kind of attention to field issues.

As we have heard, each partner agency also has its own structural approach to service delivery. Destinations Job Link tends to hire dedicated staff; JobWaveBC has staff in centralized Job Stores in several more urban centres, but subcontracts services in smaller communities.

All, of course, have a common goal of moving welfare applicants and recipients away from welfare and into work.

Generally speaking, those working at the regional level applaud this recognition of differing regional realities. However, this flexibility can also lead to frustrations and inconsistencies in service delivery. As we heard earlier, for instance, not all forms are exactly the same and there are areas where discretionary judgment is allowed (and needed) in the Ministry referral and/or agency assessment decision. Some argue the need for greater standardization — a topic discussed in the following section. In addition, there have been many changes as the program has evolved, and as many informants pointed out, while most of the major issues have been resolved and the process is now more one of fine-tuning, the program is still evolving.

In addition to the issue of whether or not to move toward standardization, there are many other challenges associated with running a program of this magnitude across such a varied geographic and social landscape.

Implementation Challenges and Responses

There seems to be a general agreement that more rural and geographically dispersed areas, and resource-based areas experiencing economic downturns, have a more difficult time implementing a program like JPP than do regions that are very urban and have a more diverse economic base and population like Vancouver (Region 1) and Victoria (Region 9). For instance, one research consideration had been to use Victoria as a comparison region because the program seemed to experience a positive implementation there and it is the “flagship” region. It is suggested, however, that these very considerations rule it out as a viable region for comparison. Victoria is seen to have “anomalies” not seen in other regions, including the fact that the EIP is done in-house rather than by a contractor. Also, the regional executive officer (REO) for the region acts as the JPP coordinator and this affects how JPP-related questions and decisions are handled.³⁶ Additionally, the region had its organizational structure, in the form of JPP-dedicated employment planning officers (EPOs), in place from program start-up, and so did not face some of the teething problems experienced by other regions, especially those with staff resource issues. Finally, of course, what works well for Victoria may not work in other regions.

In general, participants in Region 1 — such as those in the Southside office — offer a range of skill sets and higher educational and employment qualifications. As the person supervising the JobWaveBC Call Centre in Victoria told us, the lower mainland is an easier

³⁶However, the person suggesting this also stated that this might not be an advantage because it may be better to have the senior person dedicated to the program.

area for them to service because “people can travel to jobs and there is a bigger participant pool and wider range of jobs.”³⁷

Informants in the four regions were asked what special challenges they faced in terms of implementing the program. Many of their responses pointed to issues specific to their region or to the regional nature of program governance. Those responsible for managing or coordinating regional program delivery were asked to comment specifically about governing within a regional structure, given the kinds of challenges mentioned earlier.

Informants identified four challenge areas, which represent two tiers of proportional importance. The first tier is occupied by challenges related to the local/regional labour market, and problems related to program governance. A secondary set of challenges includes problems in trying to serve particular populations, and problems imposed by geographic realities.

Labour Market Realities

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of problems mentioned in this area came from informants from Region 8, although at least two informants in each of regions 4 and 5 also cited problems here.

Campbell River seems to have been particularly hard hit. A community whose economy has been resource-dependent, Campbell River has seen a severe downturn in recent years in its primary industries of logging and fishing. As one informant from Campbell River said, the community is struggling: “There are no fish, no lodges, [and] no tourists.” According to the region’s JobWaveBC coordinator, “There are more people unemployed in Campbell River, and fewer jobs, than any other place in the region.” However, while there are people out of work, and while many have recent work experience and are, in all respects, job-ready, this does not necessarily translate into referrals and placements, for a variety of reasons.

For one thing, having a highly competitive labour market means it is very difficult to get placements. According to the JobWaveBC Coordinator in Region 8, there is one placement for every 10 referrals in Campbell River, and one in six in Courtney and Port Alberni. In Nanaimo, where the economy is stronger, the ratio is one placement for every 1.75 referrals.³⁸

Nanaimo has a slightly different employment issue. As a JobWaveBC employment counsellor told us, there are jobs, but they tend to be in retail. She also points out, “Retail is minimum wage and it stays that way.” There are better-paying jobs but she says those companies tend to bring in their own workers, and she adds that the mills in the area are closing down.

Another problem related to resource industry communities is the seasonal nature of the work, and the pay people receive when they are working. They make good money when they are working, but the work can be unstable. This can result in a high number of “mutual”

³⁷As an example, JobWaveBC purchases a database list of businesses from Info Canada. This list includes 538 jobs for Nelson, including home businesses. This number compares with over 23,000 jobs for Vancouver.

³⁸According to the Destinations Job Link regional coordinator for Region 8, Campbell River is now seeing far more placements than previously, but this may be a product of the agency also receiving far more referrals. The latter seems to be related not only to a diminishing referral bottleneck, but also to the fact that at the time of data collection, seasonal jobs were opening up.

clients, because they are constantly re-qualifying for Employment Insurance (EI). Or, as the region's JPP coordinator describes below, to a situation where they need income assistance but their work history disqualifies them:

When the fish never showed up on the West Coast last year, there were many workers who hadn't worked enough in that year to qualify for EI but also had assets that made them ineligible for IA. So they were destitute but their assets disqualified them from IA, and thus from JPP.

Finally, according to a Destinations Job Link employment coordinator in Region 4, the region poses special challenges for Destinations Job Link because the jobs offered tend not to be in tourism or hospitality. Rather, the jobs tend to be of the warehouse production and/or labour variety — opposite to the Vancouver employment scene, where there are many Destinations Job Link-type jobs.

Problems of Regional Governance

Challenges mentioned here include ensuring adequate referral numbers, the issues of buy-in, and ensuring adequate Ministry and agency staff resources.

Obtaining Adequate Referral Numbers

This issue appears to be raised mostly by Destinations Job Link, and is seen as an issue in all case study regions except Region 1. It is a complex issue because in the context of program implementation, low referral numbers can reflect labour market realities, but can also reflect issues around buy-in or procedural bottlenecks.

For example, Campbell River was perceived to have a low number of referrals in comparison to Destinations Job Link. According to the agency's Regional Coordinator: "We had one heck of a time getting referrals there for two years." The region's JPP Coordinator concurs: "There was a question here about what was happening after the person came through the door." She said that when the problem surfaced, the region conducted a tracking of every individual who came through during intake, and that tracking suggested that everyone who was appropriate was being referred. She says the region contained "an inordinate number of cases of hardship, benefit ineligibility, mutuals, and others who were simply 'not job-ready'". Nevertheless, Campbell River now appears to see enough referrals to satisfy Destinations Job Link.

Buy-In

As we will learn later in this report, buy-in is an issue faced in all regions, but in the context of specific regional challenges, it is largely associated with participant and employer buy-in related to regional economic or social realities.

For instance, the situation described in resource communities, where workers are used to making high incomes and where that income source suddenly dries up, poses a problem when trying to convince those same workers that the job leads offered by JPP will work to their benefit. This, again, is a special problem for Destinations Job Link because of the stereotypical image of Destinations Job Link as offering only minimum wage employment.

The obstacle is trying to convince someone who used to make 30 or 40 dollars an hour that making minimum wage is better than being on welfare. [Interviewer: Are all jobs minimum wage?] No. There are jobs that pay more but the initial perspective is that if they get a job waiting tables or working in hospitality, they will make minimum wage. (Region 8)

This Jobs Partnership (JP) contact added that they are seeing a lot of people placed in jobs where they are making 20 and 30 dollars an hour if they have skills. But, she adds, they're seeing this more through JobWaveBC than Destinations Job Link. However, the region's JobWaveBC coordinator also expressed concern about participant resistance:

There are many people used to earning big bucks in resource industries but they have low skill levels and are not willing to settle for just any job. They're not willing to take a job that's less than \$18 an hour unless they see that the pay will increase drastically. A lot will not take part-time work even though it may lead to full-time. And there are a lot of skilled people who are employable so employers have lot to pick and choose from, so people who been out of work for awhile — those on IA — definitely don't have current work history that would put them on an even playing field with someone currently working.

She also said that there is the added problem in some communities that people who receive income assistance are stigmatized as being lazy and that employers are unlikely to hire anyone they know has come from income assistance. She thinks, however, that this attitude is changing as IA receipt becomes more commonly experienced in these communities.

In addition to the problem of resource-based communities, are the problems of familiarity that come with living in smaller, more rural areas. As the owner of the agency subcontracted to provide JobWaveBC service in Nelson explained, in small communities, some of the employers get "reputations" — "So [you] can put jobs out, but participants will say 'No way I'm working there.'"

Staffing and Workload

Several areas complained of heavy workloads due to limited ministry staff resources, but there were also regions that have experienced substantial staff turnovers that were not necessarily related to JPP, but still affected program delivery.

Certainly, as mentioned earlier in the report, the staff resources had a lot to do with regional decisions about whether they could use a pre- or post-intake model, with the pre-intake model pretty much limited to areas where staff could be spared to conduct pre-screening at the EIP sessions. The JPP Coordinator in Region 8 explained the regional decision to forego the pre-intake model:

In the beginning, when the idea was that the participant would be referred from the EIP session, we quickly learned that neither the brokers nor the Ministry were in a position to staff these sessions. Only PROs could attend and there were only seven PROs in the region; there is one EIP in every community and sessions occur with varying frequency. The brokers couldn't afford to release staff to be at the EIP session all morning; they needed their staff be at the office to receive participants. And, from the Ministry side, only PROs were informed about JPP so what happens if the PRO can't attend? (JPP Coordinator, Region 8)

She said there was also the consideration of how the program referral officer (PRO) would present JPP in that model. “Were they to market the programs?” She says they tried having PROs attend the sessions for the first month, but found the time spent on this meant they could not do the other part of their job, which was monitoring and compliance.

Population

All regions face some issues connected with the special characteristics of the populations they serve. Vancouver, for instance, offers conditions conducive to JPP, but there are areas like the Northside study site, which tends to serve many residents of the city’s downtown Eastside, that have challenges. This population tends to be single, male, and low-skilled. Vancouver’s Northside neighbourhood is home to a more transient population, and their work history is one of frequent job leaving.

Nanaimo and Langley, two other study sites, had high proportions of single parents. While single parents are often lauded as good candidates for welfare-to-work transitions, those with children under seven years of age are exempted from participation in JPP, and those who do enter the program find it difficult to make the final break to independence for the reasons described earlier.

A lot of single parents that are maybe working part time that don’t have enough hours to make it without support, like we provide a subsidy to a certain level. They are really borderline. If they have a five- and seven-year old and they’re working part time at 7-11, there’s nothing else we can do. It’s not mandatory that they be working or even seeking employment. But there is a lot of that here. It’s a pretty typical scenario. (FAW, Region 8)

Whalley had a high proportion of Youth Works clients, an apparently demanding population: “lots of questions; lots of monitoring.” This increases the workload for the Jobs Partnership (JP) contact and argues for a dedicated staff position to handle such a caseload as this.

And finally, populations living in resource-based communities tend not to have the skills necessary to enter new employment areas.

A lot of clients are cyclical. You see the same names. I’ve seen children of recipients [become recipients] . . . people don’t move from here [Nanaimo]. They just seem to stay stationary. It’s really detrimental when you see what the labour market is like. They’re content to stay here, thinking the labour market will turn around. (JP contact, Region 8)

Transportation

Regions 4 and 5 were most likely to cite challenges related to geography. Although both regions experience transportation issues of inadequate bus service and a geographic spread between where participants live and where the jobs are located, the problem differs slightly in each region.

In Region 4, for example, transportation presents a barrier, but so do participant attitudes.

Fraser Valley is a tough region to get people around because it is such a large area. There are a lot more obstacles than downtown Vancouver. You get more people not complying. For example, we have people live in Aldergrove and they're employable but they have no transportation. You can't rely on the bus service from that community. Whereas in Vancouver, people live within a 20-block radius and can walk to an employer. It's easier for people in Vancouver to get and keep jobs. There are more excuses here for people to use for not working. (Destinations Job Link Employment Coordinator)

"Employers in Whiterock [a community located next to Langley] are screaming for workers but no one wants to bus there." (Destinations Job Link Regional Coordinator)

Similarly, in Nelson bus service is poor but there is the added and complicating issue that because housing is relatively inexpensive in the surrounding areas, people tend to locate away from the town where they can afford to buy homes. Because they own these homes, they are reluctant to move into Nelson, where jobs are more likely, or to move out of the area.³⁹

And finally, in areas where bus service is non-existent, comes a different problem: the need to provide your own transportation.

Driver's licenses are one of the biggest barriers, particularly in the north island because there is virtually no transit system. You need a vehicle and a driver's license to work. A lot of people live out of town or the work is outside of town and there is a struggle to get around. There is some transit but it doesn't go everywhere and schedules are inadequate. (Region 8)

Is There a Need for Increased Standardization?

Because increased standardization had emerged as a major issue in the formative research, in this round those responsible for decision making were asked to comment on the question. When a comment was volunteered by an individual working at the front line, that comment was also included in this analysis.

While opinions ranged from "standardize it all" to "don't standardize anything," these two extremes were rare. Virtually all informants appreciated some level of autonomy, but felt that there needed to be some level of standardization; that it was important that all were "working from the same page." The JPP Coordinator for Region 1 offered this opinion:

I'm always in favour of diversity; I'm not a cookie cutter fan, but cookie cutter works administratively. As an example, when an applicant is not coded "w" and is sent to the TC [training consultant], they may get a direct appointment with a TC in one district but if they move to another district, this access may not be available. And there are 'floats' who move between offices — this can cause chaos. If there are rules, it should apply to everyone. For example, if the client is to see a TC, that should be immediate, and if they don't show, then their cheque

³⁹However, while observing the JobWaveBC intake and assessment session in Nelson, the researcher did observe an individual who checked the job lists for a job in Prince George after attending a touchback session.

*is signalled. Similarly, if it's mandatory in some sites and not others, this can cause chaos.*⁴⁰

However, when most people thought of the question of standardization, having common forms was uppermost in their minds.

I think the problem is we try to give people too much flexibility and this causes a level of chaos. That's why in this region all the forms are the same. I developed the forms with input from the fields but I wanted everyone to use the same form.”
(JPP Coordinator, Region 4)

Others areas suggested for standardization include the following: eligibility criteria; referral procedures, including a freedom of information clause in the participant agreement to let them know that information is shared between the Ministry and agency; and ensuring compliance.

If the message is “jobs first,” and we want a person to work to the best of their ability, then we need to be consistent regarding compliance. So if they're not participating in the program, then they should not be eligible for assistance.

However, others were careful to point out the benefits of having regional autonomy — that this provides support for innovative ideas and, therefore, for program improvements. Agency regional coordinators have a strong respect for this feature and feel they are supported by their own management, although representatives of both agencies said they had noted an increasing move towards centralized autonomy within the Ministry. If this is so, this move will not be met with enthusiasm by some regional managers within the Ministry. The notion of standardization, for instance, is very worrisome to a couple of JPP coordinators. One JPP coordinator feels it is very difficult for policy-makers to create a uniform policy that would accommodate the special needs of the region.

It's not so much that the people are different, but the geography is. To make a program that is based on people who have proximity to resources, easy transportation issues, things can happen on a day-to-day basis time frame, is just false. We have too many adjustments, differences in resources, don't have the ability to pool resources and create something new.

Take Cranbrook and Vancouver. Vancouver has 50 FAWs [financial assistance workers] gathered in one community. Pull one person out to do one task, others would get 1/49 of this work, not a big adjustment. But in Cranbrook, with seven FAWs to play with, I don't have ability to tap into resources in other areas. Cranbrook is a large office. So we lack the luxury to dedicate staff to one program. Even other workers wear multiple hats. When we hit vacation time, employment work has to be put on the back burner.

For a different reason, the JobWaveBC Coordinator for regions 1 and 4, argues against diminishing regional autonomy:

“The beauty of JPP is the creativity it allows. People buy into something that they have a piece of, and the only way to have a piece of something is to help create it. At its inception, when we sat down in the region with the FAWs and everybody, there was that sense that we all had a piece of the pie.”

⁴⁰Region 1 has some sites that are mandatory and some that are voluntary. The JPP Coordinator worries about this situation, but says it is a product of other contract commitments.

And, of course, all acknowledge that it is very difficult to standardize JPP in the context of the reality of regional diversity — a situation summed up well by one JobWaveBC senior manager:

It's the problem of how to standardize when there are so many regional differences. We've come a long way to putting some commonality around the things we could, and acceptance of . . . it sounds like the serenity prayer: Of the things that we can change.

[There] will be things pertaining to the client that must be universal; things pertaining to the Ministry that will be regional. Things that work in rural community that don't work in urban. As long as there are some universal truths, and these remain at the forefront of actions, we will need to make room for regional diversity.

Summing Up

While there have been challenges associated with implementing this program within the regional structure, there have also been concerted efforts to bridge differences and facilitate ways of responding to regional needs. For instance, most regions have regular coordinator meetings; and as mentioned, the program has already moved strongly in the direction of standardizing forms. All of this has, of course, meant that the program has been in a fairly constant state of change and this in itself has been a deterrent to standardization — for instance, it mitigates the ability to produce a definitive procedures manual. But, the Regional Coordinator for Destinations Job Link in Region 8 points out that the program is only just over one year old (at the time of data collection), and generally speaking the changes have been for the better.

Given the fact that many steps in the participant path from Ministry to employer depend upon the smooth integration of procedures and on the mutual support and co-operation of all partners, it is important that the partnership work well. Communication and buy-in are key, as are credible and committed staff. In the next section we shift from a consideration of the logistical challenges of governing a program like JPP to a consideration of the challenges posed by combining very different working cultures.

THE JPP ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Earlier in this report, we learned about the way agency and Ministry offices are organized across the regions. While each region may have its own variations in its administration, generally speaking, in the Ministry JPP is managed in the region by a senior staff member who holds responsibility for managing the program: the JPP coordinator. In all study sites included in this research, there is a JP contact person (EPOs in Vancouver), who is a staff person responsible for making referrals to the program, for inputting data into the JP system, and for monitoring compliance. In some sites, this person came under the Labour Market Attachment Branch (LMAB), in others; he or she is an FAW with other responsibilities.

Each agency also has a regional coordinator. In locations where Job Stores have been set up, JobWaveBC has its own staff manning the program services. In all other locations JobWaveBC subcontracts and supervises local agencies to provide JPP services. Destinations Job Link has its own staff located in centralized offices, and sometimes in satellite offices. In both agencies, staff responsible for assessing and providing follow-up services for

participants are known as employment counsellors, although the subcontracted agencies often have different titles.

Each agency, of course, has other, ancillary staff. For instance, JobWaveBC has several staff who work in the call centre in Victoria, and both agencies have support staff. There are also two special liaison positions that bridge the gap between the Ministry and the agencies.

Successful implementation of a program with the scope and complexity of JPP is highly reliant upon what occurs in the field, which ultimately affects program outcomes. It is important to have efficient and reliable systems and procedures; it is also very important that the people who are delivering the program are credible, experienced, and committed to the task.

JPP is unique. It combines three broad and very different sectors — government, small business, and hospitality and tourism — each with their own ways of doing things and each with their own cultural mindsets. Additionally, each broad sector within JPP contains its own substructures and even subcultures. For instance, JobWaveBC has subcontractors who are generally familiar with income assistance recipients, but may have other programs for which they are responsible, and other priorities. Destinations Job Link staff are primarily hired for their knowledge and experience of the tourism and hospitality industry. The Ministry has workers whose primary concern is facilitating welfare to work transitions, and other staff whose focus is supporting clients in crisis — and both groups may have involvement with JPP. All of this occurs in the context of the regional challenges mentioned, and in the context of an evolving program.

Implementing JPP: Organizational Challenges

The structural pressures of mounting a program of the magnitude and complexity of JPP have been felt by all partners. For instance, low referral numbers have caused concern for Destinations Job Link, who hired staff only to see much lower numbers of referrals than had been expected. The following section details a number of structural issue areas.

Change, Roles, and Responsibilities

Evolution means change, and this has been seen in all areas, including staffing arrangements. JobWaveBC has undergone substantial reorganization at the regional level as their system of subcontracted agencies and Job Stores has evolved. Destinations Job Link has also seen restructuring as they expand their satellite offices, add staff, and in some cases change from contract to staff positions. While subcontractors can sometimes feel isolated, and staff working in one-person offices can feel overwhelmed, in general agency staff speak highly of the relationships they experience in their organizations.

Ministry offices have also experienced staff shortages during periods of reorganization. Region 5 has been very affected by this. The Regional Coordinator estimated that all staff in the region had changed at least once since the implementation of JPP. He added that this was not related to any issues around job satisfaction but to normal attrition and job progression. Nevertheless, when this occurs, it leaves the remaining staff unsettled and means they often carry an extra work burden as new staff is hired and trained. Additionally, it can mean that untrained staff must take on the responsibility for determining eligibility for JPP, and this may cause bottlenecks in participant flows. Newer staff may, for instance, place too much

reliance on the points assessment in the eligibility screening form, and not have the experience to sense when to override the code.

The Ministry is also still feeling the effects of the merger that took place between the former Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) and the Ministry of Human Resources to form the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security (now called the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR)), with some staff still unclear about roles, responsibilities, and priorities with respect to JPP.

There are still some issues between TCs and FAWs and what their roles are and this affects us in terms of referrals. For example, the TC's focus is still on training, not employment, so there are times when Destinations Job Link has asked to close JPP files, or the FAW closes the file because the client wants to interrupt work for some kind of upgrading/training, and instead of suggesting they do this while working . . . (Destinations Job Link Operations Manager)

Confusion over roles, however, is not limited to these two groups. Even staff who work on JPP can experience confusion: “This was a new job in a new position. The job needs to be moulded more; we need to put down on paper what the job is.” There are also suggestions that there needs to be more staff training — not just to learn about procedures but also to understand the intent of policy.

That's where we as a Ministry lack. We don't train our staff enough. We don't do any cultural shifts, any changes in training staff about what the vision is, what it should be. For example the JPP workers are “into” the program, but I don't see that with the FAWs because we stereotype people into jobs — if they're doing IA the primary focus is doing that application. We need to broaden that and say that even if you're a JPP worker and you're sitting with someone, you should be able to say “You need mental health, can I provide you with something?” Just because I have a specific job function that shouldn't stop me from doing something else. (EPO, Region 1)

And there is still some confusion over the separate, yet equal, roles of the JPP liaison coordinators. As described earlier, these positions bridge the information gap between the Ministry and the agencies, with one liaison coordinator assigned to each agency. However, while the positions are valued by all, their role is seen as “critical” to the success of the partnership, both coordinators feel their roles remain ambiguous and underutilized.⁴¹ As one liaison coordinator explained, the Ministry looks at the position as the prerogative of the agency; and the agency has not taken “the bull by the horns.” This person recommends that a more detailed job description might benefit the position but adds that, because the agencies are so different, it is difficult to write a job description that suits both.

Bureaucracy, Workload, and Job Satisfaction

All partners have commented on the amount of paperwork, which has apparently increased as the bureaucracies attempt to harmonize and streamline systems. As the JobWaveBC Regional Coordinator for regions 1 and 4, explained, the major challenge was the volume of work — the number of orders coming through in Region 1. She says the growth was incremental: At first the orders came in by fax, one at a time, and she began to type them into a Word document. Then the orders began coming in at 10 orders per night, so

⁴¹However, it should be mentioned that the Destinations Job Link Operations Manager felt that one of the major changes within their organization had been increased use and appreciation of their liaison coordinator.

she hired her next-door neighbour to type them. Then she thought of getting a co-worker to send the orders to her on a spreadsheet so they could be directly imported into a data file. Finally, she began using Access and now she has all the subcontractors using Access as well.

Comments from the field suggest, however, that it is the Ministry that has felt the strongest structural pressure due to workload demands on already overworked staff:

Headquarters increased FTE [full-time equivalent] staff, probably with eight, dedicated to JPP. But in the field we've had to administer another program without any new staff. So if Headquarters has needed eight staff to run the program effectively then how can you expect the program from the field's perspective to run effectively without giving them more resources? It's been an add-on to everyone's function. (JPP Coordinator, Region 4)

This JPP Coordinator says they are doing incredibly well “considering,” but wonders how much better they could do with extra resources:

You achieve 50 per cent success worth with 50 staff. You could probably achieve 150 per cent success with extra staff. I think the Ministry can justify it. We need staff because this program will mean cost savings for the Ministry. If every office had one JPP worker, we would be that much more successful.

Staff who are assigned to JPP have often had to create their own tracking systems and referral procedures and, while this can provide a sense of personal achievement, it also creates additional work. The extra work burden has been particularly true for the FAWs, who have been expected to make referrals to JPP as part of their intake interviews. Although this may only add another 10 minutes or so to their interview time, if they have several interviews in a day, as most do, this extra work can eat up a lot of time. One FAW said that on days like this, he was usually forced to schedule a follow-up interview for the client.

Workload was a major issue for line staff, especially for FAWs, but complaints were also expressed by agency subcontractors, and although rare, by JP contact staff. In the latter cases, complaints tended to focus on the amount of paperwork involved, and what they saw as an unnecessary duplication of efforts. For instance, the JobWaveBC subcontractor for Nelson described in detail the steps she must take in order to notify head office and the Ministry when they accept an application and the reasons for acceptance or rejection. She says she must send almost identical information (number of people in program, number of job orders, number of placements) to each source. She describes this as “endless reporting” and adds that “then you have to talk to all these people and remember who they are” and what kind of job they're looking for and where they want to find work.⁴² They feel the paperwork has tended to crowd out the time they would prefer to spend with clients.

In addition, not all JP contact staff have their time dedicated to the one program. For instance, the JP contact for the Langley office also carries a maintenance caseload of about 160 cases. Some agency contractors, especially those with sole responsibility for providing services in their area, also felt overburdened. “It's highly administrative and there's a lot to it. I don't get a lunch hour, I start at five in the morning and I usually work until 8 p.m.” (JobWaveBC, Region 4).

⁴²However, it should be noted that since the program was implemented in this region last fall, there had only been a total of 20 placements in the entire region at the time of this research, of which only six had been for Nelson.

However, although several acknowledged that the work was a bit easier now than before, virtually all acknowledged the load that the program has placed on FAWs, some of whom are handling caseloads of two to three hundred. As one FAW pointed out, the issue is not just about the extra time it takes to make the referral decision; it is also about information overload:

I think there is too much information. Everything changes. You couldn't possibly get this all down pat, and then it changes. I don't see it that this [JPP referrals] should be happening here [at intake]. I'm not sure what the TC's job is, or the PROs — again, that all seems to change — but what I would like to see happen is, it's enough [for FAWs] to determine eligibility for IA. To me, at that point, we should have one person in the office that clients have to meet with [for a JPP referral]. There should be one person at least that is completely 100 per cent knowledgeable about what happens and has flowcharts and whatever. It should be all centralized and that person deals with the proper referrals. That would be an awesome job I think. It's [currently] trying to do two jobs. It just doesn't wash. You can't possibly keep up with all the intake information and all the changing things around that and then this [JPP] part of it. For me it feels like there's something there that I'm not doing. I know that and it gives me an awful feeling.

Not surprisingly, feeling like this has obvious implications for job satisfaction. In general, the JP contact staff have much sympathy for the FAW position:

FAWs are feeling a change; their jobs have changed a lot. Administrative staff are given more authority to do things that FAWs used to do, verification officers do some and EPOs. The feeling is what's next for them [the FAW])? (Region 1)

Using a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being high, this same EPO rated an FAW's stress level as a 10. She compares this with the stress of her own position, which she says is a 2, and rated it this high just because of the current focus on closing old JPP files. Interestingly, given the previous discussion about autonomy, she relates its absence in the FAW's position as a significant job satisfaction factor:

There is no autonomy in an FAW position; you are bound by regulations, manual guides, your procedures. The EPO job is different — you're working with people who are already doing job searches. JPP is an option and supplements what they are doing.

The Nelson JP contact, who has struggled with her own workload, concurs with the FAW workload issue. She says the job can become “overwhelming” for intake workers because they're given more and more items to cover in same period of time. “And there are so many different programs, and it's compounded by different guidelines associated with Youth Works and Welfare to Work.” She says it has been a “lot of work trying get consistency,” which she thinks is because there is too much the intake worker has to cover and their first priority is to establish eligibility and get the first cheque out.⁴³

Opportunities

However, while the challenges are many, there have also been many changes that have improved the structure. In some cases, reporting relationships have been clarified; in others,

⁴³However, there were a couple of FAWs who said that while their JPP responsibilities added to their workload, it was not more than they felt they could handle.

EBCs have been able to assign staff exclusively to JPP and this has relieved the pressure on other Ministry staff as well as easing communication with agency staff. Both agencies have also worked to improve their services for clients by providing more accessible offices.⁴⁴

Despite the complaints noted above, staff were far more likely to feel satisfied with their jobs than not. For instance, a Vancouver EPO told us that JPP had had only positive impacts on her job. As an FAW previously, she was often asked for a bus pass by clients in order to help them find work. She had to tell them that when they got a job, then she could give them a bus ticket. But in JPP, she was given a book of bus tickets:

I don't know how to explain this to you, but having those bus tickets in your hands, it was like gold. For so many years we advocated that we needed bus passes; every FAW talks about needing bus passes for people. When you only get \$500 a month, how do you get bus fare?

She adds that receiving feedback about those whom she had referred to the program was vital to her sense of program credibility. When she heard about the first of her clients getting a job, she thought, “This *may* work.” Then she says, she heard about “another and another” until she believed that “the program *will* work.”

Similarly, the Nelson JP contact, who also provides employment-related services for non-JPP clients, liked the fact that she was dealing with eligibility, not crisis situations. She says that a lot of caseworkers would like to spend more time with employment issues: that some only get to deal with these cases at yearly reviews.

As we have learned, working in JPP is considered desirable work because it is generally positive, not punitive. For this reason, there were some who worried about moves to increase compliance:

I'm doing more compliance so now when I do see clients, it's not as positive. Now I'm not talking about skills and training — I'm the policeman for people who are not pursuing that minimum wage job. (JP Contact)

Of course, people's job satisfaction is not only affected by the nature of the work, but is also a product of their work environment, and whether their efforts and skills are acknowledged. Generally speaking, people working on JPP like the work they are doing and are happy with their place within the organizational structure. They perceive their work to be worthwhile:

I like the fact that we make a difference in some people's lives. I know it's true. People have come back . . . and said, “You've really helped me. I really appreciate it. I couldn't have gotten this job without you.” (JobWaveBC Coordinator, Region 8)

Also, while there has been organizational restructuring, there has been little turnover. Those who started with the program, tend to still be working on the program. This is strong evidence of job satisfaction.

⁴⁴Before Destinations Job Link opened their Whalley office, participants in the Langley area were forced to bus to the agency's Surrey office. Before the Destinations Job Link employment coordinator began to hold weekly sessions in the Langley MHR EBC, applicants had no choice but to travel to the Whalley office for their intake determination. Similarly, Ashland, the JobWaveBC subcontractor for the West Kootenays, now holds weekly group intake and touchback sessions in Nelson. Previously, another local contractor provided the intake assessment, and the only contact participants had with Ashland was by phone.

Staff

Who are the staff who work on JPP? What credentials and experience are partners looking for when they hire or select workers for this program? What values should they bring to the decisions they make? What about those who are hired: what qualities and experience do they actually possess? We asked agency and ministerial managers to comment on the criteria they consider important when hiring or bringing on staff to work on JPP. Not surprisingly, agency employers had more to say here than Ministry employers. Those working on JPP in the Ministry tend to have been FAWs previously. Many had become part of LMAB shortly before JPP came into being. Some had been PROs.

Agency hiring criteria and actual staff experience are listed below.

JobWaveBC

Hiring Criteria

- Someone with high energy; empathetic but not an enabler; critical thinking skills; PR skills; some background in industry, but more interested in logical thinkers and people who are more business-oriented because the neighbourhood coordinators oversee the operation, they do not deliver to clients. (Coordinator, regions 1 and 4)
- Experience in the realm of career development and employment counselling; experience with Ministry in funded programs so they are familiar with the language, like “mutuals.” But it also depends on whether the person is able to pick things up very quickly. Another criterion is that if we are looking for someone to run the Touchback sessions, we would want someone with good group pizzazz. (Coordinator, Region 5)
- Experience in delivering this kind of program; accessible resources for client; track record in administrative financial accountability; and enthusiasm about the program. (Coordinator, Campbell River, Region 8)⁴⁵
- Some formal background in social work, psychology, and life-skills training. Some formal career-coach experience that they can check references. Standards are coming for career practitioners so [staff name] wants to make sure their ECs could qualify for national standards (Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners, which emerged at the Go for Gold conference). These standards will guide hiring in future. Overall, she looks for a combination of practical experience, good references, and formal training in career practitioners. (JobWaveBC Operations Manager)

Staff Experience

The following lists some background information on the JobWaveBC employment counsellors who participated in interviews.

⁴⁵This person has not been involved in hiring staff, but has negotiated with subcontractors and had input into the hires this agency makes.

- Worked with West Coast Group for four years; started with WBT with Business Works in the North Shore. (Region 1)
- Doing this type of work since the late 1980s. Delivered employment programs for youth. Recently joined the JobWaveBC staff when they amalgamated the JobWaveBC services and opened the Job Store February 1, 2001. (Region 1)
- Worked with clientele as the office administrator in the PARC (Pacific Assessments, Referrals, and Counselling) program, delivered EIP sessions and, on a personal level, has worked with many people on assistance for the last 12 years. (Region 4)
- Was a legal secretary for two years handling Insurance Corporation of BC claims. Also had a background in nursing (one year) which assisted in that capacity. Started with Oceana in July 2000 in a job development capacity, which involved many responsibilities, including the provision of training. However, it was not until Oceana acquired the JobWaveBC contract that he/she became an employment counsellor. (Region 4)
- A “jack-of-all-trades,” does participant allowance cheques, makes sure computer network is working. Not a counsellor but sees them in the office and they will come in and talk about the job list, etc. Says he/she has all the information available in his/her resource library. (Region 5)
- Began November 7, 2000. Has BA in Sociology and had been working as a youth counsellor with John Howard Society for three years, and when with them he/she did resumé writing, interview skills, life skills and assessment, and dealing with people. (Region 8)
- Has experience working with both IA and EI clients. Was a coordinator for a federally funded employment program in the hospitality and tourism industry. In his/her more distant work history, he/she was a schoolteacher in England for nine years. (Region 8)

The list suggests a vast range of experience and skill levels. Many appear to have previous experience working with IA recipients, although not all have experience with employment-related services, or have direct experience in business.

Destinations Job Link

Hiring Criteria

- Life skills; life learning experiences; a passion for the work itself. Interviewing skills; skills related to working with people; self-confidence; a bit of ego so they can go to employer and sell their participants with confidence. (Manager, Region 1)
- Employment coordinators must have hospitality and tourism background, and preferably some management experience. Good if they have worked with IA recipients. It is a “24-7” job, and the person must know the industry because they have to have a good sense of whether someone is suitable for the job in question. (Manager, Region 4)

- Tourism background; flexibility; empathy for client; communication skills for networking in industry; and organizational ability. Education is a factor but attitude is more important. (Manager, Region 5)
- Want people with experience in tourism industry and for whom Destinations Job Link is their only job. Feels they can provide better service by being part of one company. Past Ministry experience in terms of dealing with client base. Helps to know way the Ministry works and that things take time (says in beginning he, as an independent business person, was quite taken aback by all the rules and regulations). Also that person has proper attitude and compassion for client. Good networking in community with employers. (Manager, Region 8)

Staff Experience

- Has been working about 20 years in hospitality and tourism. Prior to working with Destinations Job Link, created the PRIDE training centre in the Downtown Eastside: “that was my baby.” Dealing directly with employment barriers with high-risk youth. A lot of experience with low-income people. Also worked as cocktail waitress at Four Seasons, as a drug and alcohol counsellor, and counselled juvenile prostitutes. (Region 1)
- Has been with Destinations Job Link since September 2000. Previously was an employment programs coordinator with MOSIAC for a year, and before that YOUTH OPTIONS (Picasso Café). (Region 1)
- Before coming to Destinations Job Link, was Director of Food and Beverage for major downtown Vancouver hotel. Came to Destinations Job Link four years ago to work on Workplace Based Training (WBT). Background is hotel-restaurant experience and has held management positions in some major hotels so says he knows the business, and “has hired and fired a lot of people so knows what employers are looking for when hiring.” (Region 4)
- Has worked for HRDC since 1988 as an employment officer. Is currently on a leave of absence in order to work with Destinations Job Link. Has been with Destinations Job Link since August 2000. Is the Employment Coordinator for Destinations Job Link in Cranbrook as well as Kimberley. (Region 5)
- Has an extensive background in hospitality and tourism. Has been in Campbell River for 20 years and has worked through ranks with restaurant industry and worked up to management positions with some of the restaurants. Worked for or with most of the restaurant people in town and has good reputation with other employers. (Region 8)

Staff Characteristics and the Worker-Client Interactions

According to Zeke Hasenfeld, Professor of Social Welfare at UCLA,⁴⁶ the key to understanding the forces that shape a particular program is to understand how the “service technology” gets worked out in the day-to-day encounters between providers and clients. Hasenfeld says that while the interaction is normally guided by a given structure and tools

⁴⁶Refer to Footnote 4.

(forms, procedures), what actually takes place is often a product of what he calls the “practice ideology” — the values, attitudes, and experience of both the worker and the client.

As we learned earlier, in JPP the worker’s assessment of job-readiness can be based upon a range of criteria, not all of which are objective. Generally, in the end the worker makes a value judgment about the client’s level of job-readiness — his or her personal assessment of the candidate’s employability.

Clients will also come with a history that colours their judgment about the relative program costs and benefits. They may have their own agenda and this may not include immediate employment. They may have had negative program experiences in the past, or negative work experiences. They may have varying degrees of confidence in their ability to find work and/or to keep working once they do.

The worker-client encounter is crucial to the participant’s future program involvement. What is the message they hear? How are they treated in this interaction? What personal criteria affects decisions regarding whether or not an individual is assessed as suitable for JPP? How informed and experienced are JPP staff? What was the overall message being sent to the client? How was the message being received?

Researchers observed several interactions at each of seven study sites.⁴⁷ In each case, not only the content of the discussion was noted, but also the body language, overall tone of the presentation, and client response. The number of actual observations per site varied according to the number of participants seen on any given day, but generally averaged about five per site.⁴⁸

Overall, JPP staff — Ministry and agency — who meet with clients and provide assessments of job readiness appear to bring with them a high standard of commitment to the well-being of the individuals they serve. Some are more capable than others; some seem more client-centred than others but, on the whole, they treat their clients with respect and they appear to care about their work. If there are complaints, it is usually that the paperwork involved means they are not able to spend enough time with their clients. Some have less training and expertise than others; some feel more connected to the program than others.⁴⁹

THE PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

As described earlier in this report, JPP is a partnership between private business consortiums and a government Ministry. It is the first of its kind and because of this the partnership and this program are being watched with great interest because of the obvious implications for enterprises such as this in the future.

At the time of the formative research, in the summer of 2000, both agencies were concerned about their future viability. They had met their placement targets, but had as yet received little payment for these placements while, at the same time, having spent considerable up-front money for client job-placement support. This lag was attributed to several things, notably to the fact that it was taking participants longer to become

⁴⁷Due to budget constraints, Campbell River was not included as a personal visit. All interviews were conducted by telephone.

⁴⁸Ideally, more observations should be conducted at each site. This study was constrained by time and budget.

⁴⁹Not surprisingly, subcontractors and workers in isolated offices enjoy less sense of connection than others.

independent of benefits than anticipated. Program developers had expected it would take up to two months for independence. Instead, this had turned out to be more like three and a half months, with an additional two months to wait for the first “milestone” payment to be issued. This was particularly true of single parents, whose benefit levels are higher than single employable recipients to begin with, and who qualify for a number of other subsidies. Occasionally a file was slow to close because the FAW was busy, or because a decision had been made to keep the file open — for instance, until employment was considered stable. In addition, very few participants had been referred in the early months, and while numbers were now reaching targets, this meant that early payments were small.

These problems appear to have been resolved. The contract has been revised to allow the agency to be paid for a placement as long as the individual is free of support and shelter payments. In other words, the Guaranteed Available Income for Need (GAIN) file can still be open when a payment is made. Some also now say that having a slow start-up in terms of referral numbers, while somewhat nerve-wracking from a financial point of view, may have been a blessing in disguise as it allowed time to work out early implementation issues.

What is the status of opinions today from those associated with the program in the targeted regions? Informants, at all levels of the organizational hierarchy, were asked to comment on various parts of the private-public relationship. Those at managerial levels were asked to provide an overall assessment of how well the relationship was working, and to explain their assessments. Frontline staff were asked to comment further on how the partnership affected them on a day-to-day basis in terms of mutual trust, support, and cooperation, and in terms of meshing potentially different approaches and systems.

Current Status

Overall, the partnership is seen to be a success. Everyone who spoke of the public-private partnership spoke of it in positive terms, although half of those who offered comment here qualified their response with what they perceived to be remaining issues. Significantly, while, as we will learn later, several staff have not entirely “bought into” the program, no one assessed the partnership as a failure.⁵⁰

Those who thought the partnership was working well provided reasons that fall into three main categories, presented in order of proportional priority.⁵¹

1. The partners share a common goal of getting participants employed.

I think it's fantastic that we are in the community. We are all providing the same service to help somebody that's in a needy situation. That's the contractor's goal as well as our goal. (JP Contact, Whalley, Region 4)

2. The partners have been effective communicators and are able to work out problems.

Good EPOs. Important thing is that they care about their participants. Regular meetings with EPOs and supervisor [staff name]. Open to feedback and to making changes. Ultimate goal is to helping people get work (having a common Ministry and JobWaveBC goal helps).

⁵⁰Of those who thought the partnership worked well (14), eight were line staff; six were senior staff. Altogether, eight were from the Ministry; four from JobWaveBC, and two from Destinations Job Link. There were no senior Destinations Job Link staff who provided an unqualified positive assessment for JPP.

⁵¹Based on the number of participants who named the particular attribute.

3. The partners give each other mutual support and cooperate well.

Thinks Ministry and agencies are all learning at the same time and helping each other along the way. Feels he/she has excellent relationship with local Ministry people and with JobWaveBC. Spoke with the new JobWaveBC coordinator that morning about a placement. Feels they [are] doing the same job. Says this is good communication and does not feel it is a contest. Feels they are both doing best job they can and doesn't feel DJL [Destinations Job Link] is in competition for referrals.

A number of other reasons were mentioned by individuals, including the following:

- The structure is clear and reporting relationships are well laid out.⁵²
- Two workers said they had done this kind of thing before so the program had a sense of familiarity.
- JPP has improved practice because it has provided a “way to monitor” clients.
- The program provides a way of reconnecting job-ready clients with the labour force.
- There is strong leadership.
- Working in JPP has increased understanding of the two service cultures.

The JobWaveBC Regional Coordinator for Region 8 acknowledges “it’s been a big deal for them [the Ministry] to implement this program, because there has been a lot of additional work for the workers to get started.” According to this coordinator, Ministry staff, including frontline workers, have “always been supportive, flexible, and always available.” She added that she feels she has a positive and mutually co-operative relationship with her Destinations Job Link colleagues. She says they “keep in touch,” and that they cross reference participants when appropriate. She feels they have “separate job markets and separate clients,” and singled out her experience with Destinations Job Link in Courtenay and Campbell River as having been one of good communication. “We are able to straighten out any concerns quickly.”

Challenges

Many feel the partnership is working well but feel there are areas of concern. Specifically they spoke of issues around buy-in, communication, service delivery, organizational structure, and regional barriers to program success. The largest group of concerns had to do with insufficient buy-in; there is the sense that not everyone is “on board,” with the program.

Buy-In

While there does appear to be broad support for the program concept, many frontline staff have problems with specific aspects of the partnership. It is significant that those who indicated they had problems with the current partnership and performance-based approach included seven of the eight JPP staff located at the research study sites.

Ironically, the group most “on board” when the program was implemented — FAWs on the Employment and Benefits side of the Ministry — have apparently become increasingly cynical and resistant to JPP. To some degree, this is because of the added workload that has

⁵²Two people commented on this; both are from Region 1.

accompanied program implementation, and there are sometimes differences in the definition of “job-ready,” but primarily, it has to do with the perception that the agencies experience too many “easy wins” — that they are getting paid for placements that the participants get on their own, and that therefore, they do not deserve payment.

I get a sense that sometimes contractors simply say you look employable, and then put them into an independent job search and don't pay too much more attention to them for the 90 days. If they find something, wonderful, and they will take credit for it.

The usual response to this kind of criticism is to point out that the contractors usually provide support while the person is looking for work, but this is not always the case and when workers hear about payments when there has been no client contact, they find this difficult to accept and wonder “what is the savings for the Ministry?” in these cases.

If the agency found employment for the client, they should get paid for it. But if they are just assisting clients with funds for a haircut, and getting their resumé down at another agency, I don't think they should get paid a lot of money for a light touch. I believe that is the majority of the work that they do. They are getting a huge amount of credit for it and I don't believe it's accurate.

Having line buy-in is very important. The Ministry Coordinator for Region 8 pointed out:

You can have a good program and it won't accomplish what it sets out to do because a few key things have been missed. All it would take to make JPP not work in any one community would be a bunch of workers saying, “No, they're barriered. I'm not referring them.”

In fact, at least one senior staff member said she had heard that FAWs were not sending their top clients to JPP because they felt the clients would get jobs on their own.

This very real potential for undermining the program's intent is also illustrated by the Destinations Job Link Coordinator for Region 8. Although he says that roughly 85 per cent of the Ministry people working in local island offices are now on board, he says there are still a couple of offices in the region, “pockets of resistance,” that are not cooperating, and referrals there have dropped to the point where “we've almost stopped taking client orders because we don't have enough to refer.”

The JobWaveBC Liaison Coordinator says she understands the FAW's thinking because at first she felt the same way. “When you come from the field and you see multi-barriered participants and those are the ones you want to help, you think here you are giving service to someone who you think could easily find work.” She says she disagrees with this since she has had an opportunity to see the advantages of being able to draw on a network of small businesses in the way that JobWaveBC can. She feels that while some do find work on their own, they and other job-ready participants find it faster through JPP. She feels that the FAWs need a better understanding of this process.

Many workers even now, have found it difficult to shift their thinking to a “work first” point of view, or to accept the business decisions that influence performance-based contracts. A good example is provided by the JPP Coordinator for Region 5 who offered the following comment when considering the public-private relationship:

It's good, but we need to work on the difference in mindsets. FAWs come from a place where they have a mandate that all citizens of BC are entitled to a certain type of service. I've had several conversations with workers who feel that the

contractors are not accepting enough single parents or two-parent families. It's a difficult thing for a civil servant to understand that [private] organizations need to show profits.

There were two other major areas in which the partnership is perceived as being lacking.

- Several representatives from both the Ministry and agency sides are critical of what they perceive as inadequate client service being given by the other side. Ministry staff say they feel the agencies are not as forthcoming as they should be with financial assistance or pre-placement assistance; agency staff are critical of referral bottlenecks and inconsistencies in service delivery due to lack of training.
- Several Ministry staff question the relevance of the private-public partnership and suggest that, given adequate resources, the same service could be done by Ministry staff.

Again, those in more senior positions point out that the kind of service provided by the agencies could not be readily duplicated by the Ministry. The Liaison Coordinators were particularly adamant about this — they had seen the importance of having industry connections:

And the Ministry will probably never have the money or ability to offer the kinds of programs that these guys can. The government does not have the public mandate to do this.

Other Issues

However, FAWs and TCs are not the only groups where resistance occurs, and not the only source of referral fluctuations. In the first several months of the program, community service providers were vocally opposed to the notion of JPP. Although this has apparently abated, many providers continue to feel that their jobs are threatened by a “creaming” of their best customers. Although several of those same service providers are now working as subcontractors for JobWaveBC and, according to informants, several have come to support what JPP is attempting to achieve, there remain pockets of resistance. This can, at times, be problematic for JPP personnel who may have responsibilities that include contact with community providers.

For instance, Kelowna is located in an area populated by a high volume of service providers. Without strong encouragement and clear directions, participants may be confused about where the JPP agencies fit in the myriad of program choices. Kelowna has recently been experiencing a sharp drop in referrals which, according to the Destinations Job Link Coordinator for this region, relates directly to the intermediary effect of a third agency being given the task of pre-screening all potential JPP participants. Because this agency also provides job-search assistance and job placement services, many potential JPP candidates stop there, and do not follow through with their agency referral, or may never get referred.⁵³

The drop in referrals is acknowledged by the Ministry JPP Coordinator, who attaches importance to solving this issue, but who suggests the problem may be one of the agency applying overly stringent eligibility criteria. He also acknowledges, however, that the region has a history of strong community-provider resistance to JPP, which was exacerbated

⁵³Reviewers (from MHR) of an earlier draft commented that work is being done to address this issue.

initially because in their enthusiasm the Ministry, following a pre-intake model, was referring anyone who had any kind of work experience or skills. Many of these same clients had formed the “core” of the providers’ services.

All of a sudden all these people dried up. The same participants who had been their success stories were suddenly gone. What that meant is that they had to scramble — number 1, to adjust their services, and number 2 is, all of the sudden, people they were geared to receive were no longer coming through the door.

He explained that after the first 90 days, when many of these individuals could not be placed, the providers began to see them returning:

Similar to putting a dam in the river, everything down the river is dying of drought. The dam fills up. You start releasing some of the downflow. That situation corrects itself to a degree. The difference is that we have taken out those who are able to work immediately. And what’s going downstream is a slightly different kettle of fish that the contractors have to deal with. We have gotten better with our criteria. We got beyond the 90 days, and there is a flow to our contractors. But nevertheless, I suspect we are still seeing [a] ripple effect.

According to some, this has produced a situation in several regions where the providers are “fighting over the clients.” It becomes a governance issue when the Ministry must deal with the various providers in other contractual arrangements.

Opportunities

But while there have been issues associated with this partnership, there has reportedly also been much progress made in solving these issues. Several proactive measures have been taken to facilitate the relationship, including those described in the following sections.

Efforts to Co-operate

Three of the four regions we studied had experienced special regional challenges that potentially threatened the business viability for the agencies, especially for Destinations Job Link.

Destinations Job Link had, and continues to have, concerns about the numbers of referrals it receives from the Ministry. In several districts we visited, offices had examined their intake population and associated JPP referrals to ensure that those who could be referred, were being referred. However, all agreed that the low referral numbers for Destinations Job Link were an issue and that special measures may need to be taken. In Region 4 this resulted in allowing a Destinations Job Link staff person to sit in the Ministry’s Langley office and screen all JPP applicants who meet BC Benefits eligibility criteria and are coded “w.” It is this Destinations Job Link person who decides whether the person is referred to Destinations Job Link or to JobWaveBC.

Region 4 was probably the most enthusiastic about JPP of all the regions when we started — very sensitive to the needs of Destinations Job Link, and Destinations has had a tough time. There is no doubt that the majority of people want JobWaveBC jobs; not as interested in hospitality. Region 4 is very sensitive to that and has put a lot of things in place to enhance Destinations referrals. (JobWaveBC Coordinator, regions 1 and 4)

In preliminary discussions, the partners in Region 4 decided to be “flexible and open-minded.” If things were not working, they would work together to fix things. (Destinations Job Link Regional Manager)

Although JobWaveBC continues to watch this situation carefully, they do not appear to have experienced any drop in referral numbers. According to the JPP coordinator for the region, “JobWaveBC still gets two times the referrals of Destinations Job Link.”

Similarly, a demonstrated willingness to work together to improve referral numbers reduced frustration for the Destinations Job Link Coordinator for Region 8, and improved overall partner relationships. According to this coordinator, he was very frustrated with the situation of low referral numbers in the region and expressed this concern to the MHR regional managers. He “sat down with them and worked with them.” He now feels that their relationship has grown and says he now “likes the way they work,” although he’d still like to have higher referral numbers in the region. From the Ministry side, the regional JPP coordinator says it helped to have the brokers share their reasons for rejecting referrals in order to ensure more “appropriate” referrals — information she feels is critical not only for the agencies, but also for the client. She also feels the public-private relationship works better “since broker staff started coming in and talking with the teams.”

Getting sufficient referrals has also been a problem for Destinations Job Link in Region 5 and, there too, the partners have worked to increase referral numbers. As the Region 5 Destinations Job Link Coordinator says:

Balancing the economics of it has been a challenge. It’s a pilot for us too so do I hire admin staff to handle what I think might come through door? I had staff in place by mid-January and then we waited for referrals. In the beginning it was much slower than [staff member] and I thought would happen. We got things rolling eventually, but there was much concern for me, as a private sector manager, that I was way overstaffed. Provincially that can be the death of an organization, so I quickly decided through more meetings and trying [to] revamp things and getting things up and running. It took a lot of effort, time, and energy, and all three parties worked hard. There were lots of meetings and we moved quickly to solutions.

Solutions in this case included making special efforts to raise awareness of Destinations Job Link with Ministry staff through visits to EBCs in the region. According to one coordinator, when this occurred, Destinations Job Link staff received “lots of questions from FAWs about who we are and how we do things.” She says giving staff feedback and showing them “testimonials” from satisfied participants promoted program buy-in: “They like to know they’ve been part of that process. They feel part of the partnership. I do too.”

Region 5 also provides evidence of a different kind of partner co-operation in the decision by the agencies to divide the Kootenays between them, with JobWaveBC responsible for the West Kootenays, and Destinations Job Link, the East. In this case, there appears to be a high level of co-operation between the two agency regional coordinators, with each accepting and making referrals to the other agency when appropriate. This kind of co-operation is not always evident, but seems more so in smaller communities. For instance, we heard of similar positive inter-agency communication in Campbell River. According to a Region 5 JPP coordinator, this is “a function of reality.” He says “When the community is small enough, you trip over each other. You don’t want to be working against both of your interests.”

Other, more structured efforts to promote co-operation and information sharing include regularly-held meetings involving regional coordinators, and an initiative currently underway of special regional forums which bring together a cross-section of all partners at all levels, and regional and headquarters staff. At a very senior level, there are regular meetings of the program management committee, involving all three partners. This, in itself, is a departure from previous relationships with the private sector that did not “sit at the table” and take part in this kind of high-level decision making.

Creative Problem Solving

Although the above examples also fit under this category, the following examples illustrate other efforts taken to think “outside the box” in order to streamline procedures.

- Organizational restructuring to create staff dedicated to JPP. In most cases, they are called “JP contact” staff, although in Region 1, they are referred to as Employment Program Officers (EPOs). Asked about the importance of her role, one JP contact explained it this way:

. . . because this way you have one person who communicates with the contractor all the time. You're not getting different people with different work styles. Everyone at Destinations Job Link and JobWaveBC knows how I work. We really help each other out and work together. It works out really well.

- Revising procedures to improve tracking and monitoring in order to identify the “no-shows” and those considered “missing in action.” In several cases, this has been pursued proactively by JP contacts, especially when these monitoring activities have been supported by agency feedback on these participants.⁵⁴
- Revising contract provisions to redefine “off IA,” so that contractors could be paid in certain cases, even if the GAIN file was still open after job placement.

Comments from the Liaison Coordinator perhaps sum up the mixture of concern and optimism reflected above. As a Liaison Coordinator, this individual is ideally positioned to understand the issues affecting both public and private partners; both kinds of partners have learned a lot about how each other works, and this knowledge has been gained at all levels. Still, the Coordinator says, there is frustration. For instance, contractors become frustrated that the Ministry takes what they perceive to be a long time to implement or react to things; the Ministry becomes frustrated because the contractor seems always to be demanding certain things that they want “today” or “yesterday” instead of “next week.” At the operational committee level, however, or in the manner in which regional agency people and Ministry staff interact, things have generally worked well — “It’s one of the better examples of a private-public partnership working.”

And finally, a comment from the JPP Coordinator, who says being part of a public-private partnership has been a positive learning experience for her:

*I have developed a better knowledge of how the private sector works
[Researcher: What do you know now that you did not know before?] I believe
there is a genuine intent to help people. I wasn't exposed before to the same level*

⁵⁴It should be said that Destinations Job Link appears more interested in supporting this activity than does JobWaveBC. This may not be considered surprising, because JobWaveBC has less concerns about maintaining numbers.

communication; I hadn't worked so closely with contractor on a day-to-day basis. Now I think we're all in the business of trying to link people to the job market so they can become self-sufficient.

Buy-In

During the summer of 2000 buy-in was considered to be one of the biggest issues faced by the program. At the time, buy-in issues were related to a number of things: criticism of the way in which the JPP contract was awarded; the fact that the program was implemented top-down, and rapidly, providing little opportunity for line input or line readiness. Also, JPP followed on the heels of a major Ministry restructuring in which former MHR Employment and Benefits staff were combined with staff on the training side from the former MAETT. The staff came with their own world view of what constituted good client care — views that were supported by many of the FAWs already working within MHR. Many of the new training consultants were loyal to established community-service providers, whose primary function was to provide employment training. This did not necessarily blend with the JPP intended message of “work first.”

However, much of the early resistance has mitigated over time, especially as many of the TCs and community providers have acknowledged program successes and have seen that their own areas are not necessarily threatened by the existence of JPP.

Also, there is little question that buy-in exists at more senior levels of JPP management. For instance, virtually all positive comments in this section came from regional and headquarters management.⁵⁵ According to one senior management person, one of the reasons the program resonates well with more senior policy and program staff is that it provides a more positive public image. It speaks to the way public employees feel they are perceived by the average citizen:

If you're at a cocktail party, the first thing you don't do is stand up and say “I'm a government employee,” and the second thing you don't say is “I work for welfare.” A public-private partnership seems to take you closer to being part of the real world.

This does not necessarily, though, reflect the sentiments of line staff. In fact, when considering all comments made by informants suggesting support or non-support for the program, it is significant that by far the majority suggested issues around buy-in.⁵⁶ Most of these have been heard already, as most had to do with cynicism about aspects of the public-private relationship. But, roughly half of the buy-in issues had to do with other kinds of issues. Having heard some of the issues around FAWs and workload, and knowing the amount of change experienced by staff, it is not surprising that the largest proportion of comments referred to issues around workload.

A somewhat ironic twist on this issue was offered by a JP contact who explained that in her office her job is appreciated because other workers do not have to do it. She says the lack of buy-in is evident in the response to the JPP-related e-mails she sends out. People tell her that when they see a JPP e-mail, they hit delete without even reading it. Now she puts

⁵⁵There was one positive comment from an employment counsellor, but it was simply a statement that she perceives support to exist for the program from clients and from the Ministry — it was not a personal endorsement.

⁵⁶The count was 26 informants relating examples where buy-in was missing, versus nine informants relating examples of buy-in.

different titles in the Subject box, like “Money” or “Chocolates.” She said that one time she put a joke at the bottom of her e-mail, and when she asked in a meeting why no one had responded to this joke, she was asked, “What joke?” She says other workers freely tell her that when they see “JPP,” they ignore those e-mails. She says this is hard, but understands that it is not because they do not want to help, but because they are too busy.

FAWs had other issues around buy-in as well, particularly in cases where FAWs do not see positive results for their efforts. We heard this in Nelson, where both the JP contact and the referring FAW felt discouraged because of the lack of placements in the area. We also heard this in Cranbrook, where the Ministry follows a pre-intake model and where attendance at the Destinations Job Link office is mandatory. There, the worker felt the message she was bringing was unwelcome and that, overall, her work was not meaningful.⁵⁷

When I took this job, I was looking for the bright light to make a difference in people’s lives. The biggest challenge is struggling with that desire and reality on the other side, which is that I’m not finding that I make the difference and impact that I had wanted to make. It’s sometimes more about numbers and paper than it is about people. The lack of welcoming reception I get from the client — most of them do see me as an extension of the Ministry and they see this [program participation] as a compliance issue. Most of them are not on board.
(Destinations Job Link Employment Coordinator)

Vancouver also follows the pre-intake model, but for the very reason outlined above, has chosen to make their sites voluntary if at all possible. Those who do self-select to apply to an agency are generally motivated to do so.

Other issues around buy-in cover a range of themes, with none receiving more than three references. They include a questioning of agency supports from Ministry staff, problems with the pre-intake model or with the program philosophy of work first, problems of working in isolation, and frustration with the program’s rapid ramp-up and top-down delivery.

COMMUNICATION

The literature suggests that communication is a key element in developing a successful partnership. Getting the message out about the program, its rationale and objectives, and its successes; making sure information about program policies and procedures is distributed to all relevant staff in a timely fashion; and ensuring that communication takes place between partners to facilitate mutual understanding and support are major challenges for any program, but more so for a program of this scope and complexity. This was already considered a primary implementation challenge during the formative research in the summer of 2000 and, although there has been much progress made in many areas, improving communication channels and information dissemination, and raising program awareness overall, continue to be program priorities. Many of the issues already mentioned concerning program buy-in and partner relationships are seen to relate closely to the need for increased and/or improved efforts in this area.

Implementing JPP required shifting to a work-first focus, and it meant shifting program activities, and the ordering of many of those activities. Educating Ministry staff about this

⁵⁷A reviewer of the draft report thought the following statement was contradicted by the numerous success stories or testimonials from participants.

new philosophy is important. The perception from various individuals is that many Ministry field staff (FAWs) are still uninformed about JPP; some treat JPP as if it was another Ministry program “I don’t see this [JPP] as being different from working [with] any other contractor.”

There is consensus that communication at the senior management levels of the three partners is good. These organizations have different cultures, but at this level, all recognize the fact of interdependence, and work co-operatively. Issues that emerge are discussed and resolved collectively. This same, easy communication exists between individual workers, Ministry to agency, and agency to agency at the field level, but it is much less systematic. This may largely be a product of the ways in which information flows. While senior level management meet regularly and share concerns, line workers depend very much upon information disseminated from their particular organizational headquarters, which is then disseminated to the most relevant regional management, which is then disseminated to the frontline workers. Frontline workers in the Ministry can learn about Ministry procedures; frontline workers in the agencies learn about how their agency, or contractor wants things done. Again, except at an individual level, cross-organizational sharing does not occur. Despite this, informants at all levels generally felt there was good communication between themselves and their partner colleagues. Occasionally there were complaints about slow response, but in these cases, heavy workloads were acknowledged to be the cause.

Informants were asked to comment on some specific communication priorities — information dissemination, access and response for questions and/or concerns — as well as any overall concerns they might have. In addition, many informants volunteered areas of concern that belong in this category and they are discussed below.

Challenges and Opportunities

Overall, informants seemed satisfied with the level of access and response they had when it came to questions or concerns about the program. For JP contacts, access and response were positively affected by having a direct line to the regional coordinator, but even in the absence of this access, they felt that their concerns were dealt with in a timely and responsive fashion.

There were, however, many issues having to do with information dissemination — especially the need for clarity around certain guidelines. This concern occupied a tier of proportional importance far above that associated with other issues mentioned, including the need for greater program awareness, the need for greater understanding of partner roles and responsibilities, and the need for feedback.

Dissemination of, and Clarity Around, Program Guidelines

This concern referred primarily to program policies and procedures. Currently, this kind of information can be initiated from headquarters but is distributed in the region by the REO, and usually by e-mail. However, one JP contact person said she has begun to receive some direct e-mails from Victoria, and appreciates this because it makes her feel a greater connection to the larger organization. She said, “It’s nice to get the recognition that we’re doing a great job and it’s coming from another source.”

There is also information in the form of general program updates, as well as reports citing program statistics and successes. The reports provide details on placement progress, as well

as best practices and client testimonials. They are distributed at regional level and are usually posted on the JPP Intranet system.

Liaison staff and other agency personnel have also made a concerted effort to visit offices in the regions to support expanded awareness of the program, and of procedures.

Despite all these efforts, there remains confusion about how to interpret program guidelines. For instance, there is confusion among both Ministry and agency staff, and at both the line and regional management level, about the 19 months of agency support participants can expect. While some informants had received the procedure update circulated at the time of this research data collection phase, many had not, and were unclear about whether this support period referred to 19 months of continuous agency support from the time of acceptance, or 19 months of independence.⁵⁸ As this seems a key element of the program, it serves as a good example of uneven program awareness.

There is communication, but many thought it was not effective, not frequent enough, and not available to all levels. Directives are sent and JPP information is available on the Intranet, but staff do not necessarily find the time to read it, and many simply do not see it as a priority. In addition, having the information available by Intranet or through e-mail also depends on staff feeling comfortable with this channel of information. Several offices were not technologically equipped for electronic messaging until well into the program. The Intranet is not available to agency staff, who must depend on directives through their organizations, but who do not then necessarily understand what happens at the Ministry end.

Thus, there is some evidence of an information gap among Ministry field staff, and this has led to some confusion in roles and priorities. There is also confusion simply because the JPP information is disseminated in the context of other Ministry information.

There is a lot of confusion about information disseminated to other Ministry staff. Those who are directly connected to the program are not confused, but others are, and there are lot of fingers in the pie — PROs, cost saving PROs, TCs, other workers — everyone's very confused. (EPO, Region 1)

This JP contact (in this case an EPO) cites the example of what to do with files transferred to other offices, or regions, because the JP file is not automatically transferred. Other workers provided other areas of confusion for which they wanted clarification. For instance, when discussing the assessment of a client's job-readiness and suitability for the program, one worker described a couple of areas in which she has some difficulty. She feels the boundaries for her accepting or rejecting a client are a little unclear. She gave an example of a client who was previously self-employed. She had some concerns about the client's desire and commitment to finding full-time employment, but was uncertain if this was reason enough not to take him into the program.

I haven't had a lot of information in terms of precisely what I'm allowed to do and what I'm absolutely not allowed to do . . . I need more guidelines. It doesn't happen very often but there are situations where you want to know what to put down [on the form following a rejection] that's politically correct where I'm not going to get myself into trouble. Maybe just a little more review for all of us. For example, with single moms who don't have daycare how are they supposed to

⁵⁸As mentioned earlier, it is 19 months of independence from income assistance, to a maximum of 30 months.

search for work? We were told that this is not an excuse [to justify rejection into the program].

A few workers expressed confusion about the 90-day period.

That is a problem — when does the 90 days start? I would like some clarification on that. I have been going on the JP Intranet to see what date they opened it on their records. If it was opened later than I referred and its past the 90 days, then I feel that I have the authority to go in and close that JP file and refer them to something else. That has been a problem because it isn't really clear when the 90 days starts. Is it the day we fax it, is it when she meets with the client, after she meets the client?

Other workers wondered what to do with the mutuals, how to assess someone with a particular disability code, and what to tell people who already have part-time jobs. One FAW told us that she finds it difficult if she sees a couple that are both required to be looking for work but one is already working part time.

You send them to JPP, and then some are open to switching jobs because they want a better job than what [they] have. But the people who are happy where they are currently working don't understand why they would want to go there (JPP).

She says the feedback she gets from the client is that JobWaveBC does not understand this either.

Communication is also hampered by the complex public-private organizational structure, which creates additional access barriers. For example, Ministry staff must work through agency headquarters to make arrangements with subcontractors. Being located in isolated offices, away from the organizational structure, can also cause problems in terms of timely and accurate information dissemination. The Nelson JobWaveBC subcontractor expressed feeling left “out of the loop” when it came to program information. This person spoke of hearing about a local program issue, usually a client issue, second-hand from his or her JobWaveBC regional coordinator, who heard it from the local Ministry person. Being “left out of the loop” was also experienced by another employment counsellor located in a more isolated community:

Being part of a satellite office means you're slow getting up to speed with technology and you're the last to know about things. Suddenly I would be informed: “Oh we were supposed to start doing that last week. Oh. Well. Nobody told me.” (Campbell River)

This same employment counsellor added, however, that things had improved since she had e-mail and her agency was sending her some administrative assistance to help with her workload.

The Need for Feedback

Although staff members were concerned that their employers were aware of their performance, and their workloads, the most often expressed comment in this category was the desire by Ministry staff to know what happens to their clients once they are referred to the program.

For instance, an FAW working in Nelson said he would “appreciate knowing more about what happens at the agency intake, and how employers are identified and selected for the program.” He says this is the “other side that he doesn’t see.”

I don’t get any feedback, including acceptance rates, etc. I just see the odd thing come across the system, like average wage. Occasionally I see activity reports. [Interviewer: Are these sent from Victoria?] I assume that’s where they come from. But I don’t hear anything locally.

Agency staff would also like to know more about participants’ backgrounds, and would like to hear whether their own recommendations for future programming for rejected clients is accorded merit and whether there is follow-through.

Greater Understanding of Partner Roles and Responsibilities

Several field people from both the Ministry and agencies saw the need for two-way education. It was suggested that a better understanding of what happens “on the other side,” might go a long way towards reducing potential grievances and misunderstandings, including unhelpful stereotypes. This includes breaking down stereotypes, such as the perception that all business people are “suits” and do not care about clients, as well as the stereotypes that agency staff who do not have previous experience with IA recipients may have had about those individuals. As one person told us:

I’ve heard JobWaveBC staff exclaim: “Oh my God, look at what we have applying! We have dental technicians, and skilled craftsmen. Why are they here?” Then they learn the reality of the labour market and the reality of being unemployed when the person has not had to look for work for 30 years. And new immigrants who arrive with professional credentials and have to take entry-level positions.

Referring officers say they need to understand what happens at the agency so they can understand their own referral decisions and what are and are not acceptable criteria. There is also the desire to know what happens to your client when you “push them out the door.” Have you sent them in the direction that is best for them? Would they have been better served being sent through a different door? They need to know what happens during the 90 days so they can feel they did not send participants “into a black hole.”

More than one senior staff member suggested that this is a feature of a client-centred approach and that they may need to “let go” of the participant and accept positive placement figures as indicative of correct choices. However, this desire for client feedback appears to be strong — at least it certainly was expressed by the majority of line people included in this study — and other senior people acknowledge that having this information may be a necessary part of ensuring staff buy-in.

This two-way education may reduce the number of misunderstandings and create opportunities for discussing common concerns. And, as a JobWaveBC liaison coordinator pointed out when arrangements were made for some JobWaveBC staff to job-shadow some FAWs, the JobWaveBC staff became much more understanding about FAW response times when they could see the workload that the FAWs carried. In a program like JPP, which relies upon effective interaction at the field level, understanding each other seems mandatory.

Because I’ve never worked for the Ministry, I’ve had to figure out how some of their systems work. The FAWs help when you ask them. But clients ask us a lot of

questions that we don't know because we're not Ministry So as far as being involved with the Ministry, it's been a real eye-opener. I've learned a lot but I wish I knew more about how they do things.

Additionally, as one informant offered, agencies learn that FAWs are not holding on to people so they can keep their jobs but rather out of concern that the client has all the supports they are entitled to under the legislation.

Two-way understanding includes being aware of contract rights and responsibilities. One JPP regional coordinator says she thinks the program did a good job about raising awareness at first, but feels current misunderstandings might have been foreshortened if the terms of the contract had been discussed more candidly. For instance, she says the “easy wins” criticism about participants who get jobs on their own might be reduced if workers realized how much money the partners invest in the clients. She suggested that Ministry people might need to know this fact.

At least two staff, including a JP contact person, also made reference to seeing no difference between the current arrangement and working with any other agency contracted by the government. This was intended to be a positive statement, but it suggests that at least some Ministry staff may not appreciate the relationship as one of being equal partners.

Other Communication Issues

Two other communication issues were mentioned. The first has to do with clarifying areas where information can and cannot be shared between Ministry and agency. Agency staff say that because clients do not recognize the agency as being connected to the welfare ministry, they are more inclined to disclose reasons for not looking for a job that often have to do with substance abuse, or with under-the-table earnings. The agency staff who commented on this tended not to communicate this to Ministry staff, but this practice was not consistent. There are also information-sharing issues, and it has been suggested that ethically there may need to be a clause inserted in the participant agreement that informs participants that some administrative information may be shared between the Ministry and the agencies.

The other communication issue is one of great importance for Destinations Job Link. The agency worries that information about their sector and the job opportunities offered by tourism and hospitality are not being communicated adequately in the JPP “message” given to applicants both at the EIP and during eligibility intake sessions. As we heard from many workers, there is a definite tendency to stereotype these jobs as entry-level, minimum wage, and dead-end. During JPP presentations, researchers observed that the two sectors were often introduced in terms of Destinations Job Link representing “tourism and hospitality,” and JobWaveBC as “everything else.” Destinations Job Link has made efforts to ensure that more broadly-based information describing the sectors is distributed to those who do deliver this message, and have even gone as far as having a Destinations Job Link employment counsellor screening all JPP referrals right in the Ministry office, but the agency continues to be plagued by low referral numbers, and there continues to be a stereotyping of Destinations Job Link jobs.

Summing Up

Since the time of the formative process research, headquarters and regional agency and liaison staff have made many efforts to improve communication including, of course, the

establishment of a computerized tracking system to monitor program participation, although all acknowledge the system is in need of refinement. There are regular meetings of senior staff at the headquarters level, and regular meetings of the regional coordinators, in addition to other efforts.

We've done open houses; met with [staff name] several times; discussed ongoing problems. There have been concerted efforts by both teams — where there is a problem, we have an open door. (Coordinator, Destinations Job Link. Region 1)

Several informants suggested that progress had definitely been made in the area of communication and that the partners had achieved a greater understanding. However, field research indicates that more effort is needed to ensure that information is disseminated to, and received and understood by, line staff. Although FAWs were more likely to be uninformed about important program parameters than were JPP staff, even here there were areas of uncertainty.

Nevertheless, informants seemed satisfied with their access, both upward and laterally, and while there are still some areas where things are not perfect, they are generally satisfied with the way problems have been, and are being, resolved.

E. The Program Overall: Present and Future

In the preceding pages, we have learned not only about how the program works, but also about the many challenges that have been faced since January 2000. In many cases, we learned of ways in which solutions to problems had been devised and about approaches that facilitated progress, as well as about areas that continue to pose problems. In these cases, and with a view to learning about best practices, informants were asked to think about the challenges — the obstacles and barriers to program success.

In this last section, informants respond to a number of questions designed to gauge their overall support for the program, and identify areas that are working well now, as well as those that need improvement. What lessons have been learned since the program was first implemented in January 2000? How likely do informants feel are the program's chances for success? What barriers remain?

The section is divided into two parts. The first deals with assessments of the program as it is today, and begins with a discussion of whether this has been an easy or difficult program to implement. The second part focuses on JPP in the future, and addresses some important questions of feasibility, as well as informants' assessments of the program's likelihood of success.

DIFFICULT OR EASY?

Given the implementation challenges covered in the previous pages — which included establishing a system for tracking and monitoring the “no-show” and “missing in action” participants, finding ways to improve referral numbers, setting up systems across a range of regions and systems, improving communication channels, and dealing with issues of workload and buy-in — one might expect that informants found this a difficult program to implement. To the contrary, however; twice as many informants thought it was easy, than thought it difficult. Roughly the same amount as those who thought it was difficult thought it was somewhere in-between.⁵⁹

Many of those who thought it was easy had worked with Workplace Based Training (WBT) before and did not find implementing this program to be much different. If anything, it was easier because there was less paperwork. Others spoke of how it was easy to implement this program because it was a “positive” program to present to clients. Other comments included reference to the ease of using subcontractors (JobWaveBC) already located in the community, and the fact that there were lots of jobs around. One person said she thought it was easy because she “believed in it.” Another thought that the tasks were not onerous. A senior JobWaveBC manager thought it was a “joy,” and felt they had been able to meet all of the challenges presented. And finally, one JPP coordinator, felt the level of support the program experienced from headquarters made it easy for her: “I have never seen as much attention given to a program in such a short time.”

⁵⁹Of those who responded to this question, 17 found it easy, eight found it difficult, and seven thought it was somewhere in-between.

Those who thought it was difficult cited a range of reasons, including workload issues, communication issues, having to work through the pockets of resistance, and having to live through restructuring and other changes. Having to adjust quickly to the rapid ramp-up — with no procedures in place — was another problem. Interestingly, both liaison coordinators felt that implementing this program was difficult and both for the same basic reason, that the scope of this “pilot program” — mounted province-wide, and for 19 months, means that not only are they just beginning to see new problems involving job-leaving issues, but that the size of the program means it is difficult to make incremental adaptations.

And finally, those who placed implementation somewhere in-between “easy” and “difficult” said things like it was “getting easier” or they felt that the program was “over the hump” or “different.” Those in Region 8 would likely have been more positive but qualified their answers by acknowledging there was still a referral issue in that region.

WHAT WORKS BEST?

When asked what they felt works best about the program now, informants provided the following areas of success.

By far the largest group of comments, roughly half,⁶⁰ focused on the program’s capacity to help clients achieve independence through work. Much enthusiasm was expressed by informants and this outpouring, more than anything, speaks to the partners’ common goal of helping welfare applicants and recipients move toward independence from the welfare system:

It provides a quick recovery for people who are eligible for, but not on, the system. It helps them get back to work immediately. I’ve interviewed people who’ve been on the system for a long time and they have no self-esteem. (Destinations Job Link Regional Manager)

It sends the message that we’re concerned about them seeking employment. Prior to JPP, it was the FAW’s responsibility for doing this. People could get lost very easily and flounder in a very vulnerable time in their lives. I think JPP is something that can help them maintain their motivation to stay out there. (Region 5, Jobs Partnership (JP) Contact)

One third of comments referred to aspects of service delivery — primarily they felt that they themselves, their organization, or the program provided good service for clients.

What seems to work best, and when I see real buy-in from clients, is when they are presented with the actual job list. We’ve never been able to do that in a program before, and I’ve been in this business for almost nine years. (Region 5, JobWaveBC)

Roughly the same proportion thought some aspect of governance worked well; the partners maintained a good relationship; communication was effective, including the sharing of best practices; the organizational structure supported flexible solutions; and, working on JPP increased job satisfaction.

Three line staff thought the tracking and monitoring system worked well.

⁶⁰There were a total of 45 comments for this question.

NEEDS WORK

Throughout the interviews, informants often mentioned some aspect of the program that might be improved, and those comments have been mentioned in the categories discussed in the previous pages. Toward the end of the interview, however, informants were asked specifically to list the program elements, if any, that they thought still needed work. This section summarizes those responses.

Informants tended to point to some aspect of service delivery: primarily to the need to improve information systems and procedures, but also to the need to begin to focus more on placement and post-placement support. A substantial proportion, however, suggested the need to increase communication efforts — a governance issue. In addition, several informants suggested a range of other areas they felt needed attention. Although informants in each response category were equally likely to be line or management, some topics were more the concern of one partner than another.⁶¹

Service Delivery

Improve Information Systems

By far the largest proportion of responses pointed to the need to improve tracking and monitoring systems. Interestingly, the largest proportion of comments in this area came from JobWaveBC informants. Several of them spoke of the need for a better data-sharing system, with references to having a system where the agencies and Ministry could share data. It also appears that the sharing of referral lists is not common to all communities and one JobWaveBC worker said that, if the Ministry were not monitoring the no-shows, she would want this list.

Other comments from both JobWaveBC and Ministry informants tended to emphasize the need for improvements in tracking and monitoring, whether by internal agency databases or the Ministry's JP System. As discussed earlier, the system is seen as an improvement on the former, more cumbersome tracking methods, but there are still inaccuracies and some would like access to a broader range of information.

Participant Flows

Although one person spoke of the need to improve referral flows, this appears to be more a regional concern.⁶² Keeping in mind that refining the referral system was the focus of Year 1 of the project, it is not surprising that comments here focused on placement and post-placement concerns.

Those who identified the number of placements as an issue came from Nelson, where placement numbers are indeed low. One informant mentioned the need to expand the list of employers who were “willing to take on IA clients as employees,” as well as a desire to expand the number of placements overall. In addition, one coordinator thought that more could be done in terms of matching participants to jobs:

⁶¹There were a total of 45 mentions for this question, with some informants providing more than one mention. Calculations of proportional importance are based on total mentions, although attention was paid to the number of informants responding in any given category.

⁶²The comment came from Region 5.

I think it's an area we've just begun to recognize we could be doing more work in. It's a pilot so we're starting to think outside some of our boxes and go, "Hey, we have 15 welders in Campbell River and there are welding positions in Trail."

She cautioned, however, that the agencies would need to be careful to introduce the notion of employment mobility in a way that was not coercive.

Post-placement concerns were most expressed by JobWaveBC staff and management, who spoke of a need for increased support-to-support job retention, and for improved monitoring to identify job-leavers. The JobWaveBC Operations Manager sees this as a priority area for Year 2: "We want to put a process in place so clients are clear about what to do if they lose their job. We want to make sure they come back to JobWaveBC."

She admits that in Year 1 of the program, this process was not identified as clearly as it could have been. She suggests participants also may not be as attentive to information about what to do in cases of job loss because when they first get jobs, they are confident the job will last. With this in mind, she says JobWaveBC needs be clearer in articulating this plan.

This JobWaveBC manager and others have also spoken of the need to improve the payment system so as to recognize those who are placed but who experience welfare exit delays. Better tracking will address this to some degree, and she says the partners need to be more proactive here too. From the JobWaveBC side, she suggests that if someone remains a recipient although working, there may be ways the agencies can work with employers to facilitate exit.

Governance

Less importance was attached to program governance than to the more pragmatic issues of service delivery and information systems. Nevertheless, the need for more work around communication, both in terms of disseminating program information, and between partners, was given strong proportional importance.⁶³

Echoing earlier concerns, several informants spoke of the need for more understanding of the roles played by other partners, and what happens in the other partner's arena. One JPP coordinator also spoke of the need for better communication within the Ministry itself:

There needs to be more communication with staff. There also needs to be more of a cultural shift. We need to talk more about the benefits [of the program]. I think maybe 25 per cent of staff sees JPP as a new way of doing business, 75 per cent sees JPP as just another program. Once we start to increase that ratio we actually will see more success.

Interestingly, while much previous discussion in this report has focused on communication between partners and/or communication between the regions and headquarters, responses to the question of "What still needs work?" also included the need for clients and participants to be better informed about potential program benefits:

Educating the participant on what the program can do for them. I think that's slowly getting out there. I think in time it will be a program that people will want to access. When I explain the program to participants it's definitely 100 per cent

⁶³Equal to the proportion (8 out of 41 who responded in this category) citing a need to improve tracking and monitoring systems.

positive. [I tell them] if you work at it and have the right attitude, you're going to get a job.

“FINE-TUNING” THE PROGRAM

Informants generally felt that while there had been many changes as the program evolved, all the major changes had occurred and the program was now entering a phase of “fine tuning.” Many informants offered suggestions regarding ways in which the program could be improved in the future and these recommendations are included here under the headings of “Recommended Changes in Governance” and “Recommended Changes in Service Delivery.” Interestingly, not too many informants suggested changes to the service delivery system, suggesting governance as the fine-tuning priority.

Recommended Changes in Governance

Comments in this section fall primarily into the following categories: communication and changes to the program model. Other comments focused on the need for more staff resources and the issue of increased standardization.

Not surprisingly given previous references in this report, the largest proportion of comments focused on recommendations for increased efforts to improve communication.⁶⁴ Elements of governance identified as needing improvement included communication, as mentioned, but also proposed changes to the partnership contract, to the organizational structure, and to the regional structure.

Two areas of communication were mentioned most frequently: the need for partners to “market” the program more effectively, and the need for increased two-way communication between Ministry and agencies.

Informants recommended the following areas of action:

- While considerable efforts have already been made to disseminate the program’s success stories, it would appear that more efforts need to be made by all partners to ensure that program benefits are known to all relevant stakeholder groups. They include Ministry referring staff, but also the provider community, training consultants, and the general public, including recipients and new welfare applicants. It is recommended that this information be passed on in person, and not just be made available on the government Intranet.
- It is also recommended that increased attention be paid to the initial information that prospective participants receive about the project. While this is certainly a concern for Destinations Job Link, it is also thought that a more informed applicant will arrive at the agency door, whether at Destinations Job Link or JobWaveBC, with more realistic expectations. Finally, there is a need for the Labour Market Attachment Branch (LMAB) to “sell” itself as well. Frontline staff may not be aware of LMAB’s role within the Ministry (“Even now, most people when they hear LMAB say, ‘Who’s that?’”).

⁶⁴This section records 64 comments in which suggestions for program development were offered. Of these 16, all offered by different informants, had to do with communication.

- There is a need for greater two-way understanding between Ministry and agencies. For instance, FAWs need a better understanding of what happens to their clients once they leave welfare and enter the agency door. Conversely, there may be a need to provide some mechanism by which the agency can provide feedback on rejections.⁶⁵ The Ministry, and prospective participants, need a better understanding of what services the agencies do and do not provide and, especially, the agency's role in job placement. It is recommended that staff from both public and private partners be given an opportunity to spend time observing and learning about the other partner's practices.
- There is a need for more effective and timely ways in which to disseminate program information to Ministry staff and agency staff — particularly subcontractors — and, between Ministry and agencies.
- Both Ministry and agencies need to understand, from the participants themselves, why so many seem reluctant to follow through on their program referral. This information could come from future research with participants, but staff could also take advantage of monitoring opportunities to discuss these issues with staff. This has been done in some areas.

Changes to the Program Model

The problem of delayed exit and/or how to support participants who are not necessarily harder-to-place but harder-to-achieve independence was on the minds of a substantial proportion of the informants. While some included those who were disabled or otherwise less likely to achieve a rapid welfare exit, most comments focused on the issue of what to do about single parents, who are seen as good employees, but in the context of performance-based contracts, not as money-makers. Both agency and Ministry staff expressed the need to support this group of participants but argued that to do so would require revisions to the contractual payment structure. As one of the more senior Ministry staff said:

Maybe we do need to make it more lucrative for our contractors to be in the business of placing people with more than three children. From our perspective it's the first step to getting people off IA. Yes, we may be paying the contractor, but it's a short-term pain for a long-term gain. From the client's perspective, they need that first big step of being employed and then they can probably move on to a better-paying job.

This person, as did many others, also spoke of the need to support welfare to work transitions for those people who are, in fact, harder-to-place. Opinion varied, however, as to whether these people could be included under an expanded version of JPP or whether new programs would need to be developed. When asked what kind of program might support job retention for this group, a more intensive mentoring approach was suggested.⁶⁶

⁶⁵“They're [Ministry] pretty clear with us that we're actually supposed to put a code down when we are sending someone back. We can't really have an opinion. A more detailed explanation would be useful to the Ministry and the client. Also, when the client's 90 days are up, there's usually a very good reason why I won't ask for an extension. The reason why is actually more useful to the Ministry than the reason why I would.”

⁶⁶Senior management people interviewed for the study indicated that there are no quick answers to this question, but they are certainly aware of the issue.

There were also conflicting opinions about the relative merits of the pre- versus post-intake models. The post-intake model is seen to improve the quality of referrals, but the pre-intake model provides agencies with a broader choice of participants for job matching.

Other mentions in this category include finding ways to provide appropriate pre-placement training, and changes to the contract that would allow agencies more dollars for up-front pre-placement expenditures such as “teeth and things like that.”

Other Recommendations for More Effective Governance

Two other areas were singled out for improvement:

- There is a need for more staff resources in order to reduce existing workloads, primarily for FAWs. In particular, it is recommended that there needs to be staff dedicated to JPP, not only to address FAW workloads, but also so that there is someone in each office who is truly knowledgeable about the program.
- Several argued for increased standardization across the regions, but again, their comments had more to do with forms and procedures than imposing fundamental, structural standardization.

Recommended Changes in Service Delivery

There were few recommendations made for service delivery fine-tuning. Most comments had to do with the need to refine information systems.

Currently, agency staff do not have access to the Ministry JPP information system and each agency has different systems and capacities, so comments had largely to do with increasing the capacity for data sharing. However, other comments referred to the need to be able to track the “no-shows” more effectively,⁶⁷ and the desire, expressed by agency staff, for a system that would facilitate job matching.

My hope would be that very soon I can be sitting with a client and he would say I want a job for a licensed mechanic and I can go anywhere, and I could just go in and type “mechanic,” and see what jobs show up.⁶⁸

Several informants suggested ways of improving service delivery, including more pre-placement support and, similarly, a couple of informants stressed the need to improve post-placement support, in particular, job retention.

A few informants recommended that there needs to be more attention paid to improving referral flows. One interesting suggestion had to do with creating a JPP venue that would improve client accessibility — a place where individuals could avoid the “stigma” of welfare, and that might provide a “one-stop-shopping” approach. Another informant suggested that referral flows might improve if the approach taken in Region 9, in which the Early Intervention Program (EIP) sessions are handled by Ministry staff rather than by outside contractors, were adopted elsewhere.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Including the desire expressed by more than one agency staff to gain access to the Ministry’s list of referrals.

⁶⁸This type of job search is now available for JobWaveBC.

⁶⁹However, it must be realized that this model requires available staff. In addition, one reviewer of the draft report suggests that JPP is not a cookie cutter approach; what works in one region will not necessarily work in another.

Finally, a couple of informants recommended improvements in terms of forms and procedures; notably the need for tools like flow charts to help non-dedicated staff make referrals, and for a procedures manual.⁷⁰

Lessons Learned — Best Practices

Several informants thought JPP represented one of their greatest learning experiences. They talked positively about practices that had led to improvements in service delivery or areas of governance. The following is a list of practices that one informant thought made JPP better:

- There were substantive efforts from both Ministry and agency staff to proactively track and monitor participant involvement, which many informants believed has led to achieving higher program attendance and participation rates. This, by far, was the most frequently cited lesson. According to one Ministry informant, “The monitoring is an absolute huge process. However, I really feel that if we’re going to make this program work we need to monitor clients to ensure they’re following through with the program. If I’m going to refer someone to a program, I want them to follow through. If they’re not going to follow through then don’t waste my time, don’t waste the contractors’ time — we’ll put you on to something else, or you’re not eligible, one of the two.”

Another Ministry person noted the importance of clients having clear expectations right at the start of the program: “An essential part of monitoring the referral involves what is actually said during the initial interview with the client. [She] feels that it is important to let the clients know that they are going to be monitored and to advise them of the repercussions of not attending their appointment with the agency (e.g. clients won’t receive IA benefits). She makes the mandatory nature of the program referral clear.”

Most agency staff agree that JPP “. . . get[s] higher attendance now because [the] Ministry is supporting tracking and telling them [participants], they could be considered non-compliant if not attended.”

- At all levels the program involves numerous individuals from both agencies and Ministry. Therefore, it is easy for people to become confused about who they should address their questions to. Often these questions need to be answered quickly and accurately. Several informants thought it was very important to establish a clear reporting structure. One *agency* regional coordinator who thought the structure worked well in Region 1 made the following comment:

Region 1 has been great . . . Carefully structured so we always knew who to speak with when wanted something. Very clear. Each office has single person through which everything JPP does is funnelled, so if need know something about office 117, we know exactly who to go to about that. And they can deal directly with that person.

⁷⁰While each agency has issued procedures manuals for their staff, there is no such plan for Ministry staff. Information about procedures, including updates and revisions, is available on the Ministry Intranet, and there is no plan to produce a hard copy manual in the future.

- JPP provides an opportunity to link people to employment — we (Ministry) have clients, they (agencies) have jobs. These are the basic rules; the rest is open to the people involved to come up with their own plan to make it work. With JPP, there is a lot of flexibility. One described the flexibility as “just said this is what have to do, will do it, will keep evaluating and monitoring and make necessary changes.”

JPP allows staff to change the structure in order to accommodate process, in a way that respects regional realities and needs. Staff, especially Ministry staff, find these features exciting. An example that illustrates this flexibility and willingness to change is one we heard often regarding the pre- and post-intake models. As we learned earlier, initially referrals went directly from the EIP, which resulted in some areas experiencing a high rejection rate at the agencies. Ministry staff in Region 8 thought this was “bad,” since people applying for welfare already feel rejected. So the region changed their referral process to occur at the intake meeting and became more stringent regarding their “job-ready” criteria, instead of doing a rather quick and superficial referral at the EIP.

- Most informants thought JPP would not work without a good working relationship among all partners. This good relationship did not happen right at the start, but evolved and improved over time as relationships and processes became better cemented.

It was really strict at first in that we put everything through the regional coordinator. That got somewhat frustrating, as the coordinator is not always available. There are situations when these people are waiting to start jobs and we need answers right away. You know you can just call the Ministry directly and get the answer. They'd rather just talk to us than have to go through the coordinator. It seems like there was an unnecessary middleman.

Most agency informants have “excellent relations with the Ministry.” “It’s been a big deal for them to implement this program; a lot of additional work for the workers to get started. They’ve always been supportive and flexible, and always available. The frontline workers in the Ministry office have been fantastic.”

Even between agencies, there appears to be a solid relationship. The JobWaveBC and Destinations Job Link regional coordinators talked about their good working relationship, and how they sometimes pass clients to the other agency, if that is more appropriate for the client.

- Informants thought it was very important for the success of JPP to have a dedicated JP worker “ . . . that way you also have one person who communicates with the contractor all the time. You’re not getting different people with different work styles. Everyone at Destinations Job Link and JobWaveBC knows how I work. We really help each other out and work together. It works out really well.”

More importantly, “if you’re an intake worker or maintenance worker and you’re up to your eyeballs in phone calls, your paper folder is full, and you’re handling client’s who are in crisis you don’t have time to do it [JPP]. So what I’m doing is, in a small way, I’m helping them with their caseload because the people they don’t have time to monitor and work with, I am taking and find them work. This is leaving intake and

maintenance workers to do the job they want to do and that is to determine [IA] eligibility and to make sure they are there to help clients in crisis situations.”

- Informants consistently talked about the importance of a good information system to track and monitor participants throughout their involvement with JPP. These tools are important to help the program achieve its goals. One *agency* staff member mentioned how a “good database” helped in their operations as it “. . . could show how many were referred and who showed up. Sometimes we refer in January and they don’t show till March. We send back information every week to say we have not seen these people yet.”
- And finally, there were several comments about the benefits of different aspects of the delivery models, such as
 - establishing a storefront, if possible;
 - making JPP voluntary rather than mandatory, since voluntary sites appear to experience a higher rate of acceptance at the agencies as more motivated people are going there; and
 - using a post-intake rather than a pre-intake model in order to reduce the rejection rate.

FINAL ASSESSMENTS: GIVING THE PROGRAM A “GRADE”

At the end of the interview, informants were asked to provide a “grade” for the program — anything from an A+ to a fail — and to explain their responses. Several informants assigned different grades to different parts of the program, and the analysis below reflects these multiple grades as well as informants’ overall assessments of the program. Overall, informants felt the program deserved a good grade. While the largest proportion of assigned grades were “Bs,” a substantial proportion felt the program, or at least elements of it, deserved an “A.” Less than one fifth of the grades fell in the “C” category.

JPP Gets an “A”

Keeping in mind that grades reflect individual standards, approximately one third of informants felt that JPP deserved an honours mark, primarily because they feel it works: it has accomplished what it set out to do by placing participants into jobs, by providing good service, and by filling a societal need.

When you think of the large numbers placed and that they have increased self-esteem . . . I see it every day. We’re giving out certificates at VCC and they clap — everybody cheering and clapping. [In] interviews with clients who were pretty beat up, they talk about the importance of someone caring. Letters and phone calls from participants who want to say “marvellous program.” (Destinations Job Link)

“A+.” It’s phenomenal. When I think about how really successful it is given the amount of time we had, it’s unbelievable. I was in a staff meeting in Vernon last week and to look at the numbers of people we’ve helped find jobs. Just quadruple numbers than other programs. It just seems like something’s working in this program people are getting jobs. (JobWaveBC)

“A,” not “A+” because I don’t believe in perfect things. But “A” because it’s a positive program with a positive impact on society; it’s improving the quality of life for participants. And it’s been a positive experience for staff who are seeing results quickly.

Several informants also felt the program deserved good marks for being innovative and/or courageous.

From an innovation perspective, I’d give it an “A” because out of that innovation has become the potential for many successes for our clients that wouldn’t have been possible given the confines of our legislation. From that perspective we have increased the chances of success. (Ministry management)

Others felt the program should get an A because it helps employers; because of the effective communication achieved at the headquarters level of management; and because, while not perfect, it is still very good.

JPP Gets a “B”

The largest proportion, roughly half of the grades assigned, were a more moderate “B.” Overall, they thought the program was needed and that it was doing what it was meant to do — move people into the workforce — but they felt there was still work to do; more “fine tuning.” As one person said, the program is “working well but not at optimum ability.” There were several issues mentioned earlier, such as the difficulty of implementing the program in rural areas. One worker said she’d give the program a “B-” in her area, Nelson, but would give higher marks for the program overall. For instance, although she feels out of touch with what happens there, she understands that Kelowna placement numbers are much higher and that people get placed more quickly. She says she thinks it is a good program but that this is a difficult area. Another person said:

“B” right now, heading for “B+.” In the first year, it probably would have been a “C+” so it’s working up the ladder The gut feeling our staff has is that they are proud of what they do and they’re getting more confident about what they’re doing, and with the employers. Most of the growing pains are over. (Region 8, Destinations Job Link Regional Manager)

A few also felt the program faced barriers because of the regional challenges, and because it is an undertaking of such magnitude.

It’s so big a provincial program, dealing with so many people, that the tracking and general paperwork generated to keep the program moving is seemingly outrageous. I don’t know how else it could be done but it seems enormous JPP is dealing with a lot of participants — 42,000 referral files been opened. Not everyone shows up but still, 42,000 people equals 42,000 times someone has gone into the computer, and maybe half show up at the door to make appointment.

Overall though, the comments reflect positive assessments.

“A” or “B+” from an employers’ point of view because I’ve been there. The program is there, provides some nice bonuses, provides a service for people without advertising; the program helps you train people. Makes it easy to market. (Destinations Job Link, Region 8)

Definitely a “B+.” There is also room for improvement. I’m sure there are things we can improve on. I’m always open to improvement. It’s a great program.

Clients will come back and say thanks . . . you see your clients in the community and they say “Hi . . . thank you so much.” Even the FAWs phone up and say thanks. It’s a great partnership. (JobWaveBC, Region 8)

From the point of view of the potential of the program, I would say overall it’s a “B” because there is great potential. We just need to be committed from a headquarters perspective that we’re going to stay with it. (JPP Regional Coordinator, Region 4)

JPP Gets a “C”

Not many informants provided low grades but the ones that were low reflect concerns with regional limitations, communication, and the program rationale.

Regional concerns came specifically from the two study sites Nelson and Campbell River, where implementing the program has been especially difficult due to local economic and/or geographic circumstances. The program has not seen high placement numbers in these areas.⁷¹ JPP workers, both agency and Ministry, questioned the feasibility of implementing this kind of program in more isolated rural areas.⁷²

Two informants questioned the overall program rationale: in one case, an FAW who did not feel the agencies provided sufficient participant support, and in the other, a regional coordinator who questioned the program at a more fundamental level.

The concept is good but as long as any provincial contract is required to meet number targets, you potentially set it up for failure because no longer are you looking at making sure that it’s appropriate and the best service and making sure that everyone who can do well is getting there. Instead, you’re focusing on something artificial and that doesn’t necessarily assist everybody.

Finally, Destinations Job Link’s general manager is one of those who gave the program multi-grades: in this case, a shared concern about communication at the field staff level.

“B” for effective roll-out and communications. It rolled out fast and we learned a lot. Communications for top management level would be “A” to “A+”; but when you take it to the regions, we’ve still a long way to go. There are pockets where communication is pretty bad, so “C-” there.

PROGRAM OUTLOOK

At the end of the interviews, management was asked an additional question designed to measure their perception of the program’s potential for realizing success, with success being understood to mean achieving targets in terms of placement rates, in supporting job retention, and in reducing caseloads. They were given a choice of the following three statements:

1. There are no major barriers to program success;

⁷¹However, the Destinations Job Link regional coordinator for Region 4 indicated that the situation in Campbell River was improving.

⁷²Although pessimistic about the program’s chance of success under the current arrangement, one FAW in Nelson felt it was important to have a program like this in the area but felt that now it “doesn’t appear to be hitting the mark quite right.” He wondered whether Destinations Job Link might have a better chance of success than JobWaveBC as many of the jobs that do not demand higher skill levels tend to be in the tourism and hospitality sector.

2. Overall the program is doing well but there are still a few glitches that need to be addressed; and
3. It's a rocky road and the program is on shaky ground.

Not surprisingly, given the grades assigned earlier, the majority of responses recorded fall into the second category: the program is working well but there are still glitches. Again, comments were generally positive.

There are a few glitches and they may never go away but I would never rate the program as unsuccessful. I think it's the most positive thing the Ministry has ever done As far as being a good program for clients, for being a morale booster, it's been a good front end program, but I don't know what savings it's actually produced, or whether the contractors are making a profit or not. (Region 1, JPP Coordinator)

Nevertheless, there was a substantial proportion who felt there were either “no major barriers to program success,” or felt the outlook was somewhere between that and having “a few glitches.”

I can see that both the Ministry and the agencies are taking steps to correct those issues and they're working from a very co-operative, positive perspective. I believe [the glitches] can be overcome. (Destinations Job Link Operations Manager)

I know we have some glitches but I hear what others say about other programs, and I think, “This is a superb program.” (JobWaveBC)

JPP's program director is one of those who do not see any barriers to success. She says she expects the program to exceed placement targets within the two-year pilot, is confident the partners will be financially viable, and is confident that the province will save money with this program. In her view, “the prospect for outcomes to be achieved is excellent.”

Despite the overall optimism about JPP, there were questions raised about program feasibility in particular situations, notably in the more geographically isolated areas, in areas where jobs are in short supply, or in areas that lack adequate transportation, where participants need to travel long distances for jobs. As previously mentioned, getting placements in the West Kootenays has been a struggle, and has resulted in buy-in issues for Ministry staff and financial issues for the JobWaveBC subcontractor there. The JobWaveBC subcontractor in Nelson, where they make weekly visits to conduct intake assessments and hold touchback sessions, felt it was much easier in a place like Victoria, where the participant can simply catch a bus and spend a couple of dollars to go for an interview. “Here,” they said, “it can be a 25-minute drive to get to a particular mill.” They also argued that program feasibility in rural areas also depended on cutting down the amount of paperwork so they could spend more time supporting participants.

However, while these issues are real, management generally seem convinced that the program can be delivered successfully in more isolated areas. For instance, one liaison coordinator said her own experience, which has included living and working in practically every region in the province, makes her believe that the “program is feasible in every single region and in small communities.” Similarly, the Region 8 Coordinator feels that while it may be more difficult to implement the program in geographically dispersed areas this can be done, as long as it is left to the region to determine how best to put the program into practice.

“Don’t give us a provincial contract. Give us a concept, and ask us how we might utilize that concept in Courtney, but don’t expect us to use the same concept in Duncan.”

It was also questioned whether the program is suitable for all client types. For example, as one JP contact thought that “JPP and youth is not a good blend — youth are demanding and have a lot of questions.” For this person, and for others, program feasibility demands increasing the number of dedicated staff.

Finally, several informants at the management level argued for the need to determine actual program impacts in order to determine long-term feasibility.

I don’t think we’ve exhausted the learning curve on this. I don’t think we know enough about the program to say that the pilot is up. I don’t think the government knows the long-term effects that this will have on the caseload because of the 19 months. We don’t know about those people that got jobs that were part-time six months ago and whether those will be full-time. There are more outcomes to be seen, so how do you say “the two years is up so let’s evaluate.” We can evaluate what’s happened so far but I don’t think we’ve seen the total outcomes to evaluate [what difference the program makes].

However, while there are areas of concern and remaining challenges for the program to face, and while several people recommended changes to the existing program, these are all seen as being “fine tuning.” The overall conclusion is that the program works, and should continue. This was the opinion of virtually all informants — certainly management, but also most line staff.

In Year 2, the final year of the pilot, it would be a serious let down for staff at the end of this year if this had to vanish. We’ve set an expectation with staff and clients. We cannot just start something and leave it midway. We would lose credibility with staff who have put so much effort into it. (JPP Regional Coordinator)

There is really a need for this program. It’s preventive, dynamic, and fast-paced. It’s designed to help people who don’t need a job club, just need a little help. (JobWaveBC Employment Counsellor)

[JPP is a] huge success story. There are two different cultures that have a good friendship. I feel all concerned are doing hard work and that the public-private partnership is a real success story. There is nothing going on elsewhere in North America that is as good as this one. (Destinations Job Link Liaison Coordinator)

The Ministry believes strongly in this message — we’re in the business of helping people become self-sufficient. The biggest learning for me has been to see the Ministry move to performance-based programming. I haven’t experienced this before, but I would like to see this continue. We have learned from [the] pilot, and I feel we have enough data now to support continuance. (JPP Senior Coordinator)

F. Wrapping Up: Final Thoughts

The Jobs Partnership Program (JPP) is a program with a clear goal. The designers of JPP have implemented a “Made in BC” concept of “work first,” which is operating in all Ministry regions and in most parts of the province.

As discussed throughout this report, the Ministry and agencies experienced various implementation challenges and issues during the first year of JPP’s operations. Ministry and agency staff met these challenges to implement JPP and to “hit the ground running with a big initiative.” Because it was a new and untested program, JPP experienced many changes during its first year of operations, but none that prevented it from achieving its placement targets for the first year.

Due to budget constraints, this SRDC study does not focus on the participants’ experience with the program. It does, however, increase knowledge about, and documentation of the program and changes in the structure and practices of JPP. The research is important in explaining findings from future impacts research. We believe that the experience of JPP should offer lessons to others who are considering similar programs, such as

- establishing and preserving an employment-focus in a program by using performance-based incentives;
- building positive relationships between private and public agencies;
- assessing and obtaining feedback on the program continuously and making policy, contract, and program adjustments along the way, which improves service delivery; and
- putting a performance contract into practice successfully.

Even though JPP accomplished several notable achievements, (similar to other new programs) it needs to continue to address potential and real challenges in the future, such as the following:

- What to do, if anything, with JPP participants who are working yet continue to receive income from BC Benefits in the form of top-ups or subsidies.
- Reducing the number of people who return to BC Benefits (post-placement support).
- Finding enough jobs, or enough appropriate jobs, for JPP participants in some areas of the province.
- How to promote job advancement (thinking beyond job retention to career advancement) to help participants move up the earnings ladder and out of poverty.
- What happens after 19 months, if the person has returned to BC Benefits?
- The potential decrease in the number of referrals. (How to ensure a steady flow of participants.)
- The quality of future participants: will they be less job-ready?

- How best to serve clients with more difficult barriers. With new programs?
- To continue to improve the information system used to record program history, maintain participant data, and reduce the workload and paperwork.
- To continue to improve buy-in from the field (e.g. make sure the success stories are getting out, try to visit as many offices as possible, and encourage two-way learning between agencies and Ministry).
- To continue to address issues arising due to regional diversity and specific regional economic and geographical realities.
- To establish a service delivery “standard of care” (consistent quality of service). Informants noted many areas of inconsistency, such as level of pre-placement services provided, and proactive post-referral tracking and monitoring.
- A two-year pilot may not be long enough to learn key implementation lessons, especially post-placement issues.
- Although targets are being met, JPP still needs an impacts evaluation and benefit-cost analysis to see what difference the program is making in the short- and long-run, and whether or not it is saving money.
- As JPP nears the end of its two-year pilot period, the Ministry will face additional new challenges as it prepares for the next phase of the JPP pilot.

Based on JPP’s experiences to date, the program shows promise. Overall, agencies are meeting their targeted placement numbers and getting people back to work. Success in JPP has been largely discussed in terms of meeting targets and the number of placements. However, some participants would have found jobs even without the program. Therefore, this measure can be an overestimate of the true difference the program made.

The literature indicates that programs with a focus on employment can generate a large or more lasting increase in employment rates, earnings, and income than pure job-search programs. JPP may be achieving this, and many believe this to be true, but without a proper impacts evaluation, the questions remain unanswered.

Appendix A: Ministry and Agency Representatives and Program Managers Interviewed for the Study

Name	Organization
Janice Aguiar	Ministry of Human Resources
Darlene Bailey	JobWaveBC
Leslee Banks	Ministry of Human Resources
Tania Bennett	JobWaveBC
Pat Bentlidge	Ministry of Human Resources
Dan Blakely	Ministry of Human Resources
Karina Brino	Ministry of Human Resources
Alice Van Blockland	Destinations Job Link
Robert Coltura	Destinations Job Link
Carol Coull	Ministry of Human Resources
Sharon DeLure	Ministry of Human Resources
Tony Gibb	Ministry of Human Resources
Jon Grass	Ministry of Human Resources
Lea Grey	Destinations Job Link
Alison Hale	JobWaveBC
Becky Haycock	JobWaveBC (subcontractor)
Kirstin Humpherys	JobWaveBC
Laurie Jacobs	Destinations Job Link
Shauna Johnson	Ministry of Human Resources
Dave Keen	Ministry of Human Resources
Lindsay Kislock	Ministry of Human Resources
Kathy Koop	JobWaveBC (subcontractor)
David McCaig	Destinations Job Link
Mike McLaughlin	Destinations Job Link
Sheryl March	JobWaveBC (subcontractor)
Susan Martimez	Ministry of Human Resources
Debi Moreland	Ministry of Human Resources

Chrissy Nolan	JobWaveBC
Kim Osborne	Destinations Job Link
Linda DeWilde Osing	Destinations Job Link
Elaine Parmenter	JobWaveBC
Brenda Paton	Ministry of Human Resources
Diane Patterson	Destinations Job Link
Fred Peterson	JobWaveBC
Jan Pope	Ministry of Human Resources
Laureen Sawyer	Ministry of Human Resources
Sharon Sigvardson	Ministry of Human Resources
Ramona Soares	Ministry of Human Resources
Harry Stand	JobWaveBC (subcontractor)
Sheila Staples	Ministry of Human Resources
Christine Stoneman	Destinations Job Link
Elizabeth Suttie	JobWaveBC
Wendy Taylor	JobWaveBC (subcontractor)
Monique Thio	Ministry of Human Resources
Andrea Vallis	Destinations Job Link
Bill Warburton	Ministry of Human Resources

Appendix B: Jobs Partnership Program — Scheduled Payments to Agencies

PLACEMENT MILESTONES

Payments are payable to the contractor only on the achievement of the cumulative full months a participant is independent of income assistance (“Placement Milestone”), as set out below.

Table B.1: Placement Milestones

Placement Milestone (Full Months a Participant is Independent of Income Assistance)	Amount Payable per Participant on Achievement of Placement Milestone (\$)
2	1,140
4	610
7	1,750
10	650
13	350
16	180
19	185
Maximum per Participant	4,865

If a participant returns to income assistance for any period of time and then begins a subsequent placement, the participant is not considered to be a new placement, but resumes participation in the program at the month consecutive to the last cumulative full month the participant achieved prior to leaving the previous placement.

Sources: Amended Schedule B of Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia (COTA) and The West Coast Group, Independent Business Consulting and Investments Ltd. agreements.

Appendix C: New BC Benefits Cases: January 2000 to March 2001

Table C.1: Percentage of Total and Non-exempted New Starts by Family Type for Non-exempt Cases and Total Cases

Year/Month	Exemption Status	Single Men (%)	Single Women (%)	Couples (%)	Two Parents (%)	Single Parent (%)
200001	Non-Exempt	55.47	23.73	4.13	8.53	8.14
200001	Total Cases	49.92	21.82	3.79	7.56	16.90
200002	Non-Exempt	54.48	25.70	4.07	7.94	7.80
200002	Total Cases	48.32	23.40	3.68	6.94	17.66
200003	Non-Exempt	53.41	27.35	4.07	7.54	7.64
200003	Total Cases	47.09	24.46	3.66	6.43	18.36
200004	Non-Exempt	52.77	27.14	4.45	7.19	8.45
200004	Total Cases	46.19	24.78	3.89	6.18	18.96
200005	Non-Exempt	50.30	28.05	4.71	7.97	8.97
200005	Total Cases	43.71	24.69	4.17	6.72	20.71
200006	Non-Exempt	50.83	28.81	4.12	6.89	9.35
200006	Total Cases	44.88	25.82	3.73	5.89	19.67
200007	Non-Exempt	50.57	28.81	4.36	7.44	8.83
200007	Total Cases	43.96	25.86	3.95	6.30	19.93
200008	Non-Exempt	49.99	26.06	4.70	7.66	11.59
200008	Total Cases	43.24	22.92	4.06	6.55	23.23
200009	Non-Exempt	50.86	28.06	3.68	7.56	9.83
200009	Total Cases	44.40	24.45	3.36	6.35	21.44
200010	Non-Exempt	52.51	27.57	3.96	6.87	9.08
200010	Total Cases	46.12	25.09	3.59	5.94	19.26
200011	Non-Exempt	54.62	25.80	3.94	7.02	8.62
200011	Total Cases	48.32	23.59	3.67	6.16	18.25
200012	Non-Exempt	55.89	23.75	4.29	7.49	8.58
200012	Total Cases	50.31	22.03	3.95	6.65	17.05
200101	Non-Exempt	54.94	24.63	3.82	8.45	8.16
200101	Total Cases	49.57	22.76	3.60	7.45	16.63
200102	Non-Exempt	54.78	26.40	4.40	6.45	7.97
200102	Total Cases	49.28	24.07	4.13	5.76	16.77
200103	Non-Exempt	55.67	25.61	4.21	7.13	7.37
200103	Total Cases	49.80	23.50	3.85	6.22	16.63

Source: MSDES Economic Analysis Branch

Notes: Non-exempt percentages are derived by removing newly started cases that are DBI, DBII, or single-parent families with at least one child under seven years of age.
 "Total Cases" percentages are derived by taking all of the newly started cases each month (including both exempt and non-exempt cases).

