

Report on the design of an approach to deliver transitional employment supports to women who experience violence

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Women's Policy Office
and
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to study

The Women's Policy Office (WPO), with lead responsibility for the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI), and the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (HRLE), with responsibility for the delivery of employment and career planning services to income support clients and others who need assistance to prepare for entry or attachment to the labour market, are collaborating on the research, design and development of an approach to delivery of transitional employment supports for victims of violence. This initiative is one of the measures included in the 2007 Budget of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador under the Poverty Reduction Strategy¹ and it is related to one of the actions set out in the *VPI Action Plan: Taking Action Against Violence 2006-2012*, specifically to review a range of transitional services for women and children and to make recommendations for improvement by 2009.²

1.2 Initiative activity to date

A project steering committee was formed which includes representatives of WPO, HRLE, and the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

WPO and HRLE engaged Goss Gilroy Inc. to carry out the research on the needs for employment supports and to propose the design for an approach to meet these needs. This report presents the results of this research.

The report proposal is organized as follows:

- Section 1 is an introduction to the study
- Section 2 describes the research approach
- Section 3 provides the finding on the impact of violence on employability
- Section 4 sets out the needs for personal supports and employment supports, and the current capacity to address these needs
- Section 5 describes the proposed approach
- Section 6 sets out the proposed action plan and estimated budget
- Section 7 describes an evaluation plan for the proposed approach to delivery of services.

To assist with determining service needs, building partnerships and in defining an approach to service delivery, WPO and HRLE assigned staff in four sites across the province during the research phase. These sites were:

- St. John's
- Marystown
- Corner Brook
- Labrador West (Labrador City and Wabush)

¹ Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Budget 2007, News Release accessed at <http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2007/hrle/0426n10.htm>

² Government of Newfoundland. (Undated). *Taking Action Against Violence 2006-2012 Violence Prevention Initiative*.

At each site, a Career Development Specialist position was filled by HRLE (at the end of February 2008) through an internal staffing process. These Career Development Specialists were located at the women's shelter at three of the sites: Iris Kirby House in St. John's, Grace Sparkes House in Marystown, Hope Haven in Labrador West. In Corner Brook, the Career Development Specialist was located at the Women's Centre.

1.3 Note on terminology and scope

When conducting the research, it became evident that women and service providers prefer not to use the term 'victims of violence', as this creates a negative stereotype of women as not being strong and resilient. As a result, we have used the term "women who have experienced violence". In most sections of the report we refer to them simply as women.

Some service providers also spoke to the need to reach out to those who are at risk of violence, consistent with the objectives of the Violence Prevention Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy. When discussing the outreach activities of the initiative, therefore, we also have included those who are at risk of experiencing violence.

The definition of violence against women used in this report is that provided by the United Nations 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

2.0 Research Approach

2.1 Overview of approach

The research focused on:

- Determining the needs for employment support services for victims of violence
- Determining any gaps or aspects for improvement in current supports to employment services and the access to these services, as well as identifying aspects of services that are considered effective
- Designing an approach to service delivery to incorporate changes or enhancements as needed
- Developing an action plan, estimated budget and an evaluation plan to guide decisions on implementation of the proposed approach.

Throughout the research and reporting, an attempt was made to ensure the research was inclusive of cultural and gender issues. In particular, we consulted with employment service providers who serve Aboriginal women, immigrant women, and women with disabilities on the particular needs of these groups and to the extent that these groups are assisted by other ‘generic’ service providers.

2.2 Methods used

Initial workshop: A half-day workshop was held with representatives of WPO, HRLE and the project steering committee, together with eight other organizations that provide shelter services and employment services in the St. John’s region. This workshop was designed to obtain initial input on the questions of interest and to help inform the subsequent research.

Literature/best practices review: We conducted a review of the literature, using the Internet, our knowledge of relevant organizations, and documents provided by the steering committee. This focused on identifying the evidence on the employment transition process for the target client group, as well as any effective approaches in other jurisdictions. Through this process, we identified employment transition programs for women who experience violence in British Columbia (Bridges for Women Society) and in Ontario, where the provincial government is currently funding a Domestic Violence Employment and Training Pilots Program, which includes seven pilot projects. Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of these organizations. In both cases, there are evaluations underway which will be made public later this year.

Consultations: We made two-day visits to each of the four sites established as part of the research phase, to consult with key stakeholders. The visits were organized in consultation with the project steering committee, HRLE regional managers and shelter coordinators. Group or individual interviews were conducted with a number of organizations that provide employment services and other personal services to women who have experienced violence (i.e. Victim Services of the Department of Justice, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

(NLHC), and the Regional Health Authorities (RHA), specifically Child Youth and Family Services and Community Mental Health Services).

In three of the sites, we also conducted individual interviews with three or four women who were identified on our behalf by the local shelter. In St. John's, a focus group was held with five women identified by Kirby House.

In total 70 individuals from various agencies/organizations and 15 women were consulted during the site visits.

The consultants made a presentation on what we heard in the site consultations at an initial staff orientation session for the Career Development Specialists assigned as part of the research phase to work in the shelters /women's centre

3.0 Violence and its Impact on Employability

This section of the report is based on what we heard in our consultations complemented by information gathered in the literature/best practices review.

3.1 The prevalence of violence against women

The most recent national analysis of the extent of violence against women was reported in *Measuring Violence Against Women – Statistical Trends 2006*.³ This report examined five major aspects of women's experiences of violence: prevalence and severity, impact, risk factors, institutional and community-based responses, and victim's use of services. It was based in part on the Statistics Canada General Social Survey (2004).

The report noted that, while the rate of spousal assaults had remained relatively unchanged in most provinces over the 1999-2004 period, the rate had increased from 4 percent to 6 percent in Newfoundland and Labrador.⁴ The Statistics Canada report notes that the majority of incidences of violence are unreported. The General Social Survey (2004), on which this report was based, found that 36 percent of female victims of spousal violence and less than 10 percent of victims of sexual assault reported these crimes to the police in 2004. Only about half of female spousal violence victims used the support of social services (p.14).⁵

In terms of risk factors, the Statistics Canada report found that young women experience the highest rates of violence. Partner's use of psychological or emotional abuse, and frequent heavy drinking by partners, raise the risk of violence against women in spousal relationships (p.14).

The report noted that low income has been linked to higher rates of spousal assault against women. For example, in 2004, the rates of spousal assault were twice as high for women with a household income of less than \$60,000 compared with those with higher incomes. The researchers found that it was unclear whether low income is a risk factor, a consequence of violence or a combination of both. The stresses associated with living in low-income situations may lead to frustration and tension in the family and to the use of violence as a response. Alternately, violence may lead to separation which results in a reduction of income for both victim and offender in subsequent relationships. (p. 40). The report cited four other studies which found that the economic costs of violence against women to the victims and society range in the billions in regard to health, justice, social services, and lost productivity costs (p.13).

In terms of numbers seeking emergency assistance and shelter in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Statistics Canada report stated that, during 2004, there were 1,084 admissions of women and dependent children to shelters in Newfoundland and Labrador. The table below shows more recent data (on the annual average numbers served over two fiscal years) that was provided by the shelters in Newfoundland and Labrador. .

³ Statistics Canada. (October 2006). *Measuring Violence Against Women Statistical Trends 2006*. Ottawa.

⁴ This was found to be a statistically significant change.

⁵ Ibid.

Shelters: Average annual numbers assisted (2005-06 and 2006-07)

Shelter	Number of women admitted	Number of children admitted	Crisis Calls
Iris Kirby House St. John's	136	105	694
Grace Sparkes House Marystown	67	19	232
Transition House Corner Brook	99	60	483
Hope Haven Labrador West	36	27	133
Cara House Gander	37	22	N/A
Libra House Happy Valley- Goose Bay*	101	61	N/A
Nain Transition House	40	29	151
Total	516	323	1693

- 2006-07 numbers only for Libra House

The employment service providers we interviewed indicated that on a regular basis they are assisting women who have experienced violence. Representatives of organizations offering group employment programming observed that there are usually several women in any one group who either self-identify or whom the service providers feel have been affected by violence of some form. They observed that many women do not self-identify during the assessment or program application process. Once they are comfortable with an individual counsellor or with their peers in group settings, they are more open to sharing their stories and seeking help. Service providers also observed that it appeared there were many others who they counsel or assist in groups who, while they did not self-identify, showed indications that they had experienced violence. In short, the opinion of group service providers is that there is a significant need for personal supports and employment services to assist women who experience violence.

3.1.1 Violence against Aboriginal women

The Statistics Canada report includes a specific examination of violence against Aboriginal women. It found that the rates of spousal violence are higher among Aboriginal women than Aboriginal men or non-Aboriginal people. A number of risk factors associated with violence for Aboriginal people were cited, including lower educational attainment and higher unemployment rates – both factors that would need to be addressed in any transitional employment supports program for this group. In the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial Aboriginal women's conference held in 2006, violence in Aboriginal communities was one of the key concerns raised. Participants identified that violence is a result of the breakdown in the social fabric of communities: the level of violence is related to the alcohol abuse, which in turn is related to a

lack of employment, which then forces individuals to look outside their communities for work (p.21).⁶

3.2 The impacts of violence on employability

This section is based largely on a document produced by the Bridges for Women Society (Bridges) based in Victoria, British Columbia – *A Women’s Resource Booklet: Overcoming the Impact of Abuse on Employability* (2007). Bridges recently celebrated their 20th anniversary of offering employability training programs and other services to women to help them overcome the barriers to employment associated with recovery from trauma. Later in this report, their programming is discussed, but this section presents highlights of their writing on the impacts of violence on employability.

3.2.1 What is employability?

Bridges defines employability as “an inclusive term that means being physically, emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically able to work. It means having the skills and tools to get and maintain employment, it involves the person’s personal and social environment as well as all the aspects of a woman’s life which affect her work” (Bridges for Women Society, p. 10).

3.2.2 The effects of abuse and violence on employability

Activation

When a threat of abuse is perceived, a woman’s flight-or-fight response is aroused. Her body prepares to fight or flee, resulting in tightened muscles, the senses becoming more acute. This can look like hypervigilance (always on alert or on guard), difficulty concentrating and /or excessive anger. Often since the body is flooded with brain chemicals and adrenal gland secretions, judgement and cognition are not as sharp as they could be. This effect leads to several employment barriers: lack of concentration, anxiety, trouble working with anyone who exhibited characteristics of the abuser, highs and lows in energy levels, and difficulty engaging or maintaining disciplined practice, and inappropriate self disclosure (often saying too much) (Ibid., p.13).

Several of the service providers and women interviewed for this study identified this impact on employability. One woman spoke of anxiety attacks which impact her ability to do work where she had to deal with people – eventually her employer let her go as she was missing time. Several women interviewed spoke of the fear for their safety as they made the decision to leave their partner. Several service providers highlighted that a safety plan is critical for many women who continue to be harassed by their partner, and that this plan has to include settings such as schools (for those taking training) and employment.

⁶ Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (Undated). *Conference Report the Path to the Good Life, Aboriginal Women’s Conference. March 13-15, 2006, Happy Valley-Goose Bay.*

Severe stress reactions

While living with fear or repression develops strength through survival, it is often at the expense of physical and psychological health. Physical manifestations of stress include fatigue, anxiety, sleep disorders, headaches. Psychological responses include depression, anxiety, suspicion and secrecy. The employment barriers that result include missing time at work, addictions, communications problems with co-workers, abusive behaviour towards co-workers, and inability to keep a job beyond short-term attempts (Ibid, p. 12). Service providers and women we interviewed frequently observed that women who experience violence are “tired”.

Dissociation

This is defined as a psychological response to abuse that develops as a coping strategy. A woman who experienced abuse as a child may have dissociated and left her body, or developed alternate personalities, and these ways of behaving may have continued into adulthood. The resulting employment barriers are forgetfulness, poor concentration, inability to ‘be present’, mental health problems, and poor self care (Ibid., p.15). Dissociation and the complexities of learners “presence” has also been identified as a challenge to learning in adult literacy programs (Horsman, p.184).

Keeping peace at all costs

Abuse survivors spend a great deal of time and energy avoiding situations that might provoke the abuser. This “peace at all costs” behaviour may transfer over into the workplace. The associated employment barriers including controlling behaviours, withdrawing well-founded personal views if they are challenged, and being more vulnerable to abuse or manipulation (Ibid., p. 16).

Powerlessness

Experience with repeated violence often leads to feelings of powerlessness that can affect other areas of life. Employment barriers related to powerlessness include inability to decide on a job or career direction, difficulty with authority figures (Ibid., p. 17). Several of the service providers we interviewed spoke of women’s fear of complaining when they are treated with a lack of respect by various agencies.

Impaired boundaries

When someone is abused, his or her boundaries are violated. The survivor may allow people to violate their boundaries or may have a poor sense of what is healthy or appropriate for them. Related employment barriers include: anxiety when being observed, vulnerability to sexual, racial or other harassment, alienation of co-workers, and no clear sense of self (Ibid., p. 17).

Impaired self-esteem

Women who have experienced violence often report that their self-esteem is low. In terms of employment barriers, low self-esteem can lead to doubting one’s competence, assuming guilt and responsibility for other’s behaviour, and self-sabotage (Ibid., p. 18).

Most informants and women we interviewed for this study cited low self-esteem as one of the most prevalent impacts of violence. They described women who have experienced violence as “beaten down”, lacking self-confidence, and having feelings of guilt, anger, shame - all of which impact their capacity for stability and successful employment.

Silence and isolation

In an abusive situation, speaking may have been defined as “mouthing off” that deserved a violent response. Silence means isolation from others and keeping a lid on feelings. Being isolated from a support network (including preventing the woman from going to school or work) may have been a part of the abuse, and this network later becomes difficult for the survivor to develop for herself. In terms of employment, this may lead to such barriers as panic attacks when required to speak out, poor assertiveness, inability to fit into education or training programs and a limited support network (Ibid., p. 18).

Physical health issues

The experience of trauma can lead to physical health issues. Those who experience barriers to employment may have limited resources to maintain health. They may also have a number of physical disabilities as a result of the abuse which impair the ability to do certain jobs. Employment barriers include being unable to do work that requires certain physical strengths, and limited energy to work (Ibid., p.22).

Mental health issues

Survivors of abuse may experience direct effects of abuse on their mental health including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Those who face barriers to work may have limited resources for counselling or medications to maintain their mental health. Many doctors do not understand women’s experience of violence and inappropriately treat them. Associated employment barriers include: absence from work, employers not approving time off for hospitalization or treatment, inability to communicate to an employer what is happening, side effects of medication, cognitive impairment, and a history of mental illness which may follow the woman into recovery and pose challenges to employment (Ibid., p. 23).

Chaos and crisis as a way of life

Sometimes survivors of abuse develop a ‘comfort zone’ that is very hard to break away from – a chaotic life is the only one that feels comfortable. A woman who has lived in constant trauma often feels more comfortable reacting to problems than dealing with everyday routine. She may catastrophize – make chaotic or dramatic everyday situations and events. Chaos and crisis as a way of life can lead to boredom with a regular schedule, creating disruptive incidents at school or work, demands on others, inappropriate use of work time to make crisis-related personal calls, a history of leaving jobs due to crises, disrupted parenting and /or involvement with child protection services, courts (Ibid., p. 26).

Substance abuse or misuse

Women who have experienced violence may turn to substances to help remove them from the pain and trauma caused by their experiences. Patterns of addiction are often learned from

families of origin and /or partners. Once established these addictions become a driving force and are hard to break. Similar addictive behaviour may occur around sex, gambling, relationships or food. Employment barriers that result may include: physical or mental deterioration, absences from work, lifestyle choices that clash with work values, and financial crises or worries (Ibid., p. 32).

Many service providers we interviewed observed that younger women in particular have a high rate of drug and alcohol addiction.

Disrupted education

The schooling of women who were abused or witnessed abuse as children may have been affected. Absences and inability to concentrate may have resulted in low marks or dropping out. The woman's attempts to get upgrading or training as an adult may have been undermined or prevented by abusive relationships. Disrupted education can impact employability in a number of ways: limited job choices, reluctance to participate in and low comfort level in educational settings, fear of failure, underdeveloped study skills, belief that she cannot learn, trauma related learning disabilities, inability to learn at work (Ibid., p. 33).

Jenny Horsman, a noted researcher and educator in adult literacy has done extensive research on the impact of violence on women's learning. In a recent article, she drew on three Canadian research studies to question conventional understanding that access to adult literacy education is simply a matter of providing programs.⁷ She concluded that women who experience violence are often not given permission to participate by abusers or are told they are "too stupid to learn" and come to believe this themselves. She concluded that the unacknowledged impacts of trauma on learning may mean that many women only get a chance to fail; this in turn may lead to the learners, educators and others working with women in the aftermath of violence to become frustrated with the lack of possibilities for educational success (Ibid., p.178).

Some of the service providers and women we interviewed identified that non-completion of high school is an issue across the various groups of women – young single mothers have often left school to have their children, older women in many cases have not completed high school, and immigrant women in some cases have not had the opportunity to attend school in their country of origin due to gender barriers. For them, supportive academic upgrading is a necessary early step towards employment.

Poverty

Women who have experienced violence often find themselves living in poverty, either as a result of being dependent on Income Support or working in low paying jobs. Poverty impacts employability in the following ways: inability to pay for adequate child care, difficulty affording food, clothing and other necessities, poor nutrition which can lead to inability to concentrate and physical weakness, return to under-paid or high risk activities, financial crises which impact ability to attend or be effective at work (Ibid., p. 35).

⁷ Horsman, Jenny. (2006). Moving beyond stupid: Taking account of the impact of violence on women's learning. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(2006), 177-188

Service providers interviewed noted that women often cannot afford to leave the abusive situation if they are dependent on their partner's income. Those receiving Income Support are reluctant to leave this for work as they fear not being able to survive on the wages being paid for the work they can find/do. Shelter coordinators observed that most women return to their home when they leave the shelters as they have no other choice – it is only after several stays at the shelter that many come with a plan to leave the relationship and seek work.

3.2.3 Summary

Individual women may face a wide range of complex and inter-related impacts from violence which can lead to significant and complex employment barriers. As discussed in the following section, these impacts and barriers call for a wide range of personal and employment supports.

3.2.4 Employment Programs in other jurisdictions

Bridges for Women Society - Women's Employability Program

The Bridges for Women Society is based in Victoria, British Columbia and is in its 20th year of offering employment programming for women who have a history of abuse. Their Women's Employability Program is a 26-week program in which participants learn together in a classroom setting and are provided personal supports through program staff and a network of other service providers. Participants attend classes Monday to Thursday from 9:30-3:00, with Fridays set aside for appointments and self-care.

Phases of the program include Basic Stabilization, Personal Skills Development, and Skills Practice and Job/Career Preparation. The curriculum is grouped into five main categories: Addressing Histories of Abuse; Individual Study based on short and long-term goals; Career Exploration focused on developing a long term, sustainable career vision that promotes successful, permanent labour force attachment; Workplace Skills developed in a workplace-like setting; Academics, which includes academic upgrading and introductory computer courses.

Program staff include a counsellor qualified in psycho educational counseling and classroom facilitators. They have learned that the program results in powerful peer group support. There is an alumni group that meets once a month and it is the main activity for providing ongoing support. The program focus now is shifting to more individualized interventions and a continuous intake approach.

Over the past three years Bridges for Women developed and now delivers an on-line version of the program in order to expand the geographic reach. This is a continuous intake, 12-week program designed for women who are more employment ready. Each participant does individual work with the help of a coach (by email and telephone contacts) and participates in asynchronous discussion forums. Participants must be out of the abusive relationship and have a connection to support in their community. This program is currently being evaluated.

Ontario – Employment Training Pilot Program

The Ontario Women's Directorate is currently funding this \$4 million training program to help women who have experienced abuse or are at risk of abuse to develop new skills, find employment, and achieve economic independence. Ten pilot projects have been approved to operate over the 2006-08 period. These include pre-employment and skills training programs, including some for specific target groups (Aboriginal women, immigrants). One project includes development of a workshop for employment service providers on the impacts of abuse on employability. An evaluation of the program is now underway.

4.0 The Needs for Transitional Supports

4.1 The Need for Personal Supports

While the initiative being considered will focus on providing transitional employment supports in response to the needs of women who have experienced violence or who are at risk of violence, informants and women interviewed as part of this consultation process identified a number of critical personal supports that are needed. These are needed in most cases throughout the transition process – prior to focusing on employment, during the preparation for work or job search, and, in some cases, while individuals are employed. As one informant said, *“If everything else in the women’s lives is a struggle then it is hard for them to get into the frame of mind needed to prepare for, find and maintain a job.”* The availability (or non-availability) of these supports has an impact on the transition of women who have experienced violence towards employment and self-sufficiency.

4.1.1 Current approaches to facilitating access

Shelters for women who have experienced violence offer a range of individual and group services/supports: these include immediate crisis support; counselling in a safe setting; referrals to outside agencies/available services; and empowerment sessions to help build self esteem/self confidence. In general, shelters direct women to services that have proven their capacity to appropriately and sensitively support women who have experienced violence.

A number of effective linkages are in place now between shelters, HRLE, NLHC, and the Department of Justice to facilitate access to personal supports and to identify and address policies and procedures that may be limiting access.

HRLE facilitates access to their services and those of other agencies for individuals with more complex needs (not limited to victims of violence) as follows:

- Liaison Social Workers are located in each region⁸ to help clients with more complex needs connect with relevant HRLE services or with services from other agencies and organizations (for example mental health services, shelters).
- In the Avalon Region, HRLE has dedicated three “community agency” - Client Services Officers to play a direct role with community agencies such as Kirby House, as well as institutions such as the Waterford Hospital. The intent of these linkages is to facilitate the provision of sensitive and responsive services to the people these agencies/institutions support – in particular those with complex needs.

4.1.2 Access to affordable and safe housing

Access to safe and affordable housing was identified by women and service providers as the key support needed in order to begin the process of moving from a violent situation. Some woman

⁸ The position in Labrador was not filled at the time this research was conducted.

said “this is the foundation,” yet most of the individuals we interviewed felt the lack of emergency, second stage and regular social housing is a key barrier to women who have experienced violence achieving economic self-sufficiency.

NLHC has a victim of family violence policy under which women/families who are first time applicants for housing are given priority consideration for the selection and approval process. Existing NLHC tenants who are experiencing violence can be transferred to another unit, have additional safety features (e.g. dead bolts) installed, etc. However, many women are reluctant to go into social housing developments for fear of their (and their children’s) safety and the poor condition of the housing – a situation which demotivates residents from having aspirations beyond the neighbourhood.

NLHC also provides financial supports to tenants that support their training/employment aspirations. If an individual is transitioning from Income Support to employment, there is a grace period in which the person’s rent remains at its current level – before it is changed to reflect the new income. Also, rent is based on net and not gross income. There is also a stay in school initiative (emanating from the Poverty Reduction Strategy). For every child in a household in Levels II, III or IV of high school who remains in school, there is a \$25/month rebate to the parents. Also if the parents are in school – then they too are eligible for this rebate.

A particular problem was identified for single women with no children. They might never be accommodated by NLHC as there are few one-bedroom social housing units available. Neither Income Support or low-paying jobs provide sufficient income to rent on the private market. Some informants observed that landlords often refuse to rent to women if they discover they are living in a shelter.

It was noted that in rural areas in particular there is low turnover of residents in social housing units which often makes it impossible for a woman to leave an abusive situation. For example, Hope Haven shelter in Labrador West goes beyond their policy mandate in keeping women longer than six weeks due to the housing shortage. The economic boom in that community is already having an impact on housing costs and availability.

4.1.3 Child care support

Access to appropriate and affordable child care in many areas of the province is a challenge. Informants in Corner Brook noted that there are a limited number of licenced day care spaces, and in Labrador West there is no child care centre (one is slated for construction in the face of the economic boom but it is questionable if this will meet the level of need). In Marystown the availability is limited, and those child care centres that exist cannot accommodate those who work shiftwork or irregular hours. Generally, in rural areas of the province access to licenced day care is severely limited, and women depend on private child care arrangements. HRLE offers funding for those eligible under the Income Support Program. In St. John’s, access to child care was not cited as an issue. In all of the four research sites the affordability of child care is a concern for those who work in low-paying jobs.

Two of the women we interviewed were not aware of the child care subsidy they could obtain as low income earners. (An informant with the Department of Health and Community Services said that public awareness has been identified as an issue and a public awareness campaign is planned for this program.)

One woman interviewed commented on the need for more flexibility in the policy for the Child Care Services Subsidy Program administered by the Department of Health and Community Services. She was denied access to this subsidy while she was off work for a period due to illness (which was a result of the violence she had experienced). She had to fight her case over a period of time to get reinstated.

4.1.4 Personal counselling

Many women (and their children) who have experienced violence need personal counselling to deal with the trauma and other impacts of violence. Several services and programs are now in place to address these needs, as follows:

The Department of Justice delivers a Victim Services Program through 11 offices across the province to which people are referred by the police, crown prosecutors, community agencies, through self-referral, etc. This is a voluntary service which provides an array of supports to the victim including assisting with court preparation and preparing victim impact statements, crisis intervention, short term counselling, and, as necessary, facilitating access to longer term counselling through its professional services program. This latter program funds services up to \$3500 per client (for the woman or her children).

For individuals needing assistance with financial support, custody of children and mediation, the Department of Justice delivers Family Justice Services through a multidisciplinary team approach. Support Application Social Workers (employees of HRLE) are part of these teams. Personal counselling is also one of the services offered through Family Justice Services.

During the period of transition from the violent situation and the building of a new life for themselves and their children, women may require assistance with mental health and/or addictions issues. There are government-funded counselling services available through the Mental Health Services and Addiction Services of the RHAs. Many informants noted that there are lengthy wait lists for both mental health and addictions counselling (with particularly long waits for the latter).

Informants observed that children of women who have experienced violence may exhibit behaviour and/or academic performance problems. Funding is available to provide assessments and supports (through the schools and/or Regional Health Authority); however, informants indicated that there are often wait lists and often the woman needs to be able to advocate on behalf of her child to access these services. This presents an additional challenge for women making the transition from violence.

Informants felt that, for women who have been through prolonged or severe abuse, personal development is a step-by-step process: the first step is to get them to believe they have the ability to do something other than continue to depend on Income Support. One informant noted that, for

many, working on these diverse personal issues becomes a pre-employment process in and of itself which requires a strong network of service providers.

4.1.5 Financial supports

Women who enter a shelter (with or without children) fall into one of three financial categories:

- those receiving Income Support who continue to receive their basic support while in the shelter;
- those who are working or receiving EI who maintain an income; and
- those who had been supported through their husband's income.

The latter group can make application for Income Support while living in the shelter but cannot receive assistance until they move out. The policy rationale of government is that the room and board costs for these women and their children are covered through funding of the shelter. The woman is provided with a personal allowance of \$125 a month that is funded by the Department of Health and Community Services and administered by shelters. The personal allowance is provided for the woman only as the National Child Benefit is provided for children.

Informants from the shelters and some women interviewed had two concerns with these policies:

- there is a perceived inequity in benefits since those already receiving Income Support continue to receive benefits while those not in receipt do not;
- the personal allowance has been at the \$125 a month rate for years, and is not adequate to cover the incidental costs incurred in attending employment programming and in creating a situation of normalcy for the woman and her children (including the capacity to be able to pay for activities at school so that children are not excluded; one example given was not having money to pay for a pizza day at school).

4.1.6 Access to transportation

Several issues were identified related to access to affordable and suitable transportation.

Most women living in poverty cannot afford a car. Public transportation (where this is available) is problematic as it can lead to long commute times for women with children who have to take a bus to get their children to daycare and then another to go on to school or work. In many cases the bus route is not convenient and taxis are the only option. It was surprising to learn that in Dunfield Park, an NHLC housing development in Corner Brook, there is no bus stop – women there have to walk down the hill to a major parkway to take their children to school and to then catch a bus to school or work.

While public transportation is virtually non-existent in rural areas of the province, HRLE does provide transportation for attendance to training, academic upgrading, and for purposes of job search based on need and reflective of local rates.

Informants in Corner Brook noted that the accessible transportation for those with disabilities is extremely expensive compared to the service in St. John's (\$20 a ride versus \$2.50).

4.1.7 Legal processes

In July 2006, the provincial Family Violence Protection Act came into force. This provides for Emergency Protection Orders, administered by the Department of Justice, to help women and their children in emergency situations by placing restrictions on the respondent. These Orders can provide women with protection from their ex-partner for up to 90 days. Some informants identified weaknesses in these Orders. One provider noted that the time frame for which they are issued has generally been much shorter than the allowable 90 days (i.e. two to three weeks) and these orders are not extended or renewed unless the ex-partner has done something to necessitate another one. This situation compromises the woman's safety and thus her capacity to focus on moving forward into a more stable situation.

4.1.8 Summary

Effective linkages between and among shelters, the women who have experienced violence and various service providers are critical to ensuring access to personal supports. When personal supports are not provided in a timely manner, or remain unaddressed, the challenge of making a transition from violence is heightened. As noted above, there are a number of constraints in the capacity to provide the personal supports that are needed and when needed.

4.2 The Need for Employment Supports

This section of the report discusses what was learned from service providers and women interviewed regarding the need for various employment supports, considerations for specific groups of women, and the extent that these needs are met in current employment services and programs.

4.2.1 The timing of employment supports

All informants interviewed for this study stated that timing of employment supports is an important consideration. Few of those who use shelters (and who are not already employed) are ready to focus on employment – particularly those who are first-time users of the shelter. They have other immediate emotional and practical needs to address (safety, housing, child care, counselling for them and their children, court proceedings). Some informants observed that it is only after several times using the shelter, and when the woman comes with a plan to leave her relationship, that employment becomes an option they can focus on. Once women are in a shelter or transition house and begin to feel supported and establish a level of trust with the shelter staff/other providers, they might begin to consider employment. However, all informants and several of the women interviewed agreed that any serious consideration of training/employment would not begin until the women had a level of stability in their lives – i.e. they were established in the community, were addressing their safety/justice issues, and had other critical supports in place including housing, child care and transportation.

The Bridges to Employment Program in BC requires that women must have left the abusive situation in order to be enrolled in their six-month employment program. Their experience has shown that it is not safe for women still in the abusive situation to participate and that most do

not have the capacity to focus on employment needs until they are established in a safe environment. Similarly the Moving on to Success Project in Ontario has found they have had to pay particular attention during the intake process to ensuring the woman is at the right place in her transition process for this kind of employment program.

4.2.2 Awareness of employment services

Access to information

There were some central issues raised in relation to access to information – knowing what services and supports are available, having someone who can facilitate access to this information, and openness on the part of service providers in sharing information.

A common observation of service providers and women interviewed is that they are often not aware of the range of available supports. As well, the timing of the provision of information is also critical, since in the early stages of moving from a violent situation other priorities for safety and financial security are more important. One woman interviewed highlighted a number of the issues related to information that service providers must take into account. She observed that when women are still in an abusive relationship they are not thinking clearly about employment. She felt that when they begin to think about employment, many assume they are not eligible for programs. Also those who do seek information may be intimidated or discouraged by the many places they have to go to find information and in being served by voice mail – not by human beings.

Some of the women interviewed commented that information on various program and financial supports needs to be available “in places where women go – doctors’ offices, fitness centres.” A number of informants spoke to the need for more outreach to inform potential users of services. Some informants felt that there should be a one-stop entry to services for women so that they are not required to repeatedly “tell their story” and/or present their information. The shelter staff are currently helping women with making their way through the various services and programs they need. Having access to employment service provider(s) understanding of the employment needs of victims of violence will enhance what the shelters are now able to do.

Some women were concerned that they are not being told by service providers about all that is available. To facilitate access to information, there is an onus on service providers of both employment and personal supports to be aware of, and actively share, information on services/benefits available. And in instances of self disclosure, there is potential for going beyond the information sharing: if the woman consents, she could be connected directly to an employment counsellor knowledgeable about the impact of violence on employability.

There is also a need to promote among women an understanding of the ‘helping’ role of HRLE and more generally of community-based social workers who are increasingly being employed by agencies to play this helping role. Women who have experienced violence can be guarded in their relationships with social workers – fearing to say too much as it may mean they lose benefits. Because HRLE asks individuals who avail of CEYS services to give written consent to

sharing of personal information with other service providers, some clients have the misperception that this means they may be forced to take work.

There is currently no resource kit/tool where women who have experienced violence can go for information on all the available personal and employment supports. . It would appear that development of such an inventory of services at the regional level would help address some of these information needs.

Having said this, we recognize the need to build on what is already in place – we learned about several similar inventories in our research and there may be others. LMIworks, (www.LMIworks.nl.ca), an initiative of HRLE has a comprehensive Labour Market Resource Directory (March 2006) which could provide the basis for such an inventory. We also understand that a mapping process has been undertaken by Stella Burry Community Services to bring together information on all social support programs and services in the St. John's area for mental health consumers, and that Women in Successful Employment (WISE) may be developing one on behalf of all employment service/program providers in St. John's. Also, Regional Coordinating Committees for the Violence Prevention Initiative in many areas of the province have taken on responsibility for the development of such inventories, and the status of these inventories should also be assessed. In short, further research on what is available and any fine-tuning needed to meet the needs of women who have experienced violence is an appropriate first step.

Coordination of employment services

There is a range of employment services and programs delivered by HRLE and Service Canada either directly or through community-based agencies. A number of informants felt that there are weak linkages among these service providers. While there were examples given of very strong collaboration among service providers for specific individuals, the overall concern is that everyone is so busy doing their own work that there is limited time or opportunity to share information on who is doing what.

There was an overall sense that employment service providers need to come together on a regular basis, maybe quarterly, to share information on what they are doing and how they could better coordinate services to the target population. Of note, this networking is needed in regard to services for all client groups, and is not limited to improving coordination of services to women who have experienced violence.

Future approaches need to include mechanisms for a core group to include HRLE, Regional Coordinating Committees for the Violence Prevention Initiative, NLHC, Regional Health Authorities and the shelters to meet, as these organizations provide the employment and personal supports considered to be the foundation for women who experience violence to transition to self-sufficiency. . HRLE could play a lead role in promoting these linkages among service providers.

4.2.3 Employment and career counselling

Women who have experienced violence have a broad range of educational levels and employment experience, and will need access to employment counselling that is appropriate to their needs. Those who have experienced more severe impacts on their employability due to violence will need access to a holistic counselling process that addresses the diverse barriers they face. As well, those with higher education, but who need help with the impacts of violence on other aspects of employability as identified in section 3.2 above, sometimes do not fit the profile for employment-preparation programs and may need more individualized assistance. Some may already have developed a strong level of employment readiness and may just need minimal assistance - for example help with job search.

The focus in all employment counselling must be on helping women to make informed choices about training and employment that will result in work they have an interest in and ability to do, and which will also result in good paying careers / jobs which provide a living for them and their children. Informants and women interviewed felt that women who have experienced violence have to resist taking the first job they find. The women interviewed were focused on finding work that interests them and which pays more than minimum wage. Several said that for too long they had just “made do” with their lives and they were not prepared to do that anymore.

In the approach proposed in this report, it is envisaged that a Career Development Specialist will be assigned as a lead counsellor. The lead Career Development Specialist would work with other staff of HRLE - the Client Service Officer, the Regional Career Information Resource Officer, and Liaison Social Worker – to achieve a team approach to service delivery for the client group.

For all members of the HRLE team, personal qualities will be as important as academic qualifications. Strong communications skills (in particular listening skills) and the ability to establish a trusting relationship with women will be key. They will require skills in mentoring to provide ongoing non-judgemental support to women, as they move through the transition process at a pace appropriate to their individual needs and situations. This will be particularly important as for many women this will be a process of many steps each with challenges.

Other employment service providers (e.g. pre-employment program deliverers, life skills coaches) assisting women who have experienced violence also need to have an understanding of the issues they face, in order to appropriately respond in group settings and in one-on-one service delivery. They will also need to establish and maintain a good network of resources to which women can be referred for non-employment supports.

The common consideration for members of the HRLE support team (Career Development Specialist, Client Services Officer, the Liaison Social Worker and the Regional Career Information Resource Officer) and the community based service providers is that they understand the impacts of violence on employability and have the personal and professional competencies to provide supportive counselling during all stages of the women’s transition to employment.

Informants interviewed for this study noted that there has been no training on the impact of abuse on employability for various service providers and they would welcome this. Networks exist to varying degrees (as discussed above) but need strengthening.

4.2.4 Financial support while in employment programming

Several issues were raised regarding access to financial support while in employment programming: barriers due to eligibility-based programming, lack of joint federal-provincial programming and the increased specialization of programs for specific groups.

Eligibility-based programming: Most employment programming (various pre-employment programs, wage subsidy programs, Orientation to Trades and Technology) is eligibility-based, in that participants must qualify for either Employment Insurance or Income Support. Skills training is only available to those who qualify for Employment Insurance Part II funding. Most informants identified that they serve a number of women each year who have experienced violence who do not qualify for Employment Insurance or Income Support and thus cannot get access to most programming. One program provider interviewed did have a few participants (not women who had experienced violence) who were not eligible for Employment Insurance or Income Support. The informant commented that these participants received no extras and had to demonstrate they would not need child care or transportation in order to participate in an HRLE-sponsored bridging initiative.

Many informants identified cases where the transition to financial self-sufficiency for women is prolonged as they go from pre-employment programming sponsored by HRLE to work rather than directly to skills training. They do this to qualify for Employment Insurance so that they can get funding to attend the training. Their transition process to good paying work can then be prolonged for many years.

Some informants identified a need for HRLE to review (in conjunction with the Department of Education) the eligibility criteria and funding levels for employment development supports provided by the provincial government in order to develop ways of making these more accessible to women who have experienced violence.

Many informants suggested that a fund be established to support women who do not meet the criteria for current programs that are eligibility-based.

Joint programming: Most employment-preparation programming is for either those eligible for Employment Insurance or Income Support but not both. Orientation to Trades and Technology was cited as the only program in which both Employment Insurance and Income Support clients are funded. Informants identified a need for more such joint programming based on the needs of the individual women – not on eligibility.

Programs for target groups: Some informants were concerned about the increasing specialization of employment services/programs (e.g. for youth, older workers, single mothers) leading to silos, duplication, and ineligibility of some women who do not fit the criteria. This is particularly a concern in smaller labour markets where there may be too small a population to

sustain programs for specific labour market groups. Further, due to this enhanced focus on populations fitting specific criteria, there is a perception that the needs of those with complex needs are not being well met.

Two additional and more specific financial support issues were also raised:

There is a concern that women staying at shelters who are not in receipt of Income Support and who receive a Personal Allowance from the Department Health and Community Services may not have access to HRLE employment development supports. One example given was support for transportation for job search and/or attendance at training. In discussion with HRLE officials clarification was provided that these women may only need to demonstrate eligibility for Income Support - they are “not required” to make an application for income support to be eligible to access these supports. There is a need to ensure this policy is communicated to all HRLE service providers and shelters.

The Orientation to Trades and Technology Program includes overnight trips to do labour market research. Participants who do not have family supports to take care of their children (including teenagers) while away often cannot afford to go. The benefits paid to participants while on overnight trips were also considered by an informant as very low in relation to actual costs. So in order to participate in this aspect of programming, a woman must take money she has budgeted for other needs.

4.2.5 Access to employment programming

There are varied levels of access to pre-employment programs, academic upgrading and skills training across the four research sites.

St. John’s offers the widest range of opportunities for both pre-employment programming and skills training on an ongoing basis. Corner Brook also offers a good range of pre-employment and skills training on an ongoing basis.

In Marystown, the College of the North Atlantic (in Burin) offers a Career Exploration for Women at least once a year. There is also one public and two private training institutions plus a literacy program provider.

Labrador West has a more limited array of programs. No pre-employment programs are offered and the College of the North Atlantic offers a limited number of technical, administrative and trades programs.

The HRLE Linkages program is offered at all four sites, but was not offered this year in Labrador West due to insufficient numbers of participants.

Programs for women

There are several pre-employment and employment programs focused specifically on women across the current research sites:

- Women Interested in Successful Employment (WISE) is offered in St. John's,
- The Single Parents' Association of Newfoundland Single Parents Employment Program is offered in St. John's
- HRLE offers an Employment Transition Program for single mothers in Corner Brook and is considering expanding this to other regions
- Career Exploration for Women is offered by the College of the North Atlantic at the Burin Campus
- Orientation to Trades and Technology (OTT) is offered by the College of the North Atlantic at St. John's, Corner Brook and Burin campuses.

Informants from some of these programs indicated that they offer a combination of group and individual work so that the specific needs of women are met. Most staff from these transitional initiatives indicated that they would welcome specific training and capacity building regarding strategies for assisting women who have experienced violence. This array of programs could form the basis for pre-employment, career exploration supports for women who have experienced violence.

Rural areas

Informants noted that there are very limited training opportunities in rural areas. If women have to move away from their homes for training it can be costly, and they also are removed from their support networks which are considered key to their success.

4.2.6 Access to employment (job brokering, wage subsidies)

Job brokering and wage subsidies are considered necessities for the target population but again of less use in rural areas where opportunities for employment are limited. Some informants noted that, depending on the labour market, the job ends when the subsidy ends.

A concern cited by many was that minimum wage employment would not provide a living wage for the target population and would not be feasible, especially for those with dependents. It was suggested that to provide an added incentive for women to take employment the Earned Income Supplement now provided to women who participate in the SPAN Single Parent Employment Support Program and in the HRLE Employment Transitions Program be provided to women who have experienced violence.

4.2.7 Job retention supports

A common concern was the need for the development of awareness among employers on their role in supporting women who work for them and who have experienced violence. Informants and women interviewed were concerned that employers generally are not supportive of women

who have experienced violence, as today's work place is a fast paced environment which does not lend itself to supporting "problem" employees. Women do not divulge to their employers at the time of hiring that they have issues around violence and, once employed, often do not have the confidence necessary to approach an employer with the issues that may be affecting their work. One woman interviewed said she had been terminated when she missed time due to illness that was related to abuse. Another lost her job when her ex-partner kept coming to her place of work to harass her.

Informants felt that several strategies are needed:

- Helping women to develop their skills and capacity to deal with their employment barriers before they start work;
- Educating employers on their responsibilities to accommodate employees who may be affected by violence.
- Mentoring women as they move into employment and for a period of time while employed in order to advise them on handling issues that arise. Protecting the women's privacy will be paramount in any mentoring process.

Some informants interviewed for this study commented that, with the labour market tightening up in this province, there may be opportunities (and a need) for employment service providers to work with employers and business associations to help them develop the understanding and skills to employ 'non-traditional' workers. Others noted that, given the prevalence of violence against women (and to a lesser extent against men), the impact of violence on employability is a workplace issue that bears a broader awareness strategy.

In Ontario, one of seven pilot projects being conducted with funding from the provincial government under the Employment and Training Pilot Program for women who have experienced violence recently conducted interviews with a small sample of employers. All had had employees who had experienced violence. An informant from the program said they learned that employers are desperate for advice on how to appropriately deal with such situations. In part, this is driven by the tight labour market where employers have to be more open to hiring workers that may face more complex barriers to employment.

Many informants stressed the need to develop an approach to educating employers on the impact of violence on the workplace and their role in accommodating employees who are affected by violence. Such an awareness initiative would need to involve such partners as Violence Prevention Initiative and groups that represent of employers, such as the Employer's Council.

4.2.8 Considerations for specific groups

Older women

Older women needing employment services may never have worked outside the home or have no recent attachment to the workforce and therefore no job search skills. Informants felt that this population may be quite intimidated at the thought of having to go to work because they have

little or no skills training, lower levels of formal education, lack of awareness of their skills, lack of confidence in their abilities and/or fear of the technology which is now needed in most jobs.

Younger women

Informants felt that young women who have experienced violence are disconnected from services and so do not know where to begin to access support. Informants stated that younger women often have complex needs – addictions, mental health issues, poverty, etc. Abuse is often an inter-generational issue and many consider it normal.

Some informants felt that due to their age and stage in their lives, young women are often not ready to seek employment. Many live in the moment and are not focused on work that would cut into their “ideal” lifestyle (e.g. Income Support and an apartment are their aspirations) and so there is no attention to long-term goals as long as these needs are met. Also, they often have low education levels and little or no employment experience. Some felt that younger women would benefit greatly from supported employment, including access to job coaches, training in conflict resolution, and mentoring to learn essential work skills.

It was felt that young women with children might be more ready to move to training or employment at age 30 plus - when their children are in school, child care is less of an issue and a level of maturity has been achieved.

Women with disabilities

All personal and employment-related supports must be accessible to and accommodating of persons with disabilities. In particular informants referenced women who have mental health issues and their need to be stable, established and have access to a continuum of supports (e.g. home supports, counselling, job coaches, employment counsellors) if they are to be successfully employed.

Aboriginal women

There is one Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) holder for the island portion of the province, which provides access to training programs for individuals who are eligible for Employment Insurance. Services are provided by distance from one central location, and the organization has not served any women who self-identified as having experienced violence.

Some informants observed that this population experiences both cultural and language barriers resulting in them being very isolated and cautious in their relationships. Some informants remarked that issues which young aboriginal women bring are complex: they are more marginalized and isolated due to the often extreme nature of their poverty and abuse issues. To be responsive to their needs, service providers must be informed about and understand their life experiences.

Immigrant women

In terms of experience of violence, immigrant women who come as refugees to Canada may have experienced the trauma of war and conflict and the associated violence against women that occurs as part of these conflicts. An understanding of this background is needed by service providers.

Most informants cited language barriers and lack of interpreters as the key issues in supporting immigrant women who have experienced violence. A shelter informant stated that in some cases they have had to depend on a woman's children to translate what she is saying and/or converse through translators in Halifax. It also was felt that many immigrant women do not know about available services – perhaps because of isolation from mainstream services.

Cultural issues also create huge barriers for immigrant women. It was noted that many have come from countries where women are subservient to men who are the controlling influences in their lives. Often they have little or no education and are extremely reluctant to discuss their experiences and reticent to trust. If they leave their husbands, they are often not able to access their local multi-cultural community because their ex-partner remains a part of this community.

Due to the differences in the immigrant women's cultures and values, it was felt that service providers need a level of cultural competence in providing services.

The Association for New Canadians offers AXIS (Acquiring Experience Integrating Skills) career services for immigrants in St. John's. This provides both group and individual client-participant focused services to prepare immigrants for employment and to facilitate work placements. This service is one of several integrated services provided by the Association to meet the full range of immigrants' needs.

4.2.9 Summary

Women who have experienced violence have unique backgrounds and experiences and varied levels of readiness to make the transition to work. There are also common needs across this client group that must be factored into programs and services. In particular there is a need for development of capacity across all service providers to understand the impacts of violence on employability and the required program and service responses. There is currently an array of pre-employment and career exploration programming in place which can form the starting point of an enhanced approach to meeting the needs of this client group.

5.0 Proposed approach to service delivery

5.1 Context

This section sets out a *proposed* approach to delivery of employment supports for women who have experienced violence for consideration by HRLE and WPO and their government and community-based partners, as they move forward on the implementation of government's commitment under the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Violence Prevention Initiative. This proposed approach is based on what was learned from the research regarding employment support needs and the context for delivery within HRLE and the community-based sector in the province. It is intended as a framework to guide the decisions of government, together with their community-based partners. The ultimate service components and delivery approach may vary from that proposed in this report.

Women seeking transitional employment supports will have varied attachments to the paid workforce, and diverse educational and employment needs. Throughout the transition process, a range of personal and economic supports will need to be provided to the individual, and made accessible in a seamless manner by supportive service providers. Some may need part-time programming and flexibility in financial supports to accommodate this pattern of participation. Some may need the opportunity to opt out of services and programs for a period of time as issues emerge. The supports will be needed, in some cases, throughout a lengthy transition process - during preparation for training and employment, in finding work, and in maintaining work. Each phase in the transition process must be responsive to the individual and may involve a combination of individual supports/counselling complemented by participation in group programming.

Features of the proposed approach include:

- facilitating the provision of services in the community (specifically at shelters/transitions houses) and conducting outreach activities
- building the capacity of existing employment services and programs to provide services to women who have experienced violence
- enhancing coordination of employment services with those offered by service providers responsible for providing a range of personal supports to women and their children ...

...rather than the development of a new parallel program specifically for women who have experienced violence.

5.2 Objective

The aim is to reduce and ultimately to prevent poverty among women who have experienced violence by building their capacity to prepare for, find and retain employment that will enable them to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

5.3 Target groups to be served

Two target groups will be served:

- The **primary** target group is women who have experienced violence and need help in making the transition towards employment or in maintaining employment. This group will be served directly by the program as they self-identify prior to or during service delivery. Most of these women are expected to be those who use the services of shelters and transition houses across the province, and who will be identified by shelter staff.
- The **secondary** target group is women who are at risk of experiencing violence and need help in making the transition towards employment. This group will be informed of employment services as part of program outreach.

The two target groups will include women who have experienced or who are at risk of experiencing all forms of violence: by their intimate partner, parent(s) or others. The group includes those who have experienced abuse in childhood or adulthood, those who have been sexually assaulted, and immigrant women who have suffered trauma as a result of conflict /war and whose employability is affected by this violence.

5.4 Management structure

Provincial level

The development of this approach to delivery of employment supports will be led by HRLE and delivered in collaboration with WPO (including the Violence Prevention Initiative), and the network of shelters/transition houses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The approach will be coordinated with those programs and services which offer personal supports to women who experience violence and their children through:

- Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) - Child, Youth, and Family Services, Addictions Services, Mental Health Services
- NLHC - Housing
- Department of Justice - Victim Services.

A provincial steering committee will be formed comprised of representatives of all of the above departments and organizations. A provincial coordinator will be assigned at HRLE to lead the development and implementation of the approach.

The role of the committee will be to:

- provide advice to HRLE and partners on the design of the approach to service delivery
- review and approve an implementation plan
- monitor implementation
- provide input to the evaluation.

Regional level

At the regional level, HRLE will manage the implementation of the approach to service delivery. HRLE will collaborate with the local shelter/transition house, the Regional Violence Prevention Initiative Committee, Regional Health Authority, NLHC and the Department of Justice on delivery of the approach.

Within HRLE at the regional level, a team approach will be used in developing and implementing the approach to and to coordinating service delivery. The team will include the lead Career Development Specialist, Client Services Officer, Regional Career Information Resource Officer, and the Liaison Social Worker.

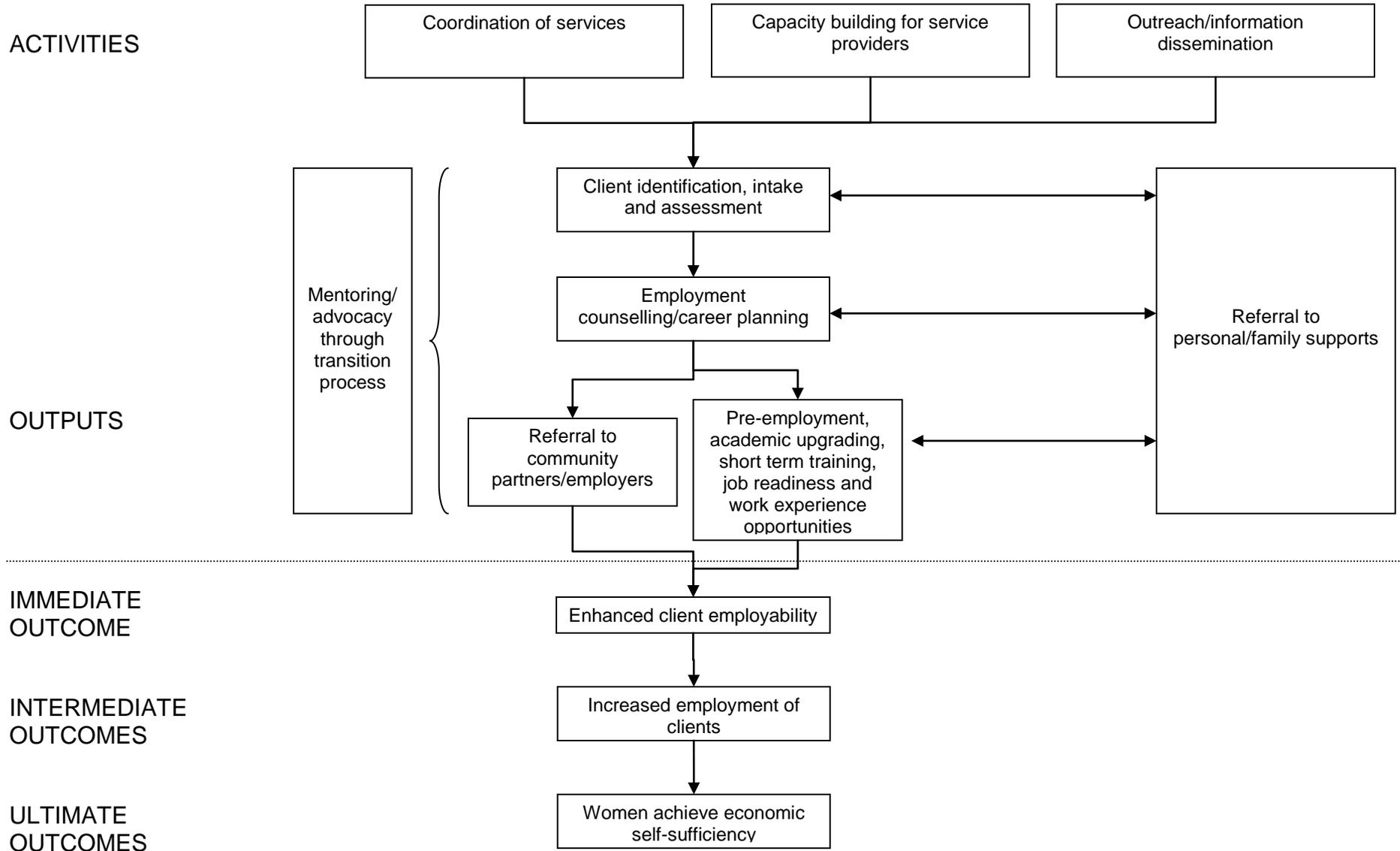
5.5 Activities, Outputs and Outcomes

The approach to delivery of employment supports for women who have experienced violence will have three main component activities:

1. Coordination of services
2. Capacity building for service providers
3. Outreach/information dissemination

A logic model for the program is shown on the following page. A narrative description of each component of the logic model follows.

Transitional Employment Supports for Women Who Have Experienced Violence



5.5.1 Activities

1. COORDINATION OF SERVICES

Coordination at the provincial level

A program coordinator will be assigned at HRLE provincial office to carry out the program design and to develop and lead an implementation plan. This coordinator will work under the direction of the provincial steering committee, and will work in collaboration with the lead Career Development Specialists, together with other members of HRLE team in each region, to achieve a level of consistency across the province in the planned approach, but one that is responsive to the needs and environment at each site (e.g. taking into consideration the variations in numbers of clients and array of service providers).

The provincial level coordinator will also lead the development of components of the initiative that would be more appropriately done at the provincial level.

Regional coordination

The HRLE team (lead Career Development Specialist, Client Services Officer, the Regional Career Information Resource Officer, and the Liaison Social Worker) will facilitate collaboration among service providers (convening group meetings, advocating for services) in providing services. This will include identifying cases where flexibility is needed in the application of policies or where it appears that improved coordination of services is needed to ensure individuals' needs are met.

Networking

HRLE will organize regular networking sessions for all service providers (of employment and personal supports and including representation from Violence Prevention Initiative regional committees) as a means of keeping the linkages active, improving awareness of respective activities, and to support a coordinated approach to delivering services. A listserv of service providers should also be developed to facilitate information exchange and coordination.

2. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Capacity within HRLE

It is envisaged that a team will be formed in each HRLE region to lead the approach to providing employment supports to women who have experienced violence. The team will be comprised of:

- Lead Career Development Specialist who will liaise with shelter staff and provide direct employment services and supports to clients;
- Client Services Officer who will participate in the service needs assessment, and the provision of services;

- Liaison Social Workers who will play a key role in supporting clients with complex needs in accessing HRLE services and connecting these clients to services of other providers;
- Regional Career Information Resource Officers who will be engaged in supporting effective program design, partner training, and working with the employer community to increase understanding of and accommodation of employees who have experienced violence.

In addition to serving individual women, the role of this HRLE team will include:

- education of other service providers (within HRLE and externally) on needs of the client group, including participation in delivery of the workshops cited above
- identification of systemic barriers (policies and the way these are interpreted) and playing a role in getting these barriers addressed
- the development of a tool kit, that will include communications products unique to this initiative in response to the needs of women and their employers
- liaison with other service providers and brokering for referral of individuals to other employment and personal supports – a collaborative, problem-prevention and problem-solving approach.
- community outreach to establish links with service providers and with vulnerable populations of women - before and after they leave abusive situations. This will require creative approaches to linking up with organizations such as Community Centres and Family Resource Centres to plant the seed of awareness of employment options for women who may not now be in the labour market
- employer education on the issue of violence and its impact on the workplace / their responsibilities
- job brokering to support job search and mentoring once work is found to ensure job retention - or arranging for access to job brokering services provided by others.

Assigning a lead Career Development Specialist in each region for this initiative represents an important step in capacity building within HRLE and the community in regards to programming focused on women who have experienced violence. Having these staff spend time in shelters/transition houses and/or women's centres is key to ensuring the program is informed by the perspective of the community and the women themselves. The Career Development Specialist role will be dynamic, involving employment assessment and counselling, case management, advocacy, and mentoring.

The role requires comprehensive skills in employment counselling and communications, a background in working with and for women, an understanding of the impact of violence on employability and strategies for helping women who have experienced violence to develop their capacity to address the barriers to employment they face.

The role will require flexibility and innovation in helping individual women in their transition to work and in keeping work. It will also require identifying systemic barriers in programming that excludes some women and working with others to remove these.

Capacity of other service providers

Workshops for employment service providers

As a means of developing the capacity of other service providers, a workshop should be developed for all employment service providers to help build their understanding of the impacts of violence on employability and approaches to helping women develop their capacity to overcome the barriers they face. It is anticipated workshop participants would then incorporate this understanding in tailoring their interventions to the needs of these individual women.

The workshop should cover such topics as understanding woman abuse, the impacts of abuse on employability and connecting and linking with local resources and service providers. Such a workshop is currently being developed and piloted in Ontario by A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW), an umbrella group, of supporters, trainers, agencies, and organizations delivering employment and training services to women. Contact should be made with ACTEW once their program is developed and as it is evaluated to learn from their experience and to build on their material.

Some organizations that provide training exclusively for women (SPAN, WISE, Employment Transitions, OTT) may need more in-depth training on learning strategies for those who have experienced violence. This could be accomplished by engaging an organization like Bridges to Employment to advise on or provide this training.

An online version of the workshop (self-paced) should be developed to reach a broad range of service providers on an ongoing basis.

3. OUTREACH AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Outreach/visits to other service providers of employment and personal supports

The lead Career Development Specialist will make contact with and carry out regular visits to other service providers of employment and personal supports to establish linkages and facilitate referrals.

Visits will be made to shelters/transition houses to maintain linkages and to provide employment services and counselling to individual women who request these services be provided at these sites – or to connect individual women with appropriate employment service providers at HRLE or in the community.

Visits will also be made to Community Centres located at social housing developments and to Family Resource Centres to establish linkages with program staff to facilitate referrals and to help promote awareness among their clients of the employment services and options available to them. The premise is that at least some of these individuals may fit the target group for this program.

In regard to Community Centres, HRLE has recently funded the Community Centre Alliance to expand its career and employment strategy for families living in social housing now operating in St. John's to four communities across the province: Labrador (specific site to be determined), Corner Brook, Marystown and Grand Falls-Windsor. Called Makin' It Work, this neighbourhood-based approach focuses on collaborative delivery of services appropriate to each locale and in particular on links to employment. This should be an effective avenue for outreach

for the employment supports for women who have experienced violence. There may also be other employment programs delivered in these social housing developments with which linkages should be established.

The Career Development Specialists also will develop a plan for outreach to government and community-based services in rural areas of the regions. It is recognized that effective outreach to rural areas will be a challenge, given the weaker labour markets and lack of services. There will be a need in each region to tailor an appropriate approach. This should be done in collaboration with the provincial steering committee (and their representatives at the regional level) and with other service providers such as Family Resource Centres, schools, police, municipalities, and Regional Economic Development Boards.

Resource inventory

To respond to the women's need for improved access to information, an inventory of resources should be developed. This inventory, tailored to each region within a provincial format (common look and quality standard), should bring together information on all services, programs and supports (financial and non-financial) to meet both personal and employment needs of women who have experienced violence.

This product should build on any other existing resource inventories and any that are in the planning stages (as noted earlier in this report). In particular they should be developed in collaboration with the Regional Violence Prevention Initiative Committees.

The resource inventory should be designed to meet the needs of service providers and women seeking services. An electronic form of the inventory should be linked to various relevant websites. A process for ongoing tracking of changes in programs and services and updating of the inventory should be developed and maintained.

An accompanying brochure should be developed to explain the inventory and how to access it. This should be widely distributed to places where women access various services (e.g. doctors' offices).

Outreach to employers

Outreach, information dissemination and awareness building should be carried out with employers and employer associations. This aspect of the program requires further research and development, in collaboration with the Violence Prevention Initiative and the employer community. In particular there is a need for further research on the needs of employers in supporting women in their workplaces who have experienced violence. Based on this research, an approach to meeting their needs should be developed. This should also examine any legislative or policy levers available to require such support from employers for this situation (e.g. Human Rights Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act).

We envisage that over time these efforts might result in an awareness campaign about violence and its impact on the workplace, as well as individual assistance for employers (e.g. workshops such as are planned for service providers) on their responsibilities and strategies.

The above activities – Capacity Building for Service Providers, Coordination of Services and Outreach/Information Dissemination, – are expected to influence the next level of activities in the delivery of employment supports, as described below.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF CLIENTS, INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT

Women who could potentially benefit from the program may be identified by various service providers:

The primary target group for the program – women who use shelters – will be identified by shelter staff and referred to the lead Career Development Specialist.

The lead Career Development Specialist may identify women who have experienced violence through their outreach work in the community and through direct service delivery at HRLE offices.

HRLE staff carrying out intake and assessment for Income Support benefits will appropriately refer women who self-identify as having experienced violence for various HRLE benefits. Those expressing an interest in employment will be referred to the lead Career Development Specialist.

Other employment agencies such as EAS offices, Youth Employment Services, etc. may also serve women who self-identify as having experienced violence; in these cases, they will liaise with the lead staff where it is deemed appropriate in meeting needs and with the informed consent of the client.

In each case above, the service provider will use the standard intake and assessment process they use for all clients.

As noted in section 7.1 of this report, the highest priority must be placed on protecting the privacy and safety of women being served, and in ensuring the confidentiality of any information gathered and maintained on clients and services provided.

5. EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING AND CAREER PLANNING

The counselling process will preferably include completion of the Employment Readiness Scale, a tool that has been adopted by HRLE and at least some community agencies funded by HRLE. This will serve two purposes:

- to identify needs and plan services (including referrals to other agencies for personal supports where these have not already been accessed)
- to help in developing a profile of women served in the program for use in the evaluation.

6. MENTORING, ADVOCACY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORTS THROUGHOUT THE TRANSITION PROCESS

The HRLE team, together with other service providers will provide various supports throughout the counselling process and while women are enrolled in programs. Two supports in particular will need to be developed:

- **MENTORING/ADVOCACY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORTS THROUGH TRANSITION PROCESS**

The HRLE team will provide mentoring and advocacy to support each client as she progresses through the transition process. This will include facilitation of access to other service providers.

- **REFERRALS TO PERSONAL/FAMILY SUPPORTS**

At all steps in the transition process, referrals to a network of service providers who offer personal or family supports will be facilitated as needed by the HRLE team, with the lead for this being the Career Development Specialist. Referrals may also be made to employment service providers by the agencies providing personal supports.

Other considerations in the delivery of employment supports

- **Flexibility in delivery**

Some women may require a leave of absence from programming for personal or family reasons. Programs will need to be designed to accommodate an individual's return when she is ready to resume the transition process. One approach would be to implement continuous intake processes for pre-employment programming. (We note that the BC Bridges to Employment program is now moving in this direction.)

- **Financial assistance while in programming**

It is recommended that further research be done on the feasibility of allocating funds (to be held centrally at HRLE) to support women who do not qualify for Employment Insurance or Income Support while they attend employment and employment-preparation programming.

5.5.2 Outputs

The above activities will result in two outputs:

- **Referral to other employment agencies**

Service providers may need to refer women to other employment agencies for a continuation of services or for entry into new services or programs offered by these other agencies.

- **Employment services, skills enhancement, and work experience opportunities**

This represents the opportunities that service providers offer to help individual clients improve their readiness for employment. These services and opportunities should link to the employment

barriers and proposed actions outlined in the client's employment plan. Activities could include life skills, job-seeking skills as well as academic upgrading and workplace-related skills.

We are **not** recommending the offering of specific group services focused solely on the needs of women who have experienced violence, for the following reasons:

- Specific group programming may not be appropriate for those who have more complex issues and barriers as result of the violence.
- While the experience in programs offered now in British Columbia and Ontario is that programs specifically for women who have experienced violence provide valuable peer support, we perceive that there is a risk of stigmatization. Informants interviewed for this study who are delivering group programming (for single mothers or generic groups) observed that when women who have experienced violence reveal their situation, the peer support from other participants has been evident and powerful.
- The literature and some informants interviewed indicate that there are at least some participants in various generic programming (pre-employment, literacy) who have experienced some form of violence – they may not have self-identified but the issue and the impact on them becomes apparent as they progress through the program.

Consequently, we are recommending generic group programming be utilized and that program facilitators be trained in strategies that recognize the impacts of violence on learning.

We are recommending that training be provided to organizations that now offer group programming to build their capacity to provide relevant assistance to women who have experienced violence - through both group and individual interventions. This would be accomplished through the workshops proposed above. As noted, some service providers who work exclusively with women (SPAN, WISE, Employment Transitions) may need more in-depth training on learning strategies for those who have experienced violence. This could be accomplished by engaging an organization like Bridges to Employment to provide additional training.

There is also a need to ensure that service providers have a good network of community services to whom they can refer women for the various supports they need. The inventory of resources and regular networking sessions are ways of supporting this network.

5.5.3 Outcomes

- **Immediate outcome**

As a consequence of the outputs, the immediate outcome is:

Enhanced employment readiness – As a result of the activities undertaken by service providers and the outputs they produce, it is expected that women will be more ready for employment, i.e. they will be able, with little or no assistance, to find, acquire, and keep an appropriate job, as well as manage transitions to new jobs as needed. This enhancement may occur in many ways including (but not limited to) improved capacity to self-manage the employment barriers they

face as a result of the violence they have experienced, improved work skills, better awareness of labour market opportunities, improved job search skills, improved personal/life skills and support networks, and skills acquisition for the work desired. A variety of products are available to measure such improvements. HRLE has adopted the Employment Readiness Scale and some community-based service providers use this tool.

- **Intermediate outcome**

As a consequence of enhanced employment readiness, the intermediate outcome is increased employment of women. The purpose of working with women who have experienced violence to enhance their employment readiness is to increase the chances they will be successful in obtaining work in the labour market.

- **Ultimate outcome**

The ultimate outcome of the program is that women who have experienced violence will achieve economic self-sufficiency. As a consequence of this economic self-sufficiency, the women assisted will be less likely to experience violence.

6.0 Action plan and budget

6.1 Action plan

The following chart sets out the next steps proposed for development of the initiative. This action plan is set out to guide the work of HRLE, in collaboration with its partners in this development work.

The action plan is based on the understanding that full funding for the initiative has not yet been allocated. Initial stages will involve further development of a proposed implementation plan, a plan that will include staffing and appropriate services.

Action plan for initiative development	
Program management and human resources	Formalize provincial steering committee, verify committee's terms of reference, membership and invite planned members to participate.
	Assign provincial coordinator role.
Program activities	<p>Develop and submit for approval a proposed implementation plan to include: a program service definition; a human resource plan; training plan; product development; communications plan and tools, budget, policies and procedures in including client referral requirements; and evaluation plan/tools.</p> <p>The implementation plan includes a commitment to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a team approach within each HRLE region • Maintaining and further developing partnership approaches established between HRLE and the shelters • Working with the VPI initiative

6.2 Estimated budget

The Terms of Reference for this study called for the inclusion of costing for the development and implementation of the approach to delivery of transitional employment supports to victims of violence.

The following are cost categories are a *very preliminary estimate* of costs, based on the above proposed action plan and approach to service delivery. These costs will need to be further researched as part of the full development of the initiative.

Where costs have been estimated they are for a two-year period. The Implementation Plan, when submitted to the steering committee, needs to include detailed project/approach specific costs.

Development of an approach to delivery of transitional employment supports – Budget estimates			
Cost Category	Salaries \$	Other costs \$	Assumptions
<i>Program management</i>			
Meetings of provincial steering committee		12,600	4 in-person meetings @ \$3000 (assuming one rep from each region) 6 teleconference meetings @ \$100
Provincial coordinator	120,000	10,000	Estimate \$60,000 annual salary plus travel costs
Regional team meetings		800	8 meetings each refreshments only
HRLE staff in regions	400,000		
<i>Coordination</i>			
Networking sessions, travel within regional catchment areas		12,000	
<i>Capacity building</i>			
Training staff		20,000	Estimate \$5000 each for various courses
Workshops for service providers		14,000	\$4000 development costs \$1000 for delivery x 6 workshops \$4000 for development of on-line version
<i>Outreach</i>			
Employer awareness /outreach		10,000	\$10,000 to do research and develop /test

Development of an approach to delivery of transitional employment supports – Budget estimates			
Cost Category	Salaries \$	Other costs \$	Assumptions
			awareness program
Resource inventory, communication tool to clients, and employers		5,000	In house by provincial coordinator, in collaboration with lead CDSs and dept communications staff. Production costs only
Financial assistance – employment development supports		200,000	Flexible envelop to address identified gaps in service
Performance measurement and evaluation		40,000	Ongoing monitoring in-house Evaluation (two phases)
Total estimated budget	\$520,000	\$324,400	

In summary, a preliminary estimate of the cost of the initiative over a two-year period is \$844,400 for all proposed components.

7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

This section sets out a proposed approach to monitoring and evaluating the development of this initiative. This plan is intended to guide the decisions of the steering committee on this aspect of development of the initiative. This plan may require modification as the implementation proceeds and decisions are made on the design of the initiative.

7.1 Client identification

A method will be needed to developed (as part of the design of the initiative) to determine whether the efforts to improve coordination of services, the capacity of service providers to meet their needs and outreach have led to reaching the target group. There will also be a need for some type of follow-up with individual women served to obtain their perspective on how well programs and services met their needs in moving towards employment and economic self-sufficiency.

This implies some means of identifying individuals receiving services through this initiative so that this follow up can be carried out. It is recognized that this aspect of the initiative needs to be planned with the utmost care by the provincial steering committee, with the highest attention to the confidentiality of the information collected in order to protect the privacy and safety of the women served.

This aspect will also need to include a process to obtain informed consent from the women served. This process would inform them of the initiative, advise them how any information collected will be used, maintained and protected, and request their permission to follow up with them as part of monitoring or evaluation.

7.2 Monitoring plan

The monitoring should focus on tracking and documentation of the progress made in the detailed planning and implementation of the initiative. A schedule for monitoring reports (e.g quarterly) should be established. A format for the reports should be developed to track progress made for each key action. This should include quantitative information on level of activity as well as qualitative information (e.g. feedback from participants in capacity building workshops). The reports should also identify any factors (positive or negative) impacting on progress, any deviations from the plan and the rationale for these changes, and the projected impact of the changes on the initiative). Expenditures for each action should also be tracked.

7.3 Evaluation plan

7.3.1 Test questions

It is proposed that the evaluation of the initiative focus on the following test questions:

- Does the coordination of services, capacity building for service providers and outreach lead to access to a continuum of transitional employment supports appropriate to the needs of women who have experienced violence?
- Does the access to transitional employment supports for women who have experienced violence enable them to move towards economic self-sufficiency through employment?

7.3.2 Evaluation questions

The following are the broad evaluation questions to be used to guide information collection and analysis as well as the proposed sources of this information (evaluation methods). These questions will need to be refined once decisions are made on the specifics of design and delivery of the proposed approach.

Evaluation questions and sources		
Program component	Evaluation Issues	Sources
Program Management	<p>Did the management structure, resources, and processes provide the appropriate leadership for the design and implementation of the approach to delivery of employment supports to women who have experienced violence?</p> <p>For the engagement of partners?</p> <p>For developing understanding among all partners of the impacts of violence on employability and required program interventions?</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p>
Coordination of services	<p>Did the coordination of activities at the provincial level result in the appropriate degree of consistency and tailoring in the approach across the province?</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p>
	<p>Did liaison by the Career Development Specialists with shelter/transition houses facilitate identifying clients and their access to services?</p>	<p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Client focus groups or survey</p>
	<p>Did the coordination of services at the regional level facilitate access to services at the appropriate time for women using shelters?</p>	<p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Client focus</p>

Evaluation questions and sources		
Program component	Evaluation Issues	Sources
		groups or survey
	Did the coordination of services and networking at the regional level result in an improved continuum of employment services and personal supports?	Key informant interviews Client focus groups or survey
Capacity building for service providers	Did the development of the HRLE team approach and capacity of the team result in the appropriate skill sets to carry out the approach?	Key informant interviews
	Did the workshops and other capacity building for service providers result in improved understanding of the impacts of violence on employability and increased capacity to provide appropriate employment supports for women who have experienced violence?	Key informant interviews
Outreach/information dissemination	Did the HRLE outreach activities to other service providers (of employment and personal supports) result in reaching women at risk of violence?	Key informant interviews Client focus groups or survey
	Did the dissemination of information on employment and personal services and supports improve awareness of and access to these services and supports among women who experienced violence? Among service providers?	Key informant interviews Client focus groups or survey
	Did the outreach to employers result in improved awareness among employers of their role in supporting women who have experienced violence in the workplace? Did it result in responsive action by employers to support women?	Key informant interviews Client focus groups or survey Interviews with employers
Continuum of employment services/supports	What proportion of women considered potential clients of the program accessed services?	Key informant interviews
	Was the delivery of employment services tailored to the needs of individual women?	Key informant interviews Client focus groups or survey
	To what extent were referrals to personal and family supports made? Were these personal and family supports accessed in a timely manner? Did the supports facilitate the transition to employment?	Key informant interviews
	What difference did the mentoring and advocacy provided make to clients' transition towards employment?	Key informant interviews Client focus

Evaluation questions and sources		
Program component	Evaluation Issues	Sources
		groups or survey
Outcomes	To what extent was the employment readiness of clients enhanced?	Key informant interviews Client focus groups or survey
	What were the employment outcomes of clients? To what extent did clients achieve self-sufficiency?	Key informant interviews Client focus groups or survey

7.3.3 Evaluation phases

Two phases of information collection and reporting are proposed:

- An interim phase after year one of development/implementation of the approach to assess progress with planned activities, early feedback of service providers on the success of the capacity building and to identify any fine-tuning needed in activities, management and resourcing.
- A final phase at the end of year two of implementation of the approach to assess impacts and to inform the decision on continuation of this approach.

7.3.4 Evaluation methods

The proposed evaluation methods to be included in both phases are:

- A review of documents including planning documents, minutes of meetings, policy documents, etc.
- Key informant interviews with various service providers involved in the program design and delivery
- Focus groups or surveys of clients served. This method will be dependent on development of an appropriate, confidential method of identifying clients. One alternative, if such a method cannot be achieved, would be conducting focus groups with a cross section of clients of transition houses/shelters as was done as part of the research for this report
- Interviews with employers engaged in any awareness building activity of the program – in the final phase only.

