Career Education in Atlantic Canada: Research & Recommendations

FINAL REPORT

Submitted to: Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET)

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An Atlantic Career Education Strategy for Provincial Action

Executive Summary

Canada's youth unemployment continues to be disproportionately elevated, our student summer jobless rate has hit the highest level since data has been collected and our youth underemployment rates are the second highest among OECD countries as far too many young adults are caught in precarious, non-permanent jobs that are not commensurate with their education. The Atlantic Provinces are no exception. While the Atlantic Provinces have the highest university participation rates in Canada, they also have some of the poorest attainment rates. Despite skill and labour shortages in all Atlantic Provinces, youth are turning away from vital post-secondary feeder programs and migrating out of the Atlantic region to find work.

The world of work is – simply put – not what it used to be. The relatively secure and stable career trajectories of the 20th century have been replaced with fast-changing, compound, complex and more precarious ones.

Career development is focused on understanding these labour market complexities and ensuring individuals have the critical knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to effectively navigate educational and employment choices, transitions and progression. Career education is the application of age-appropriate and career development to students in public education.

The economic and human imperative for career education is compelling. Quality career education impacts not only educational attainment, but also worker productivity, health, dependence on social assistance, criminal involvement, and capacity to contribute to tax revenues. Career education has been demonstrated to reduce high school drop-out (Kotamaraju, 2011) and increase student academic achievement, particularly in key science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) areas (SAS, 2012). According to Jarvis (2013) even if career education only produce a 1% increase in government revenues and productivity and a 1% decrease in social costs this would represent over $20 billion annually for Canadians. This amount could pay the salaries of over 250,000 educators, provide for new resources/facilities or cover the full post-secondary tuition of a million students.

Accordingly, many jurisdictions around the world are harnessing the potential of career education as a means to achieving key socio-economic targets. In a significant and positive step forward, CAMET contracted with the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) to conduct an Environmental Scan of current practice and an analysis to uncover strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Based on this and a review of best Canadian

and international best practices, CCDF was engaged to provide recommendations to strengthen career education.

This project comprised four phases:

1. An Environmental Scan Report based on a review of key source documents;

2. A SWOT Analysis was conducted in order to integrate the voices to key stakeholder groups:
   - Face-to-face focus groups with secondary school students
   - An online survey of young adults (those who had not transitioned to post-secondary, those who had but had not persisted and those currently in post-secondary)
   - Telephone focus groups with parents/guardians; and
   - Key informant interviews with educators.

3. A review of best practice in career education was completed; and

4. The research was synthesized into priority recommendations, including steps to support implementation and evaluation plan.

Key recommendations include the following:

- **Develop and Publish an Atlantic Career Education Strategy**.

  This would position the Atlantic Provinces as visible leaders, provide provinces with a road map to guide implementation and define benchmarks to support quality assurance and reportable student success outcomes.

- **Provide Training and Professional Learning for Educators and Administrators**

  Establish a tailored needs-based approach so that all teachers have basic career and labour market awareness, career educators and guidance counsellors have specialized training reflective of the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners and administrators understand the role of career education within their broader purview.

- **Integrate Career Education Early**

  Build a developmental approach to career education that engages students early (Grade 5) and provides age-appropriate opportunities for targeted skill development, experiential learning/exposure and career planning. It is recommended that the approach integrate both mandatory elements linked to graduation requirements and infusion of career/labour market themes across subjects.

- **Follow through to Implementation**

  It is recommended that each Atlantic Province build from the Atlantic Career Education Strategy to create regionally-tailored implementation plans that are consistent with the Atlantic vision and meet common standards, but also reflect local priorities, needs and realities. These plans should address human resource needs (including training and time) and evaluation.

- **Engage with Key Stakeholders**

  To increase student engagement, it is recommended that the Atlantic Provinces integrate career experience/exposure programming within career development courses. Students should have multiple opportunities for work experiences in K-12, especially at key transition years (minimally once prior to entry into secondary and 2-3 times across the secondary grades).

  To reach all students with career education programming, it is recommended that educators identify barriers and eliminate them so that the faces and voices of all students and their families are seen and heard and all share equitable access to vital career education.

- **Evaluate for Accountability, Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement**

  It is strongly recommended that targeted evaluation be adopted as a priority and the results reviewed at least annually and used to guide and refine ongoing planning and delivery. Prior to and during the implementation of an evaluation plan, it will be critical that the Atlantic Provinces have accountability teams in place with the expertise and resources required to develop and oversee the implementation of the evaluation plan.

This report concludes by delineating suggested initial implementation steps to support a common and integrated **Atlantic Career Education Strategy** with tailored **provincial action**, building on the best from each province, strategically creating efficiencies by pooling resources and establishing the Atlantic region as world leaders in career education.

Background

The need for responsive, comprehensive and coordinated career development services[1] to support youth transition to work and/or post-secondary learning is acute in Canada. Nationally, youth employment rates are still struggling to recover from the 2008 recession. And, while it is not unusual for youth unemployment to take longer to recover from recessions, Canadian youth have been floundering beyond what is the typical recovery period. Perhaps, this is because they struggled even prior to the recession despite a better employment rate prior to 2008. For over 10 years, Canadian youth have found it difficult to find work that is stable and meets their education level. Since 2001, Canada has had the second highest rate of youth underemployment among OECD member countries (de Broucker, 2005). Twenty to 35% of Canadian young graduates say that their job is not closely related to their education (Boudarbat and Chernoff, 2010). Of those Canadian youth that say they are overqualified for their job, 75% continued to say that five years later (Frenette, 2004). In terms of precarious work, the proportion of young employed Canadians (those under 30) working non-permanent jobs (temporary, contract, part-time, low paid and low skilled) has nearly doubled from 6.9% in 1997 to 11.6% in 2011 (Foster, 2012). Canadian youth are even having problems finding summer employment. The national student jobless rate of 17.8% in 2012 was higher than 2011 and 2010 and is the highest level since data became available in 1977 (Bell, Keynote, November, 2012).

In addition to this worrisome national picture, each provincial/territorial jurisdiction in Canada has unique considerations, needs and challenges with respect to the labour market integration of its youth that often compound the situation of youth un/underemployment.   Atlantic Canada faces "a youth unemployment problem in urban centres … as individuals aged 15-24 years have much higher unemployment rates than [youth] nationally" (Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, 2012). Summer employment, the staple of work experience for youth, is dismal in some provinces. New Brunswick's student unemployment rate has steadily risen. In 2012 the summer unemployment rate for students was 20.4 which was 7.3 percentage points higher than in 2007 (Employment and Social Development Canada, July 2013). Although these numbers may tempt youth to stay in school, as they traditionally have in the Atlantic Provinces, their participation rates have begun to decline.

Another Atlantic Canada concern is the retention of employable youth. Rather than accessing work to apply their skills and knowledge at home, Atlantic youth are moving westward in considerable numbers in search of employment. Young people account for most of the net migration from Atlantic Canada (Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, 2012). Even more

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[1] Career development supports and services offered through the public school system are generally referred to as career education.

disconcerting is that youth are choosing to move when there are significant skill and labour shortages in all Atlantic Provinces. Atlantic employers interviewed in the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's 2012 cross-country consultations on Canada's Skills Crisis said that skill shortages are rising to critical levels. Despite the reality that there are work opportunities in the Atlantic Provinces, youth are turning away from PSE (a key to accessing quality employment in the digital age) and many PSE graduates are choosing to move out of province to find work. It's a perplexing situation and likely symptomatic of larger issues impacting youth employment globally.

The very nature of the labour market, including its entry and progression rules, has changed. Economists, labour specialists, futurists and career development experts have drawn attention to significant shifts in the nature of work and careers for well over two decades. The secure and stable structures that largely characterized career development in the 20th century have been replaced with work that is project-based, temporary, time-limited and, some would argue, precarious. Careers today have been described as uncertain (Gellatt, 1991), boundaryless (Arthur, 1994), protean (Hall, 1996), portfolio (Handy, 1989) and squiggly (Joel, 2013). The average young person today can expect to stay in one job a maximum of two years. Many may never hold a "job" in its traditional sense. With this level of change, job destabilization and complete restructuring of how one works, individuals, especially those at the earliest stages of their careers, are struggling to cope in this labour market and, hence, transitions from school-to-(school)-to-work are taking longer. Research shows that the characteristics that once marked the full transition to adulthood are happening later in Canada, often in one's 30s rather than in one's 20s. Delays of this transition not only have significant impacts on youth; but there are also significant implications to the economies where they reside.

The field of Career Development is focused on understanding these labour market complexities and intervening proactively and preventatively to help individuals effectively navigate education and employment. Career Development is defined in the [Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners](#) as the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future. There are several noteworthy elements in this definition:

- **Lifelong** – career development is not summed up in a single decision. A simplistic view of career development would have a young person decide what to "be" and what education to pursue in order to achieve that – end of story. The real story, however, generally involves multiple chapters, with distinct goals, tasks, outcomes and transitions across the lifespan. In early childhood, career development is largely about exploration, developing a sense of self in the future and expanding horizons with respect to what that future self could encompass. Later in adolescence, career development is about exposure, experience, reflection and the development of personal/career management

and employability skills. Throughout adulthood, those skills are refined, expanded and deployed to navigate an ever changing labour market. The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs articulates the life/work competencies Canadians need to proactively manage their career development from kindergarten to adulthood.

- **Managing** – career development will happen whether it is managed or not. The question is the extent to which you want to influence your career direction versus leaving it to chance. Current levels of youth unemployment and underemployment, job dissatisfaction and mental health claims in the workplace would suggest that leaving it to chance, more often than not, does not pan out.

- **Learning, work and transitions** – career development is the mechanism by which learning (formal and informal), work (paid and unpaid) and the transitions between are navigated.

- **Personally determined** – career development is about intentionality. Done well, it ensures that the decisions we make about learning and work are grounded in knowledge of self (personal interests, attributes, values and skills), and knowledge of educational/labour market realities (conditions, finances, prospects, entry requirements, progression and pathways). Done well, it ensures you are prepared for the realities of your choices, have the skills and supports to manage and, importantly, are clear about *why* the choice is right for you, fueling your motivation, focus and success.

- **Evolving preferred future** – career development recognizes that both we and our labour market change over time. What we want and what is possible are not static. Whether we are employed with one company long term, pursue entrepreneurial ventures or piece together our living through multiple contract, project-based and portfolio work, we will need to adjust and adapt, re-conceive and re-create our careers. This demands vigilance and career management and employability skills.

The Economic and Human Imperative for Career Education

The cost of *not* providing career education and associated services are significant. Jarvis (2013) notes that Canada's education system is more successful than most in helping youth acquire academic skills, but it is less successful in helping students to see the relevance of their learning, connect with the labour market or develop the essential employability skills and personal attributes employers need. Studies confirmed what was found in this report's SWOT analysis: that the majority of secondary students do not feel prepared for their transition to post-secondary or the world of work (Talbot & Associates, 2006). The economic consequences of reduced educational attainment, out-migration, youth unemployment/underemployment and delayed transitions to productive adulthood are staggering.

- **Productivity**: According to a 2009 study conducted by the Conference Board of Canada, workplace dissatisfaction has reached 55%. It has been increasing steadily over the last two decades and this level is the highest level recorded to date. If quality career education could help youth prepare for and enter jobs that were consistent with their interests, skills and values the economic impact would be significant. Jarvis (2013) notes that even a 1% increase in Canada's productivity would result in $13 billion in goods and services each year and would yield dramatic standard of living gains for Canadian communities.

- **Education**: When students don't understand why they are learning what they're learning – when they cannot see the personal relevance of education to their future – all too many lack intentionality, falter, under-achieve or drop out. Of the minority who move onto post-secondary and make it successfully to graduation, too many leave with heavy student debt and unclear career prospects. Kotamaraju (2011), in his analysis of studies of return on investment of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming in the US, reported that students taking CTE courses are less likely to drop out of high school. In their 2012 News Release, the SAS Institute reported that students using Future for Kids (a career education program) demonstrated higher academic test results, particularly in key STEM areas. Again the potential economic impact is substantial. Hankivsky (2008) prepared a comprehensive analysis of costs associated with drop-out across Canada for the Canadian Council on Learning. She calculated tangible costs associated with health, social assistance, crime and labour/employment (including earning loss, tax revenue loss, Employment Insurance revenue loss and Employment Insurance cost), estimating that the cost of high school non-completion across Canada to be $2,767 per drop-out annually, or an aggregated annual cost of $1.1 billion dollars. Further, she estimates that a 1% percent increase in the number of Canadian high school graduates would results in lifetime savings of $70 billion in health care, $34 billion in private earnings, $2.3 billion in tax revenues and $686 million in Employment Insurance premiums.

Jarvis (2013) projected the potential savings if career education could make a 1% difference across health, social services, protection and corrections.

- **Health**: Jarvis argues that those who are unemployed/underemployed are subject to increased stress and predisposition to unhealthy behaviours, such as substance and physical abuse. Savickas (2002) made the connection between employment and mental health. The 2002 Ipsos-Reid survey found that one in six adults had been so stressed that they considered suicide. The main causes cited were work (43%) and finances (39%). If improved career planning could reduce health expenditures by just 1%, the annual savings would be $1.2 billion.

- **Social Assistance**: Fewer individuals would depend on social assistance payments if more had the skills to find and keep suitable work. A 1% reduction in payments would result in $2 billion in annual savings.

- **Corrections**: A 1 % improvement in the number of detainees who acquire career management/planning skills could save $510 million annually.

- **Tax Revenues**: If the number of Canadians paying taxes (rather than drawing on assistance programs) increased by just 1%, the annual savings would amount to $5.8 billion. A 5% increase in employment would result in increased revenue of $29 billion annually for all levels of government.

Jarvis (2013) concludes:

> *Together, a 1% increase in government revenues and productivity and a 1% decrease in social costs represents over a $20 billion annual windfall for Canadian individuals, organizations and communities. …[T]o put this staggering number in perspective, this would cover the salaries of over 250,000 additional teachers or counsellors or could provide more learning resources and facilities, or cover the full tuition for over a million undergraduate and graduate students.*

Similar analyses have been completed in the UK (Hughes, 2004) and US (Belfield, Levin and Rosen, 2012). Hughes (2004) concluded:

- *Implementing career-relevant opportunities will:*
  - Help more youth and adults to become satisfied, fulfilled, self-reliant, contributing and prosperous citizens
  - Bring more motivated and engaged learners to teachers and trainers
  - Provide more qualified and motivated workers to…businesses that are increasingly challenged to find the talent they need to compete successfully
  - Save significant [money] annually in support of people who have difficulty locating and maintaining suitable work roles
  - Increase the international competitiveness and improve living standards in communities across the nation.

- *Investment in career development, exploration, and management services can produce very considerable cost benefits and savings for individual's local communities and the national economy.*

These are the tangible economic costs. There are also very significant human costs associated with students floundering, dropping out and faltering in their transitions to post-secondary and the labour market. Hankivsky (2012) writes:

> *Unlike tangible losses, pain and suffering and reduced quality of life do not have a natural market price and cannot be bought and sold. Such psychological and emotional losses, however, are real. Some economists have argued that intangible costs far surpass all other direct and indirect costs combined.*

For these reason, many jurisdictions are looking at the potential role of career education in supporting better career transitions for youth. The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) is no exception.

In a significant and positive step forward in examining how best to support student transitions to learning and work, CAMET contracted with the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) to understand the current strengths and gaps in the public school-based delivery of career development services across both Anglophone and Francophone sectors in Atlantic Canada. This research project involved consultation and focus groups with key stakeholders in each Atlantic province to understand need and capacity, define the current situation with respect to policy, programming and access to labour market information and career education and uncover the level of consistency with respect to provision and implementation. Based on this, as well as a review of provincial/international best practices, this report provides recommendations for career education reforms that respect the fiscal realities of provincial budgets.

Methodology

Research Aim

The overall aim of this research project is to understand the strengths and gaps in the school-based delivery of career development services in both the Anglophone and Francophone systems in the Atlantic Provinces and, based on this as well as provincial/international best practices, to provide practical, comprehensive and innovative recommendations and clear implementation steps for the strengthening and delivery of leading edge career development programs and services within existing provincial budgets.

To do this, CCDF:

- Completed an Environmental Scan to articulate the breadth, depth, capacity, consistency and actual provision of career development services for students across the Atlantic Provinces. This included:
    - A review of all available resources (policy documents, research papers, career education curriculum, tools, etc.);
    - Identification of innovative and effective approaches currently being tried and/or already implemented;
    - A review of existing labour market information (LMI) and its currency, accuracy and relevance to career and PSE planning, notably information on post-secondary programming options and pathways to the labour market available to students in Atlantic Canada;
    - Identification of any substantive differences in career development programming and implementation in Anglophone and Francophone education sectors and what benefits can be gleaned from any differences in both systems.

- Conducted a SWOT analysis of current career development programming in each Atlantic province (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) through:
    - Focus groups with secondary school students (grade 9 to 12);
    - An online survey of young adults in PSE (university, public and private colleges and apprenticeship) or who either choose to go to work directly from high school or left PSE prior to graduating;
    - Semi-structured interviews with educators/service providers (guidance counsellors, principals/administrators, curriculum developers, teachers of co-op or career/personal development curricula); and
    - Focus groups with parents/guardians of youth.

- Examined the research (via literature and key stakeholder interviews) of provincial and international best practice in school-based career development delivery.

Phase 1 – Preliminary Environmental Scan Report (Spring-Summer 2013)

The first phase of research (Spring 2013) focussed on developing an overall understanding of the current state of career education policy, programming and provision for students in the Atlantic Provinces, including the identification of existing pockets of excellence and innovation. This foundational piece helped to support the development of focus group, survey and informant interview protocols, all of which were key components of the subsequent SWOT analysis. To compile the Environmental Scan, CCDF conducted active research (online and telephone) as well as worked with the Project Committee (comprised of CAMET designates) to gather relevant documents and information and to identify targets for Phase 2 consultations.

From the information gathered, CCDF developed a report that mapped the current system(s) in each province and began to articulate possible themes for development and established a baseline for informing recommendations. This report was shared with and reviewed by the CAMET Standing Committees on Public and Post-Secondary Education to ensure that the baseline for further research is accurate and complete. A summary of this follows in the Environmental Scan section of this report.

The report also informed the development of focus group, survey and semi-structured interview protocols, including a list of guiding SWOT-based questions.

Phase 2 – SWOT Analysis – Participant Research (September-October 2013)
Focus Group, Survey and Key Informant Interview Development
Because of the need to reach multiple stakeholders across urban and rural environments and in multiple learning and service delivery locations, CCDF undertook a multi-faceted approach to the participant research to gather the widest possible perspectives on the current career education system. Both timelines and budget limitations prevented accessing the numbers required for statistical rigor. Accordingly, it was agreed that the intent of the SWOT was not to gather statistical data, but rather to hear a range of voices (including those from under-represented populations[2]) across the Atlantic Provinces.

Based on consultations with both CAMET Standing Committees, CCDF undertook the following approach to the SWOT analysis:

- Conduct face-to-face focus groups with **secondary students**: Unlike other target populations, it is possible to access a range of voices in one locale (one school) and to strategically seek a balance of urban/rural, French/English and under-represented groups across the four provinces:

	NB	NS	PEI	NL
Urban English	✓	✓		✓
Rural English			✓	✓
Urban French			✓	
Rural French	✓	✓		

  This configuration is based on population and, importantly, proportional representation of Francophone populations.

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[2] Under-represented populations as identified by CAMET's Standing Committees on Post-Secondary and Public School Education are: persons with disabilities, Aboriginal youth, low-income/no parental history of PSE and young males (particularly African NS males).

- **Young adults who have gone on to work and/or have left PSE programs prior to graduation** were identified by the CAMET Standing Committees as an important group for consideration in this research. These students are not easily identified in a single locale; rather they are dispersed across community-based agencies, employment services and/or PSE programs (having gone back for a second or third try). They are a mobile, fluid population and, accordingly, CCDF developed an online survey to reach them. For this survey, CCDF relied heavily on the Standing Committees' and its own networks to identify candidates and promote their participation. The survey was kept open from late-summer through mid-fall and offered those who completed an incentive for doing so to maximize response rates.

- Similarly, **current PSE students** (those who have persevered) were also identified as a key target. Although they can be found in one locale (PSE institution), CCDF sought a diversity of voices across universities, public and private colleges and apprenticeship programs. Accordingly, CCDF integrated tailored questions into the survey instrument outlined above. The survey had a specific break point, with alternative questions for respondents depending on whether they were in or out of post-secondary.

- For **parents**, CCDF held a series of telephone focus groups. Telephone focus groups were selected as a research instrument to allow for a variety of voices to be heard. Telephone focus groups allow for involvement of parents in many geographic locations, allowing participants to stay at home rather than arrange for transportation to come to a face-to-face focus group location and providing a certain amount of anonymity so that participants do not need to be concerned about appearance issues that can sometimes be barriers to attendance.

CCDF anticipated that the realities and issues faced by rural and urban parents might differ significantly. Accordingly, CCDF suggested a total of four telephone focus groups drawing parents across the four Atlantic Provinces as follows:

- Urban English
- Urban French
- Rural English
- Rural French

- Finally, CCDF selected a number of **key informant educators** in consultation with the CAMET Standing Committees for one-to-one semi-structured interviews. CCDF spoke with a range of educators with a breadth of knowledge with respect to actual implementation in their respective jurisdictions.

All protocols and participant research instruments were reviewed and approved by both Standing Committees (see Appendix A).

Phase 3 – Research on Provincial, National and International Best Practice (Summer 2013)

Drawing on its own best practice research and extensive national and international networks, CCDF identified the most current research, progressive policies, innovative curriculum and service provision approaches, employer and community engagement strategies and PSE and labour market information approaches. It analysed what is known about effective school-based career development services to inform and inspire the development of recommendations in this report.

Phase 4 – Research Synthesis and Recommendations Report (October-December 2013)

Using all data gathered, CCDF developed this report, including recommendations to develop and provide innovative and robust career development and transition support to youth and to position the Atlantic Provinces as leaders in career education. All recommendations reflect the imperative to remain within existing provincial budgets, make best possible use of existing innovations and reflect evidence-based practice, but also endeavour to "push the envelope" with respect to current thinking and practice.

Environmental Scan

An Environmental Scan was submitted to and approved by the CAMET Standing Committees in August 2013. Intended as a precursor to this report and recommendations, the Scan mapped current provision of career education in public schools (K-12) across the Atlantic Provinces.

A call for key documents was issued in collaboration with the CAMET Standing Committees on Public and Post-Secondary Education. Documents reviewed included the following:

- Documents that detail the career education programs and services currently being delivered;

- Relevant policies covering career education programming and provision within Departments of Education and, as appropriate, across related Departments;

- Reports, reviews and articles describing, assessing and/or evaluating current career education programming;

- Curriculum, tools and innovative effective approaches used in the delivery of career education programming; and

- Provincial LMI tools and resources focused on PSE options and pathways to the labour market currently available to students.

A complete listing of sources reviewed and provincial contacts consulted is available in the Bibliography and the full report resides now with the CAMET Standing Committees.

The following key findings are particularly germane to this final report:

- There are numerous high quality career education programs and resources and diverse approaches to delivery across the Atlantic Provinces. All provinces offer career education and we identified examples of early intervention, developmental curricular integration from K -12, innovative approaches to modularization and workshop delivery, use of portfolios and stand-alone career development courses at the secondary level. However, unless a compulsory requirement, few students take advantage of these offerings and some of the most comprehensive models are reserved for those students who are at risk of leaving school, disengaged or performing below their potential.

- Despite the range of curriculum available across the grades, we found continued reliance on out-dated/limited labour market information.

- Most provinces do not mandate completion of career development course(s) as a graduation requirement or grade student achievement in this area. As a result, implementation varies considerably and is highly dependent on local leadership.

- Key Skills Frameworks (such as the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs, Essential Skills, and Employability Skills) are referenced in some curricula, but are not consistently integrated or applied.

- Consistent curricular integration of labour market/PSE exposure, linkages between subject learning and the labour market and current, practical information/instruction to support PSE/labour market transitions appear to be lacking. While co-operative education and apprenticeship are offered in all provinces, uptake is severely limited (ranging from .05% to 12% of the student body in the 2012-2013 academic year across Atlantic Provinces). Co-operative education and apprenticeship appear to be oddly disconnected from career education curricula, with limited debriefing of work experiences within an employability/career education context. Supports do not seem to be in place to ensure student/employer engagement.

- Although our research focussed on career education support for those in the identified under-represented groups (First Nations, Métis and Inuit, students with a disability, males, females, families with low incomes, Afro-Canadians and those whose parents have not attended Post-Secondary Education) we found relatively few programs specifically targeted to these groups.

- We found significant systemic weakness across all provinces with respect to the training and professional development of educators, guidance counsellors and administrators. No basic pre-service training is required of educators. No specialized training on the role of career development in education is required of administrators. Career education tends to be taught by new teachers and turnover is high. No specialized training in the theory, content or approaches to career education is required of career educators or, with the exception of francophone counsellors in New Brunswick, guidance counsellors. No specialized training in labour market realities, job development or employer relations is required of teachers of co-operative education or apprenticeship programs. Whereas all teachers and administrators will have studied the core academic subjects themselves, most will have had limited or no exposure to career education. Without even the most basic foundational training on the link between education and work, the integration of career education across subjects and schools is hindered. The lack of specialized training or professional development for career educators (including those teaching career development courses, co-operative education and apprenticeship) and guidance counsellors jeopardizes capacity to deliver even the best curricula and programming. Collectively, it sends a message that career education is not valued within schools. There are national competency standards, certification programs and abundant training/professional development already developed to support addressing this significant weakness.

- In the absence of this training, we did find some innovative examples of bringing external career development expertise into the school.

- With respect to guidance counsellors, there appear to be two potentially faulty assumptions:

  - *Counsellor training provides expertise in career development.* Although there is some overlap between counselling and career development competencies, they are distinct. Training in counselling (with the possible exception of the Francophone sector in New Brunswick) does not necessarily equip someone to deliver or support career education.
  - *Guidance counsellors focus largely on career issues*. Guidance counsellors were reported to be often overwhelmed with competing priorities (personal/behaviour issues) and an over-riding lack of role clarity was reported.

- There were pockets of innovation in terms of sharing expertise/resources (the teacher wiki for co-operative educators in Nova Scotia is a notable example). Largely, however, it would appear that career educators are isolated from each other and from the wider career development profession.

- Cross-curricular approaches have merit. When career education is "everybody's business", however, it can easily become nobody's business. Education and engagement of staff at all levels is critical.

- While we found a few examples of evaluation and the tracking of outcomes, there is a lack of systemic commitment to impact assessment or evidence-based practice. The competence/capacity of deliverers is not assessed; the impact of career education is typically not measured; career-related student outcomes are rarely tracked; student achievement in the context of career education is typically not assessed or graded. Given that often "what gets measured is what gets done", the lack of accountability associated with career education may contribute to spotty implementation and results. This lack of outcome measurement limits evidence-based policy and program development and jeopardizes quality assurance.

SWOT

In September-October 2013, CCDF conducted an analysis of key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) with respect to career education across the Atlantic Provinces. Given limitations of time and budget, the purpose of the analysis was not to be statistically rigorous. Rather, the intent was to hear directly from a small but diverse sample of students, parents, young adults and educators in the field so that the findings and recommendations derived from the broader research could be reinforced by statements expressed directly by these key stakeholders.

A tailored approach was employed to support access to the four stakeholder groups:

Secondary Students

Eight (8) face-to-face focus groups were conducted with secondary students. The purpose of these focus groups was to explore students' sense of preparedness for their next step after secondary graduation. Focus group questions reflected the following themes:

- Preferences for, access to and use of career information, services and programming;
- Knowledge of PSE options and pathways, costs and their access to financial planning supports;
- Preferred delivery modes and key career influencers;
- Perspectives on the career development services currently available in their province; and
- Perspectives on the level of provision they have received or are receiving.

The CAMET Standing Committees reviewed and approved the focus group protocol.

Every effort was made to reflect a diversity of age/experience, socio-economic, cultural, language and urban/rural diversity across the eight focus groups:

	NB	NS	PEI	NL
Urban English	14 Grade 12 Students	38 Grade 11-12 Co-op Students		23 Grade 11 Students in CD 2201 Course
Rural English			13 Grade 11-12 Leadership Students	20 Grade 12 Students
Urban French			18 Grade 10 Students	
Rural French	15 Grade 12 Students	13 Grade 11 Students		

Sessions were 1.5-2 hours in duration and while CCDF facilitated the focus groups independently, school personnel were present throughout.

Focus group facilitators submitted narrative reports following each focus group. All focus groups were also audiotaped (with student permission) and both facilitator reports and original transcripts informed this report.

Key Findings from Focus Groups with Secondary Students

Taken as a whole, the focus groups with secondary students point to significant needs among students and disconcerting gaps in career education's response:

- Although some senior secondary students did have a plan to go on to post-secondary education after graduation, few had explored more than one option or conducted research to understand post-secondary/labour market realities. Most remained uncertain about the specific program they would pursue or the labour market prospects they might face.

- Many students expressed considerable anxiety about their future. They were concerned about disappointing their parents, making ill-informed decisions, failing post-secondary, failing to find employment or landing in a job that they are not well-suited to perform. Overwhelmingly, students have very real concerns about supporting themselves financially, both during post-secondary and beyond, and said they felt ill-equipped to budget or manage independent living. Students said that instruction on budgeting, independent living skills, work ethics and practical information/exposure regarding what to expect in post-secondary/work should be mandatory.

> **"It's like all your life someone holds your hand or you're being told what to do, and then all of a sudden you're tossed on your own and being told to go figure out what you want to do with your life."**

- Students did not feel well-supported in trying to address these anxieties and plan for their educational/work futures. Some referred to assistance with course selection and post-secondary applications, but globally felt unsupported in developing a meaningful and realistic career plan.

- While considered important by students, career development courses (mandatory/elective) were largely not found to be useful as delivered. Students expressed disappointment in the content, approach and timing of career

> **"I think there could have been more for us to do in that class in terms of conversations we could have around our career options, but we ended up spending lots of time on our own online pretty much doing personality assessments."**
>
> **"Students are left to figure out career plans on their own through the internet."**

development courses. Students seemed to indicate that the courses are dominated by independent work online, completing interest inventories and personality tests. *Career Cruising* is available to students, but it would appear that the site may be misused and its potential largely untapped. *Career Cruising* requires facilitation and this does not seem to be happening in any consistent way. When it comes to labour market information, students appear to have access, but may be lacking the skills and supports to make career sense of that information. Students do not appear to be supported in the core elements of career education: understanding themselves (interests, values, skills), exploring widely (ideally through exposure) so they move beyond a narrow scope to "taste" diverse possibilities, understanding the full range of post-secondary options, understanding their labour market and the realities associated with jobs of interest, connecting these in a personally meaningful and realistic plan and having the transition and management skills to enact it.

- The issue of timing was highlighted as a concern by many students. Students wanted help in middle school with choosing secondary school courses. Students felt they needed to begin the exploration process and thinking about themselves and their futures much earlier. This could build toward more hands-on experiential learning, real-life exposure and specific, concrete instruction and information in latter grades.

> **"Teachers have certain ideas of what we should be and are not open to listening to what we want."**

- Accurate, current and local labour market information and the capacity to make personal sense of information appear to be lacking. Students repeatedly indicated that they did not access labour market information on prospects, projections, working conditions or wages to inform their decision making.

- It is clear that students yearn for exposure to real people with real experience in PSE and work. They want to know what to expect in post-secondary and/or their chosen field of work – the good *and* the bad. Overwhelmingly, they want direct PSE and labour market exposure and feel this is sorely lacking currently. Those students who did get direct exposure to people and/or experiences in real post-

secondary and/or work settings indicated that these had "a huge impact" on their decisions. When asked what had been most helpful or influential in their future planning to date, students consistently referred to contact with real people in post-secondary or doing jobs of interest and real exposure to campuses/workplaces. For example, one student said she wanted to be a vet until she spent some time at the vet college where they were performing surgery on a pig. Another student thought she might like to be a lawyer until she found out how long it would take and how much writing lawyers do. Students need exposure to more than one potential occupation and they need help reflecting on what they have learned about themselves, the labour market and their own career development as a result of each exposure.

> "Teachers should tell us why we are learning what we are learning."

- Students expressed frustration that career exploration and co-operative education courses were difficult to access. Scheduling was problematic as their course loads were dominated by mandatory offerings to meet post-secondary requirements and transportation was cited as a barrier to co-operative education work placements.

- Students felt they are pushed into traditional PSE (university only) and that diverse occupations are not honoured by educators.

- Students also felt they were "pigeon-holed" based on their academic performance. If, for example, they did well in math, they may be pushed to pursue accounting despite having no interest in the area – let alone whether there are reasonable employment prospects.

- Students wish teachers would connect classroom learning to actual workplace tasks and that there was time to explore what the curriculum might mean for them and their future. Students indicated that teachers have too much curriculum content to deliver and either do not have time or do not know how to make the links to their futures. They said that teachers are "too rigid". Some felt that if they ask questions in class about how the content links to possible careers, it would "derail" the class and the teacher would see this as a manoeuvre to "waste time" instead of being productive.

- Students confirmed what research has long told us: that parents remain the most significant influence. Many students noted, however, that their parents' perspectives reflect another time and are irrelevant to them and their realities. A number of students noted that their parents did not give specific career or

post-secondary information. Some parents were seen as a source of pressure to go to university and "do better" than they had.

- Students value the guidance counsellor, but see them as focused on "problem students" and don't want that stigma and/or are reluctant to "bother them" because they are so busy. Some students felt that it should be mandatory to see the guidance counsellor in Grade 10 and Grade 12.

Although students were able to point to a wide range of programs and services, the global picture emerging from the student focus groups is one of widespread inconsistencies and weaknesses with respect to implementation.

Young Adults

An online survey of current PSE students, young adults who have not gone on to PSE and/or have dropped out or failed was conducted, with open access for a period of six (6) weeks.

A total of 445 people completed the full survey as follows:

- 89.9% (400) completed the survey in English; 10.1% (45) completed in French;

- 71% (316) were female; 29% (129) were male;

- 76.9% of respondents were less than 25 years of age;

- 59.6% reported that secondary school is their highest level of education completed; 33.7% reported completion of some form of post-secondary;

- Most respondents went to school in New Brunswick (50.8%) or PEI (26.1%) and, likewise, most respondents currently live in New Brunswick (49.4%) or PEI (35.3%). This is noteworthy when extrapolating results to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, where the response rates were extremely low (27 and 25 respondents respectively);

- 75.3% of respondents live in an urban area; 24.7% live in rural settings;

- 43.8% self-identified as a member of an under-represented group as follows:

  - 27.4% low income;
  - 22.9% parents/guardians did not attend post-secondary;
  - 5.8% First Nation, Métis or Inuit;
  - 1.8% African Canadian;

No respondents self-identified as having disabilities.

- 87.2% are attending a post-secondary institute as follows:

- 57.7% are attending a public/community college and 33.0% are attending university;
- 52.3% intend on completing a 1 or 2 year certificate/diploma program, and 23.7% an undergraduate degree;
- Close to two thirds (64.7%) are in their first year of the program.

Appendix B provides the demographic analysis of respondents and frequency tables. The following highlights key findings:

- **Information & Activities to Support Career Planning**

  When asked what were their most useful sources of information in planning for their transition from secondary school, respondents rated parents/guardians (57.6%) and websites from university/college/apprenticeship (43.5%) as most useful. Information sources rated least useful included blogs, school assemblies and apprenticeship offices. It is noteworthy – and of considerable concern – that staple career education components were rated as not at all/not very useful by large numbers of respondents:

  - Career planning centres (55%);
  - Labour market information (52.6%);
  - Career specialists (47%);
  - *Career Cruising* (43.1%);
  - Guidance counsellors (39.6%);
  - Career-related courses in high school (37.8%);
  - Career fairs (35%);
  - Teachers (29.4%).

  Summer employment and volunteer work were cited as activities with the most impact on their future; the International Baccalaureate program and school assemblies were rated as having the least impact. Again, many of the core elements of career education were rated as having no or almost no impact by almost half of the respondents.

  > **Almost 70% of respondents reported that high school did not adequately prepare them for deciding on a career direction.**

- **Career Goals**

  Eighty-seven percent of respondents (392/445) have decided on a career path. Among those who have not, the main reasons cited was that 'there are so many choices. It is confusing', 'I don't know what I am good at doing' and 'I don't have enough information.' Young people typically started thinking about career planning during or after high school. This was the case for 41.1% and 29%, respectively.

- **Effectiveness of High School in Preparing Students for their Future**

Almost 31.9% of respondents felt high school adequately prepared them for deciding on a career path; 68.1% did not. The number one reason cited for their lack of preparedness was that not enough career information/support was provided (33%). When asked whether they thought secondary school adequately prepared them to make the transition to post-secondary studies, work or whatever else they chose, respondents were split almost evenly (50.6% yes; 49.4% no). Forty percent of respondents indicated that teachers did not prepare them/provide a realistic view of post-secondary. When asked what kind of information, resources or supports they wished they had had to help them with their career direction and transition, respondents' top choices were more information on a broad range of careers (43.3%), hands-on experience, such as job shadowing, co-operative education placements or internships (16.3%) and life skills training/university preparation, including budgeting and study skills (14.2%).

- **Post-secondary Choice**
  Over 70% of respondents indicated that:

  - They had an interest in their subject area and that, now that they were in post-secondary, they felt as sure or even more sure about their choice;
  - They chose programs that provided skills needed for related employment;
  - They would not be able to attend post-secondary without summer employment;
  - They were knowledgeable about the potential for employment in their field;
  - The cost of a post-secondary education is much higher than they realized.

Respondents typically learned about the post-secondary institution/program they are attending through the institution's website (55.7%) and/or from their friends (49.2%). They mainly picked their **institution** because it was close or in their home community (51.8%) and/or the availability of the program (56.7%). Finances loomed as a significant influencer of institutional choice (49%). Respondents typically selected their **program** of choice based on: interest in the subject (69.9%) and/or the employment opportunities (57.7%). The majority (78.4%) had not changed programs once they started. It is noteworthy, however, that almost 65% of respondents were in their first year of post-secondary and the survey was administered within the first few weeks of the academic year. The main reason why the remaining 21.8% changed programs was that it "wasn't a good fit for me in terms of my interests /skills" (66.7%) and it "wasn't going to lead to the kind of work I want to do" (48.8%).

Of those respondents currently in post-secondary, 45% were not clear about the extent to which their post-secondary education choice was a good "fit" for them when they left

high school. Almost 57% indicated that they did not have opportunities to check out their field of interest before committing to a post-secondary program.

Almost 61% of respondents could not attend post-secondary without a student loan and have to work during the academic year to meet their financial commitments. Over 75% or respondents could not attend post-secondary without summer employment.

- **Respondents not Enrolled in Post-secondary Studies**
Fifty-seven respondents were not enrolled in a post-secondary institution. Of these, 61.4% were working full time. Approximately 23% of these respondents enrolled in post-secondary after high school, but withdrew without finishing. Main reasons cited for withdrawing included, 'program was not what I expected' and 'realized the program was not a good fit for my interests (38.5% respectively).

Debt appears to be the main factor keeping these people away from post-secondary studies. While they believe a post-secondary education will help them get a job:

- 83.7% felt that post-secondary education is too expensive;
- 73.8% were afraid of taking on too much debt;
- 71.1% do not have enough money to attend, and;
- 63.9% stated the program they wanted was too expensive.

However, 73.7% stated they may attend post-secondary sometime in the future.

When asked what could make them reconsider their decision not to attend post-secondary, the top responses were:

- Affordability (40.4%);
- Program that is a good "fit" for my interests and skills (38.6%); and
- Program that has good job prospects (35.1%).

Parents

Despite intense recruitment efforts and flexibility (weekend and evening focus groups), only twenty parents from across all Atlantic Provinces participated in focus groups. Eight parents live in urban settings; 12 live rurally. A summary of key findings are included herein both because including the voices of this key stakeholder remains an important element of this project and because responses are broadly consistent with other research on parent perspectives (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003 and 2004).

When asked about the extent to which they felt their child is well prepared for their transition from secondary school, parents listed services/supports accessed (guidance

counsellors, career development course, dual track, summer work, *O2*, job placements, co-operative education, post-secondary visits/orientations, career days, volunteering, career assessments, *Take Your Kid to Work*), but did not seem able to definitively gauge their preparedness. Nova Scotia parents spoke very positively about the *O2* program and reported that it gave their children an edge by exposing them to work experiences and post-secondary programs related to their chosen area.

Despite the long list of resources, activities and supports, a number of parents indicated that their children were struggling with what to do and where to go and that more career/post-secondary information and supports are needed. While some noted that their children were being supported by the guidance counsellor, others expressed concern that the guidance counsellor did not seem to be accessible or "connected with the students". Some parents indicated that, as far as they knew, "nothing was happening" to help their child. Overall, there was some dissatisfaction expressed regarding the support their children got from the school environment and consensus that there needs to be more structured, formal support offered to secondary students to help them prepare for their transition. Some parents thought it was normal for kids to "not know" and to falter initially, possibly trying programs and changing course before settling on a direction. Many parents did not feel that their child had adequately explored potential options, however, and expressed concern regarding their readiness for life after secondary school.

There was no consensus regarding who is ultimately responsible for career education. Some parents felt strongly that it is primarily the role of parents to guide their children in planning for the future. Others felt equally strongly that the school should assume at least part of this role. These parents indicated that, when it comes to career education, they felt they were doing "a lot of things that schools should be doing and are more equipped to do." It is noteworthy that a number of parents sought private, external support from a qualified career development practitioner to fill this void. Without exception, the parents who had paid for professional help said this support was very beneficial, but noted that not all parents could afford this extra assistance.

Parents of children who did have a relatively clear sense of career direction identified many positive influencers, but those most cited related to exposure to work experience and/or people studying/doing work in areas of interest. Barriers to developing a sense of direction included a lack of clarity on the part of students with respect to their career goals, inadequate labour market information, lack of clarity regarding "in-demand jobs", limited access to guidance counsellors, teacher/guidance counsellors not respecting/valuing student choice and limited availability of/competition for post-

secondary program spots. A number of parents highlighted finances as a significant barrier to post-secondary. Some noted that the location of their home community limited their children's options. Several parents criticized the school system for "coddling" their children, noting that they were not preparing them for the "real world" where deadlines and expectations must be met.

Just as secondary students expressed considerable anxiety about the future in the face-to-face focus groups, so too did parents identify very real and pressing fears. Overall, parents were scared that their children are not prepared for life after high school. In some cases, concern was expressed about their lack of readiness for post-secondary and/or the world of work. A number of parents were concerned about their son's/daughter's lack of basic money management, study and life skills. A number of parents were fearful that their children remained unclear about their direction and about the realities of life in post-secondary and/or the labour market. They worried about their child failing – or feeling like they had failed if they needed to change programs. Money loomed large as a source of anxiety, with parents expressing concern about not being able to afford preferred programs and/or moving into debt. Ultimately, all parents wanted their child to find a "good" job that would offer adequate pay and reasonable satisfaction, but a number of parents worried that their child may have difficulty finding that.

When asked what information, resources and/or supports they would like to have, many parents indicated that they wanted better, more tailored information and support. Many said they were overwhelmed with the volume of information and wanted simple information that was organized, packaged and tailored to their community and needs. They wanted to be more connected to the school, the guidance counsellor and to other parents through practical sessions about a wider diversity of post-secondary and career options, prospects associated with different post-secondary programs and occupations, financial supports and how they can better support their children. Parents noted that this needs to start well before Grade 12.

When asked what information, resources and/or supports they would like their children to access at school, they emphasized more and earlier exposure to diverse post-secondary and career options. Some parents suggested "mini" post-secondary courses in Grades 10-11 to expose students to a range of programs before they are required to choose. Several parents felt that a mandatory career development course would be useful, but some questioned the effectiveness of current delivery. One parent noted that "students think [the career development course] is a waste of time". Some expressed concern that, currently, career education is often embedded into other

curricular themes, such as health, and therefore "diluted". Parents suggested that the career development course should be focused on career exploration and exposure, decision making and practical skills (budgeting, independent living skills, basic employability skills). Both within this course and across the full curriculum, parents reinforced that school should better "reflect the real world" in terms of the demands and expectations to which students are held. Finally, parents emphasized that students should have earlier and more consistent access to well-trained guidance professionals.

Educators

A total of 21 Anglophone and Francophone key informants were interviewed, representing all four Atlantic Provinces and a range of professional portfolios, including Provincial Consultant for Guidance, Guidance Counsellor, Provincial Consultant for Career Development, Career Education Curriculum Specialist, Secondary Curriculum Consultant, Language Arts Curriculum Consultant, Director of Apprenticeship, College President, College Department Head, Coordinator Youth Pathways and Transitions, Coordinator Community-Based Learning, Executive Director Parent Federation, O2 Coordinator and Teacher. Regardless of their current position, all were identified as having significant background in the area of career education in their respective jurisdictions.

Educators highlighted examples of leading edge curricula, resources and programs and committed personnel in their respective provinces. In Prince Edward Island, educators expressed considerable pride for their career development framework and the *Career Exploration and Opportunities* (CEO) course. In Nova Scotia, the *O2* program, community-based learning, co-operative education and *Diploma Academy* were held up as best practices. New Brunswick pointed to their approach to career development in francophone schools modelled after the *"école orientante"* model in Quebec, *Career Focussing* and the *Work Room*, a partnership with the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. Educators from Newfoundland and Labrador referred to their Entrepreneurship course as being one of the first such courses in Canada and continuing to be a leader in entrepreneurship education at the high school level.

Several important themes were echoed across the key informant interviews:

- **Access to career education is not universal**. In some provinces, there are no compulsory career education programs and optional programming is targeted to specific populations, either formally or informally. In others, mandatory programming is limited to a single grade level. Educators felt that **career education should be universally mandatory and built developmentally across grade levels**. One educator noted that, unless students choose to take co-operative education or career development courses, it is "*hit and miss because there is not much for them unless they take it upon themselves to check things out*."

> "It's the course that has the potential to have the greatest impact on our students."
>
> "If there were a provincially mandated career development program in the curriculum, ALL students would be served."

- Related to this, some educators suggested that students with **specific needs and/or at the extremes of the academic spectrum** seem to be better served as there are programs, options and services for them. Students in the average category fall through the cracks because there are assumptions that they will be "ok" when, in fact according to many of the educators, they are "lost". Some educators noted that the "high flyers" capable of self-advocacy (and with parents that pushed for service) managed, while the rest were not adequately served. In Nova Scotia, socio-economically disadvantaged students (outside of *O2*) are generally least well-prepared according to the educators interviewed. Language is also a barrier for minority Francophone students outside of New Brunswick as some events/supports are only available in English. On the other hand, there are dedicated programs supporting francophone youth and promoting bilingual career development in some jurisdictions.

- Educators stressed the importance of having **a framework** to guide the overall delivery of career education. According to educators, policy must address issues of inconsistent implementation and establish career education as a priority. This theme of **buy-in** and prioritizing career education was emphasized repeatedly in key informant interviews. According to many educators, the barrier to quality career education is not a lack of finances or resources; it is a lack of priority and commitment to make it happen. Educators said that career education is successful in schools where staff at all levels are committed and bought in, but this is far from universally the case.

> **"It is a significance issue not a curriculum issue."**
>
> **"The research is there to tell us how significant this is. There is no shortage of information. This needs to be a priority."**

- Many educators pointed to the **lack of teacher training/professional development and high teacher turnover** as significant impediments to quality career education. Educators noted that even the best curriculum/programming can fall flat when delivered by someone lacking the requisite information, competencies and capacity. *"[The quality] depends on the teacher; is it being taught the way it is supposed to be taught? We know that it is not always happening."* that if robust training was mandated, teachers would "own it, want to promote it, teach it and mentor others."

- Closely related to this theme is the fact that career education is often "lost" or "buried" in a course focused on a range of health/personal development themes. The career development course was described as a "crazy course" veering between far-ranging topics such as sex education, healthy relationships and careers with little consistency with respect to approach between teachers.

- Several educators bemoaned that there is a lack of focus on **implementation** and/or longer-term commitment to programs that work well.

- **Timetable/Scheduling** came up over and over as a barrier to implementation. Teachers need to connect with students "when they're ready". Educators bemoaned the rigidity of course scheduling, the pressure on students to bulk up on academic courses and the curricular and administrative demands on teachers. The result: career education is often squeezed out. It is noteworthy that the co-op education program in Nova Scotia appears to be overcoming some of this rigidity of scheduling by providing teachers with the flexibility to offer co-operative education placements during the summer, March Break, evenings and weekends.

> **"Our frustration is with program starting and stopping when they are working. How can they emphasize getting kids into post-secondary education and yet stop programs that work to get them there or run programs meant to help them badly?"**

- Many educators spoke to the potential power of **Co-operative Education/Apprenticeship** programs but noted that they are not used to their full potential. Barriers include: the extent of student preparation required, finding enough employers, transportation and scheduling. Another educator noted that his Ministry

has such a strong focus on instructional time that it has become increasingly difficult to negotiate student off-site visits and job shadowing. He saw this as a step backwards. Several educators noted that there should be at least one co-operative education experience for all students and, ideally, multiple work experiences over the secondary years. They noted that students that integrate real exposure and work experience are the best prepared upon graduation for their transition to post-secondary or the labour market. These students realize the importance of essential skills and literacy, they make connections between the curriculum and their future and, consequently, learning becomes intentional. They build critical bridges to the labour market, establishing mentors, creating networks and "tasting" the world of work. Educators noted that employers and post-secondary institutions recognize the value, but it remains a severely under-resourced and under-utilized tool within the public education sector.

> **"Kids who are doing well [academically] are driven towards a full course load to get scholarship opportunities or fulfill math requirements. Co-op is a difficult sell for high end kids."**

- Closely related to this, according to educators, students need much more **exposure** to both people and experiences (guest speakers, post-secondary ambassadors, site visits, job shadowing, coop, work placements, volunteering, etc.).

- Students need to be exposed **beyond traditional options**. This is, at least in part, a training/professional development issue. One educator said, "*We need to offer professional development training to our educators who have done the traditional route in education. We need to provide them with training to widen their knowledge about how careers have changed. Teachers don't know what has happened in the labour market.*" Relatedly, another educator spoke of a mentor who had established an innovative and highly successful teacher co-op program in New Brunswick enabling teachers to be exposed to a broader range of careers, thereby preparing them to better prepare their students.

> **"Nothing works as well as real life exposure."**

- Many key informants stated that career education needs to **start earlier**, ideally in the primary grades. One educator noted that some students are already "disengaged" by Grade 8-9. Educators noted that students are naturally engaged and curious at earlier ages and the school needs to help them explore and then build on that as they get older.

- The **importance of partnership** between parents, school and community was emphasized. Several educators noted the value of **bringing in external career**

development expertise to benefit both the students and staff. One educator suggested that partnerships could help to address the scarcity of funding for career education programming and/or increase the perceived value of career education, noting that employers seeking to recruit/retain a skilled labour force are ready partners.

- **Financial literacy** was highlighted as absolutely essential, yet, according to a number of educators, "*students are really not prepared.*"

- **Resources** such as *Career Cruising* are often under-utilized due to teacher turnover and lack of training. There seemed to be a clear distinction between educators actively facilitating the use of resources and those that left students to explore more independently.

- **Parents** are the most significant influence and they need support too. One educator suggested that, starting in at least Grade 9, students should have an annual education plan that is developed with parents.

- There was widespread support for **infusion,** making links in the curriculum in all subjects with real life.

- Many educators pointed to **guidance counsellors** as a primary support for students' career development in the school, but some noted their lack of accessibility, multiple demands on their time and capacity issues. In francophone New Brunswick, guidance counsellors are mandated and trained to focus on career counselling. In other jurisdictions, they may have more general counselling training and have multiple responsibilities in the school. Some educators called for career "coaches" and two distinct kinds of counsellors – one for social issues and one for career development. Guidance counsellors are too often "*overwhelmed with other issues*" and "*career development is such a small piece of the guidance counsellor's role that it just doesn't get the attention it needs.*"

> **"Career Development teachers cannot do it alone. Other teachers need to make links as well and have a career focus in their subject areas.**
> **Teachers need to develop a reflex in their daily practice to assist students in life/career planning and not be just content teachers."**

- **Technology, social media, the internet and alternative media** could be better used to raise awareness of the importance of career development and provide service. One educator suggested the establishment of a "career hotline" staffed by expert career practitioners and accessible to all students.

- More broadly, a number of educators called for a more current and **tailored Atlantic approach to career education**. According to educators, a number of programs have been imported from other regions and/or maintained beyond their "best before date".

- **Students need the personal touch –** they need mentors/coaches to help them better understand what it is like to move away. This was highlighted as one of the key strengths of the *O2* program.

- **Too few students consider multiple options, explore post-secondary/careers and leave high school with a meaningful and realistic career plan.** When asked to rate, on a scale of 1-10, the extent to which graduating students leave with a career plan that is meaningful and achievable, responses ranged from 1.5 to 7. Overall, educators postulated that about half of their students leave secondary school prepared for their next step.

> **"I feel that about 15-20% of high school graduates are leaving with a clear career plan that is meaningful and achievable. The rest are not, and that's not acceptable."**

- Finally, the lack of **evaluation/data to track impact** was noted.

> **"How effective we are, I don't honestly know. We have no data to support any conclusion on that."**

Best Practice Review

As part of the process in building towards recommendations for K-12 career education in the Atlantic Provinces, CAMET asked CCDF to review national and international best practice research. Best practice reviewed for this section of the report are limited to those practices for which CCDF found evidence/research demonstrating that the practice met and/or exceeded the intended outcomes.   CCDF reviewed the literature for best practice with respect to content, implementation and integration of school-based career education.

Once the best practice review was complete, CCDF compared these practices with programming in the Atlantic Provinces and identified some Atlantic promising practices. For the purpose of this report, promising practices are those practices for which there is limited or anecdotal evidence of impact but that reflect elements found in the best practice research. These promising practices will be carried forward into this report's recommendations and considered as foundational practices for a broader Atlantic strategy to career education.

In doing the best practice research, CCDF focussed on reviewing literature that addressed the gaps or areas of weakness that emerged from the Environmental Scan and SWOT analysis. While there were a number of issues raised, CCDF grouped them into the five following concerns for the best practice research:

- The need for an overarching, well-articulated framework or approach that rationalizes the curriculum, the tools used and the supports and programs being offered,

- The lack of engagement by staff, students, employers, parents and the community;

- The need for consistent content and programming that focuses on the development and/or integration of career management skills, career exposure and labour market information;

- The lack of staff training and professional development, and;

- The absence of evaluation and quality assurance measures.

Interestingly, the literature confirmed that these are common concerns across many jurisdictions and countries. The best practice research highlights a number of ways that countries have addressed these concerns to enhance career education and program delivery in the K-12 system.

The Big Picture: An Approach that Rationalizes Services and Activities
Changes in the world of work over the past three decades have transformed the practice of career education. Career learning for students has become an increasingly complex and multi-faceted activity which is no longer reducible to single-point decisions supported by 1-1 guidance.

Many countries, Canada included, have increased their investment in career development programs, resources and tools available to public school students. What we see in Canada, however, is a plethora of isolated programs – many good – but lacking in any overall framework, approach or guiding principles that rationalizes and integrates specific interventions into a cohesive developmental experience for the student. Without this, engagement and implementation falters and investments are not optimized. The National Careers Council (2013) in the UK found that countries that have an overarching framework such as a career development strategy supported by national and local leadership stand as best practice in the field. These countries and jurisdictions demonstrate greater coordination of careers policies and practices on a sustained and cost-effective basis (National Careers Council, 2013).

There are two prominent best practice models for career development policy frameworks/approaches highlighted in the literature: the lifelong careers guidance approach (many European countries have adopted this model, see Denmark, Finland, Norway, UK) and the Comprehensive Guidance Program (US public school-based). Lifelong guidance is a model that is seamless in approach beginning in early elementary school (Denmark, Finland, Australia) and targeting services and programming proactively prior to key transitions points (e.g. elementary school-to-middle school, middle-school-to-high school, high school-to-work or PSE, PSE-to-work, work-to-learning, etc.). It is a developmental model that moves from kindergarten to retirement. In this approach, service is generally offered by trained career development professionals outside of schools, but there is an emphasis on the coordination between the interventions in schools and services available to students in the community.

Denmark is perhaps the most well-known example of this model in practice. Denmark, like Finland and France, has legislated entitlement to career service for all its citizens in an Act of Parliament. Career education is a clear policy and programming priority which is backed by a significant investment (70 million Euros in 2010-2012). The Danish framework is driven by three desired outcomes:

- To ensure that 95% of youth complete high school by 2015;
- To have 60% of youth complete PSE by 2020;
- To make it "…easier for citizens to make realistic decisions about learning opportunities and careers for the individual's sake and for the good of society as a whole" (Euroguidance Denmark, 2012, p. 3).

To achieve these outcomes, the Danish Guidance Act[3] defines seven main goals:

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[3] Career development/career education is generally referred to as careers guidance across European countries.

1. Ensure that choice of education is of greatest benefit to the individual and society and that every student graduates with a vocational or professional qualification;

2. Target youth who, without career education, would struggle to choose and complete education and training;

3. Balance individual interests, skills and experience with labour market demand;

4. Reduce the number of drop-outs and educational program changes;

5. Develop individual ability to seek and use ICT-based career, training, education and labour market information;

6. Strive for coherence and progression in the delivery of career education;

7. Ensure that service remains independent of sectorial and institutional interest and as such be provided by practitioners with an approved guidance education or required competencies (Euroguidance Denmark, 2012).

The Guidance Act is anchored by a quality assurance framework guided nationally but, importantly, allows for local tailoring to meet individual needs. There are two main service locations for youth: the Youth Guidance Centres (MYGCs) and the Regional Guidance Centres (RCs). The MYGCs work with local schools to support students from grades 1-10. Career education is delivered in concert with the schools and in the years leading up to Grade 10, students go to the MYGCs for a range of programming including work placements, bridging courses and to access mentorship programs. Students in Grade 9 work with staff at MYGCs to develop individual transition plans describing their learning and career goals for after middle school. The RCs support students from grades 10-12 and young adults/adults seeking assistance to get into PSE. All high school graduates must complete a compulsory career plan to graduate. In addition to the MYGCs and RCs, Denmark has a robust eGuidance system with LMI and education/training information for youth and parents. There is wide stakeholder involvement through national dialogue forums to improve services and connect local practitioners with national policy-makers. Another feature of note is its Centre for Expertise for Guidance facility that evaluates its career guidance systems, collects best practices, initiates analysis of interventions continually and requires compulsory training and certification for those delivering guidance.

In terms of impact, Denmark seems to be on track to hit their targets set out in the Act. Their graduation rate from university in 2007 was 47% (Orders and Duquette, 2010) and 90% from secondary school in 2011 (Osterlun, 2012). Denmark also has one of the lowest unemployment rates for youth 15-24 in the world (Foster, 2012). Perhaps, most significant, in a student survey (May 2010), 95% of students found the activities and services associated with the Act to be helpful in making work and learning choices (Bell and Benes, 2012).

Other countries (UK, Finland, Norway, South Korea and New Zealand) have a variation of the lifelong system approach to career development education and service. Most focus on an integrated system of career education embedding it into classroom learning. Another feature is bringing in or out-sourcing career and employment services outside of the school. The rationale for this is to allow students to receive services outside of the school environment and hence give them access to a "neutral" professional or service-body. Another key feature of all of these approaches is that quality assurance and evaluation are cornerstones of their strategy for career education and service, articulating evaluation explicitly as integral to the overall framework.

The second main model is the Comprehensive School Guidance Program (CSGP) model that originated in the US. Unlike the lifelong systems developed in Europe, this model is solely focussed on students in the public school system. Like the lifelong model, the CSGP is developmental in approach. It has three main elements: content, organizational framework and resources. The content of the program is competency-based and focusses on the development of students' career management skills based on the competencies delineated in the *National Career Development Guidelines* – a precursor to Canada's *Blueprint for Life-Work Designs*. The organizational framework "contains three structural components (definition, rationale, assumptions) [and] four program components (curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services and system support)" (Gysbers, 2005). Resources include consideration of the human, financial and political resources needed to fully implement the program. Importantly, the CGCP program articulates roles for all members of the school community, the establishment of an advisory committee to oversee implementation and the design and administration of a program needs assessment. A requirement of the CSGP program is that school counsellors are responsible for its implementation in schools. They are given the resources and time to coordinate the program and deliver aspects of the program that require their professional expertise. In all CSGP programs being run in the US, the career development component is a primary activity of the guidance curriculum. Career activities begin early in elementary school emphasizing career awareness and by middle and secondary school **all** students are being exposed to a standard range of career awareness, exploration and planning activities such as exposure to guest speakers, career/education days/evenings, job shadowing and the use of LMI (Gysbers, 2005). The key principles guiding CSGP are:

- It must be mainstreamed so that all students have equal access to service and it is seen as integral as other programs in the school;

- It must be comprehensive in approach yet responsive to individual student needs;

- It must be holistic integrating career development into aspects of academic, personal and social development;

- It must be developmental in approach embedded into the curriculum with a strong experiential component;

- It must be consistent and a sustained effort supported by local, state and national policies with sufficient resources;

- Well trained professionals must be at the centre of delivery;

- It must focus on the development of career management competencies;

- It must be accountable and be backed by quality assurance measures and evaluation (Gysbers, 2005).

The results of the CGCP have been positive. Generally, CGCP has been more effective at accessing the full student-body, not just those going to university. The program had a higher profile than previous guidance programs and most students, teachers and parents were positive about the program (Lehr and Sumarah, 2002). Perhaps, the most significant feedback of the program was around implementation in the school setting (i.e. how different aspects of the program would integrate together). The CGCP hinges on the commitment of staff, counsellors, administration, boards and governments to make it work effectively without which the benefits of the program are not as richly obtained.

Variants of the CGCP have been instituted in Canada. Quebec's *école orientante* is similar in approach. The *école orientante* emphasizes the importance of multi-professional teams organised around the school and delivering career development content in ways that are similar to and often interrelated with other curriculum content (Hooley et al., 2012). On paper both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia implemented the CGCP model in the late 1990s. Vestiges of the system are still in place, but neither province is implementing it fully. A program review in Nova Scotia showed similar results to those jurisdictions in the US who struggle with implementation. Guidance counsellors, in Lehr and Sumarah's review of the Nova Scotia program (2002), commented on the work to get commitment from staff and administration and the lack of adequate resources to support the successful implementation of the program. Teachers said that without these elements the program suffered in its capacity to reach all students (Lehr and Sumarah, 2002).

Jurisdictions where the lifelong learning and the CGCP models have been successful have been so primarily because they have developed a strategy for service based on the outcomes they want to achieve and the goals for building towards theses outcomes. This is strikingly absent across the Atlantic Provinces. There is a wealth of content and programming in the Atlantic Provinces; yet there is no coordination or integration. Bowes et al. (2005) state that "the lack of [a rationalized] strategy leads to many insufficiencies in the system" (p.4) such as duplication,

poor uptake and lack of awareness of existing supports and services. The lack of a strategy impacts the uptake by students and engagement by staff.

In 2008, Prince Edward Island developed a framework document that articulates its full range of career development programs. Nova Scotia's *O2* program similarly articulates objectives and intended outcomes and has eight program components related to them. These examples provide a good starting point for strategy development that could be expanded. Building on this, the next steps would be to articulate a vision for career education and programming including goals, desired outcomes, a scope, an evaluation and accountability process and an implementation plan. Such a document could help provinces not only rationalize the investment in career education, but also ensure that related programming was fully implemented and integrated into the broader education system.

Integration and Implementation

Hooley et al. (2012) in their review of the career education system in the UK found that "the integration of a variety of careers interventions with each other and with the wider school curriculum leads to more effective outcomes" (p. 25). For Hooley et al., evidence supports a curriculum-led integrative approach versus an activity-approach where schools provide a number of career education activities (e.g. career and entrepreneurship courses, co-operative education placements, guidance counselling, career-related presentations, career fairs) which are disconnected from each other and from the school's curriculum (Hooley et al., 2012, p. 6). Curriculum-led approaches see career education "as an important focal point for learning, with a body of knowledge, skills and pedagogic approaches connected with it" (Hooley et al., 2012, p.7). Career education in this case is interwoven into the broader mainstream curriculum. It is an approach that validates career education as a crucially important subject of learning in schools. The centrality of the curriculum in the curriculum-led approach is vital to its success, but as with the CGCP model, it requires substantial buy-in at all-levels from staff, administration, boards, community and government.

In terms of integration and implementation, curriculum-led approaches, like the one found in Finland, are the responsibility of all staff in schools. Guidance counsellors and student advisors have specific leadership roles, but the principal is responsible for supporting student career development and every teacher has career education activities as part of their duties. Career education is also seen as a community issue. Schools are legislated to work with parents, public employment services, community organizations and businesses. As such, employers are actively involved in the compulsory work-tasting experiences of students. (Interviews with Raimo Vuorinen, Coordinator of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network and the Finnish Institute for Educational Research, and Dave Redekopp, Principal of the Life-Role Development Group)

Some of the Atlantic Provinces have integrated career education theoretically into broader curriculum, but the results of the SWOT demonstrated that time spent on career education differs by instructor, school and board. Other career education activities such as career counselling, co-operative education and other experiential learning stand apart from the career development courses. The Atlantic Provinces, at best, straddle an approach between curriculum-led and activity-based. Newfoundland and Labrador have made a positive step forward in having a mandatory career development course. This is a good starting point that could be built upon to integrate career education into each grade and course. The *O2* program in Nova Scotia is a prime example of a curriculum-led approach. It is a promising practice, but limited by the number of students that have access to the program. It is currently available in every school in Nova Scotia, but only 20 students per school are admitted yearly (in grade 10) to the program. To be a full curriculum-led approach *O2* would need to be expanded to reach the full student body.

Engagement

Integration and implementation go hand in hand with engagement and all of this is made possible when there is commitment from all levels. We know from the research that integrated career education programs in schools support student motivation to continue their studies past high school (Lapan, Gysbers and Sun, 1997). Students say that their learning in school became more relevant when they took part in career education programming that extended to the community (through volunteering, co-operative education, job shadowing, etc.) (Bell and Bezanson, 2006). We also know that students respond quite differently to career development courses and activities when they are led by teachers and/or counsellors who have an interest in and the training required to deliver the subject (see the Training Section below). Teachers and guidance counsellors provide state-of-the-art programming when they are trained, supported authentically by administration and have sustained resources to deliver services and programming consistently. Communities, specifically employers, contribute readily to the career education of students when the "What's in it for me" is clear. Nova Scotia's co-operative education program is a promising practice in this regard. By providing safety and work-readiness training to students as a pre-requisite to their placement experience, the school eased the burden for local employers to participate in the program by making sure students could work safely and were work-ready. This resulted in employers clamouring to be part of the co-operative education program. Employer engagement is enhanced by this win-win, and by having a program that is resourced adequately to support partnership development and management of the program.

Research demonstrates that parents/guardians remain the number one provider of informal career information and the number one influence on student career choice. With the rapid changes in the labour market, parents feel ill-equipped in terms of providing information and

support on new career pathways. Engaging parents in school-based career programming is key (Hughes and Gration, 2009). There are a number of strategies to do this, such as hosting workshops for parents, developing ICT tools specifically aimed at parents and ensuring that information is available in a variety of languages so that resources are made available in the parent's/guardian's first language (ELGPN, 2012). Another best practice in engaging parents/guardians is to develop workshops and resources to help them explore their own career development while learning how to support their child's career development. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (based in the US) in their policy report "Youth and Work: Restoring Teen and Young Adult Connections to Opportunity," emphasized the need for policy makers and career development practitioners to consider a two-generation approach and bundle services for parent and child.

There are two promising practice examples in the Atlantic Provinces. Firstly, New Brunswick's Department of Family and Community Services (FCS) in New Brunswick piloted a project using the aforementioned approach in 2002. In a career development workshop for parents and teens given to social assistance recipients, parents explored not only how to help their teens develop their career but also how to apply career development principles to themselves. A survey of parent reaction to the workshops found that parents were better able to discuss careers with their teen and actually had career conversations with their teen post-intervention. Enthusiasm to continue these discussions was high. Many reported that they came to the workshop to support their child, but found that the workshop was also beneficial to them as well (Hollihan, 2003). The program ended in 2009 when FCS lost its Career Consultants.

Nova Scotia introduced "Parents as Career Coaches" in 2007 to help parents and guardians assist their children in making informed career decisions and is offered at no cost to parents and guardians of junior and senior high school students across Nova Scotia. It has increased the number of parents accessing this workshop from 120 in the period Oct. 2010 – June 2011 to 595 in the same months in 2012-2013. This represents an 84% increase in participation. High flexibility around registration (on-line, in-school and drop-in), multiple marketing touch points and extending the workshop to parents of students in Middle/Junior grades seem to have impacted the increase (Cuvelier, 2013).

Finally, a critical piece of engagement is around ensuring social inclusion in career education. Career education programming needs to reach and engage all students and, to do this, targeted programming may be needed for specific population groups. For example, initiatives like Take Your Kids to Work can exclude participation from students who come from workless homes. There needs to be consideration in programming targeted to under-represented groups. Bell and O'Reilly (2008) catalogued over 44 programs and policies targeted at supporting youth in making the transition from school to school and school to work. Many of these promising and

best practice programs targeted specific population groups (e.g. *LE,NONET*, *Future to Discover*, *Techsploration*). Similarly, Bell and Benes (2012) found many best practices in terms of targeting and engaging specific under-represented young graduates (e.g. *Ability Edge*, *Aboriginal Youth Exchange Program*, *Ryerson University Tri-Mentoring Program*). In the Scan, CCDF also found some promising practices in this regard such as:

- New Brunswick's *Aboriginal Trades Orientation Program* and its training of First Nations Education Support Workers to be certified Career Development Practitioners;

- Nova Scotia's *Business Network for Aboriginal Youth* – a mentorship program linking Aboriginal students to Aboriginal business mentors;

- Newfoundland and Labrador's Office to Advance Women Apprentices provides mentorship to young women in high school skilled trades classes and the Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership (LATP) prepares Aboriginal youth for employment created through resource development using Training-to-Employment plans;

- Nova Scotia has Community Access Facilitators to support Students with Disabilities with transition planning;

- The Atlantic Special Education Authority (APSEA) provides transition services, centre-based career assessments and career exploration services to students who are blind, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing across all Atlantic Provinces.

Many of these programs listed above include the following to build engagement with these populations: having role models and mentors from the same cultural background, inviting the students' community to participate in career days, training staff in career development and working respectfully with employers to make accommodations that support student participation in work placements (Bell and Benes, 2012).

Content and Programming

The literature on best practice in career education emphasizes three main content pieces that should be significantly present in all career education programs in schools:

- Career management skill development
- Career Exposure Activities
- Labour Market Information

Career Management Skills Development

One of the most comprehensive reviews of career development services was undertaken in 2004 by the OECD. One of the key recommendations in its report, *Bridging the Gap*, was that services need more than 1-on-1 interviews; they need to teach career self-management and career decision-making skills supplemented with a developmental approach (2004). Because

career progression today is no longer a ladder, but a sequence of slides, hops, descents and climbs to get to where you want to be, students need a core group of skills to navigate the labour market. Career management skills (CMS) are seen as essential skills in today's knowledge economy (Hooley, 2011, Jarvis, 2010, Bezanson, 2008, Bell and Bezanson, 2006). Hooley (2011) suggests that graduates who have developed CMSs are the ones who will develop quicker labour market attachment, have enhanced earnings and have a more positive outlook on their career futures. These skills need to be a core element in career education programs.

They include skills of **personal management** (self-awareness and building a positive self-image, the ability to interact effectively with others and to change and grow throughout life), **learning and work exploration** (participating in lifelong learning, researching labour market information and using it effectively, understanding the relationship between career goals and society/the economy) and **life/work building** (securing, creating and maintaining work, making life/work enhancing decisions, maintaining a balance between life and work roles, understanding the changing nature of life and work roles, and understanding, engaging in and managing one's own life/work building process). In Canada, the most comprehensive developmental framework of these skills is the *[Blueprint for Life/Work Designs](#)*. The *Blueprint* has been adapted by many countries, most notably Australia, where their public school careers curriculum is coded to the *Blueprint*. They use these competencies and the related indicators as student outcomes that are evaluated and tracked. This is an underutilized resource in Canada. Some Atlantic Provinces reference it as a source to teachers, but none, based on the Environmental Scan, actually coded their curriculum or graded student achievement with respect to CMSs. It should be used to define the core competencies that students need to emerge with out of the curriculum and career courses. The indicators outlined in the Blueprint can be used to assess student CMS competency and as a result validate the learning content of the career courses on par with other subject courses.

Career Exposure
Research backs the need for students to have *career management skills*, but equally important is the need for *work experience opportunities*. A combination of career education, work experience and exposure to alternative pathways to the labour market is essential for most individuals to discover work that motivates and suits them. Research studies suggest that "young people gain particularly valuable information on jobs and careers if obtained in a real workplace through contacts with working people" (OECD, 2010, p. 85). Not only does it support career decision-making and improve intentional learning and engagement, but research demonstrates the positive links between higher levels of school-mediated employer contracts and the later higher earning of young adults (National Careers Council, 2013, p. 31). Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands (three countries with very low youth unemployment rates)

have dual credit, apprenticeship and other work experience programs where significant numbers of students choose pathways where 20-90% of their learning is completed in the workplace (Learning Partnership, Career Education – An International Context, n.d.). Yet, less that 20% of students in Canada (less than 13% in the Atlantic Provinces) are enrolled in the primary exposure building program offered in schools - co-operative education (Malatest, 2009).

At minimum, the National Careers Council in the UK recommends that career exposure/experiential learning should take place well before key decision making points between middle, secondary and post-secondary. All students need these experiences and more than once in the course of their public school education. The experience does not necessarily need to be a full co-operative education placement; in fact, in addition to co-operative education there should be a variety of exposure experiences from which students can draw, including:

> *"work experience, enterprise competition and volunteering where individuals are challenged to be effective in unfamiliar situations. In today's job market, people need to be personally effective across a range of competencies, to be active problem solvers and plot their own futures through periods of training, unemployment and work. We need to be sure that our educational system prepares people for the emotional and psychological challenges of the twenty-first century labour market."* (National Careers Council, 2013, p. 33).

A best practice work experience program in Canada is Manitoba's *Career Trek*. The program begins in Grade 5 and exposes students to over 80 different careers. There are two more points of programming in Grades 9 and 10 where students experience a narrower field of options at an increasingly more in-depth level. The general secondary school graduation rate of students who take part in the program is 91% and 49% of the participants (tracked from the first four cohorts of the program) went onto PSE.

Another best practice is *CCInspire*, a US-based subsidiary of *Career Cruising* (which is being considered for implementation in New Brunswick). This program provides students with career exploration experience and mentorship with local employers. It is available in over 1500 schools in the US. The key to this program is its capacity to engage communities in providing career exposure programming by connecting with local employers and demonstrating to them how connecting with students early helps nurture talent for the future of their businesses and their communities.

The key to implementation of exposure programming is community and employer involvement. This takes time and resources to develop. The UK has employer databases that schools can call to help them connect to business. Community groups and schools are also encouraged to have connections with organizations that focus on attracting young people to their sector. The UK examples include: *STEM Ambassadors*, *Career Academies*, *CBI Business in the Classroom*, *Big Bang*, *Young Engineers*, local education-business partnerships. The UK, Demark and Finland have third parties specifically hired to focus on creating and maintaining these relationships (National Careers Council, 2013). There are numerous strategies for doing so; many already underway in the Atlantic Provinces (e.g. Nova Scotia's co-operative education program). Ultimately, however, it needs a person whose role it is to facilitate this for a school or a number of schools.

Labour Market Information

There is a notable lack of formal tailored labour market information (LMI) available to students in the Atlantic Provinces and it seems from the SWOT that young people do not find what is available to them particularly useful. Often, LMI is presented without context and, according to students, parents and educators, students are often sat in front of computers to "figure it out."

The Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-based Practice in Career Development (CRWG), found in its study, "Measuring the Impact of LMI," that LMI on its own is not useful. People do not go to LMI to find out what they need; they find out what they need then find the LMI connected to that need. LMI must be tied to the user's employability need and experience to be useful and that is where the development of career management skills and career exposure can support the integration of LMI. The CRWG in their snapshot report of this project stated that "a critical career self-management skill is the ability to access, interpret, and make practical use of Labour Market Information (LMI). Accurate LMI that users can interpret and contextualize to their own situations is imperative" (CRWG, n.d.). Given the importance of using this information when making career-decisions, it seems necessary to better support students in its use. CCDF found in its research study, "Assessing the Impact of Career Development Resources and Practitioner Support Across the Employability Dimensions," that if you tailor LMI to career need and structure and sequence information within a broader context of career development support, users feel less overwhelmed by the information and more likely to be able to use it in their career decision-making. The study developed simple pointer career and labour market packages. Prior to use, users were assessed for employability need and oriented to each package tailored to that need. The study found statistically and clinically positive results on user skill, knowledge in use of LMI, attitude towards their career future and ability to find employment that fit with career goals as a result of being in the study (CCDF, 2013).

Similarly, the [Social Research and Demonstration Corporation](#) (SRDC) tested a custom-designed career development service interactive web site with PSE graduates who felt overqualified for their current jobs. This site guided users to assess their career need and then they were directed to LMI specific to that need. Tailoring and targeting content had a significant impact. Those that participated and used the tool found LMI "within earlier reach and were more likely to report that they were making greater use of LMI since the time of their enrolment in the study" (SRDC, 2012, p. 42).

While research on the use of LMI has not, to date, focussed on high school students, evidence, as stated above, suggests that the ability to use LMI in career decision-making positively impacts aspects of self-efficacy, confidence and career fit. To generate these outcomes, it needs to be simplified and tailored to the audience.

Training

Several countries have noted training of deliverers as essential to the efficacy and efficiency of career education systems. The assumption that personal counsellors and teachers could provide career education and service without specific training is a notion that has been challenged in many research reports. The OECD's *Bridging the Gap* (2004) found that individual career counselling offered in schools could be too remote from the labour market when tied to personal guidance counsellors who tend to not have background in career development. Bowes et al. in their study of the UK careers guidance system also found that "quality [of service] can … be affected by the qualifications and experience of teachers responsible for career development education/service" (p. 5). Teachers who lack training in career development can negatively impact student experience. Ontario, like the Atlantic Provinces, provides no training for teachers and similarly selects teachers to teach the careers course based on who has the space in their schedules to teach it. The results of this approach have had similar student reaction as those found in the SWOT focus groups. The Ontario Student Trustees Association 2011 survey of Ontario's mandatory course found that 74% of students said the courses were a waste of time and less than 50% would take the courses if they were made optional. Malatest and Associates who examined career counselling provision in Canadian schools, recommended that "all counsellors … have adequate professional training for their mandated roles and responsibilities in career development" as guidance counsellors in Canada largely did not have this training (2009, p. 49).

The impact of teacher and counsellor training is significant:

- Winters et al. in 2012 looked at the impact of training on vocational teachers who were implementing a competency-based career learning program in the Netherlands. The program integrated the development of career management competencies that had several, what they referred to as, "powerful career learning environments." One such

learning environment was a "career conversation" between the student, their teacher and their vocational placement mentor. The researchers looked at what happens in these conversations when you provide career development training to the teachers. The results were significant. In the conversations that took place after training, students talked more than their teachers, the training stimulated communication with the students rather than one-way conversations directed by the teacher, more conversation time was spent on "the student's career and, more specifically, now balanced over all career competencies.[4]

- At the University of Lethbridge (Alberta), Slomp and Bernes conducted a study in 2011 that had pre-service teachers (B.Ed. students) take a one-term course on career development and then execute a career-related project in their practicum experience. The teachers ranged from elementary to high school levels across most subject areas. The findings were significant: teachers demonstrated many positive changes in the pre and post-test such as recognizing that career planning is not a one-time activity, that there was not one right occupation for students, that their role was to help students develop the "knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for effective lifelong career self-management" and an enhanced appreciation for the importance of career planning (Slomp and Bernes, 2012, pp. 33-34). In hindsight, the teachers rated their knowledge, skills and attitudes as unacceptable prior to having taken the course.

Because of these and other impacts of training, many countries have made training a priority or mandatory for all who deliver career service:

- By 2013, South Korea will have appointed approximately 5000 career counsellors and every career counsellor will have completed 600 hours of mandatory training prior to commencement (National Career Council, 2013, p.2013);

- The Hungarian Government provides short courses for teachers, social workers and others to train them in basic career education skills, drawing from a ten-module program (National Careers Council, 2013);

- Denmark insists on common core training for all staff working in career education settings and additional training for career guidance specialists;

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[4] Kuijpers and Scheerens (2006) outlined six career competencies: career-actualization-ability, the degree to which employees are capable of realizing personal goals and values in their working career; career reflection, reviewing one's own competencies with respect to one's career; motivation reflections, reviewing one's own desires and values with respect to one's career; work exploration, orientation toward matching one's own identity and competencies to the required values and competencies in a specific work situation; career control, career-related planning and influencing of learning and work processes; and networking, setting up contacts that are relevant for one's career. For the Winter's et al. study referenced above, all competencies but networking were impacted positively by teacher training.

- Finland is perhaps the most strongly committed in this area with professional qualification and competency requirements defined in legislation. They have a strong training system to support foundational training and continued professional development. Training is competency-based and aligned with a competency framework adopted by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance and serves as their basic foundation for quality career education (interviews with Raimo Vuorinen, Coordinator of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network and the Finnish Institute for Educational Research, and Dave Redekopp, Principal of the Life-Role Development Group).

In Canada, many provinces (including New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador) have invested in comprehensive competency-based training for staff delivering adult career development services. This training is aligned with the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners and certification via the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance. The New Brunswick Career Development Action Group lists training courses for career development practitioners that meet certification standards. Similar training was offered to government employment counsellors in Newfoundland and Labrador. Other training programs are available from post-secondary institutions and can be found on the Canadian Council for Career Development web site. Both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are launching provincial certification for career development practitioners. Yet, the public education system appears to function in isolation of the training standards and certification embraced by the broader field.

As the labour market and, relatedly, the delivery of career education becomes more complex, training is essential for ethical practice. The National Careers Council (NCC) in the UK states that the role of the career development professional has changed dramatically because of the changes in the labour market. This change, the NCC argues, "...requires new skills sets that facilitate and support young people, adults, employers and parents to comprehend and utilise to good effect ICT, social networking and face-to-face career development support within and outside of the workplace and labour market" (2013, p. 20).

Evaluation and Quality Standards

Career services cannot move towards better, improved or even responsive practice if evaluation is not at the forefront of the system. Many countries have moved to create extensive system evaluation tools and/or quality standards to support the delivery of career education in schools. Sweden, for example, has developed a quality indicator tool for career education and guidance (BRUK) (ELGPN, 2012). Denmark has a youth database system in place to collect data about education and employment status on all 15-29 year olds (ELGPN, 2012). Estonia is piloting three quality index user manuals to ensure the quality of career education in

schools (ELGPN, 2012). In the UK, they have a kite-mark known as [Quality in Career Standard](#) (QiCS). This standard emphasizes:

> *…staff training and qualifications, engagement of school leadership in the programme, impartiality, the centrality of career education and curriculum interventions, the importance of career and labour market information, the value of work with external partners (employers), families and careers, and the importance of monitoring, evaluation, review and development of the programme* (Hooley et al., 2012, 27).

The main goal in having the kite-mark is to create a "coherent national framework for quality in relation to careers work in schools" (Hooley et al., 2012, p. 27). Similar systems are available in Wales, Scotland, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand.

Evaluation and quality standards are needed to validate investment and more and more career services are being called to make evaluation part of the culture of service delivery. A recent review of Quality Standards in the delivery of career development (Bezanson, 2012) points to a range of potential models and suggest more rigour is needed. As Hooley et al. describe "having a charismatic and brilliant guidance practitioner cannot be described as a quality feature, but having a well-trained, regularly observed practitioner who learns from the feedback of her or his [students] can" (2012, p. 25). Quality is a measure of process and approach and there are many different kinds of quality measurements (Hooley et al., 2012).

Plant (2004, p. 143) identifies four poles around which quality standards are organised:

- standards relating to inputs and processes versus standards relating to outcomes;
- standards derived from the viewpoint of the client/customer versus standards derived from the need for public accountability;
- standards that are self-assessed versus standards for external accreditation;
- general guidelines versus specific measurable standards.

There is value in all of these approaches to measuring quality. As Hooley et al. state:

> *It is important to be sure that inputs are appropriate, that outputs are measurable, that clients are satisfied, that public (or other) monies are spent appropriately, that practitioners are monitoring quality and are accountable, that there is a broad agreement about approach, and that specific indicators exist which can be used to ensure performance. The approach that is taken to monitoring quality is likely to focus on one or more of these areas.*

In a review of the literature, some of the recommended points of evaluation to assure quality and development of career education systems in schools include (CCDF, 2013; ELGPN, 2012; Hooley et al, 2012; Interview with Dave Redekopp, 2013; Malatest, 2009):

- Teacher/guidance counsellor career development competence (e.g. number of teachers and/or counsellors who hold professional credentials or training certificates in career development);

- Student career management competence as guided by a career development framework such as the *Blueprint for Life-Work Designs*;

- Student attainment levels and progression as well as school leaver rates;

- User reported benefits and satisfaction reports (e.g. career and learning program fit, self-confidence, self-efficacy);

- Event and program attendance;

- Transition rates;

- School-parent connections;

- School-community connections;

- School-employer relationships;

- Administrative support.

Savickas et al. (2009) argued that career guidance and education systems need to stop seeking a singular outcome (students go to PSE) and begin to consider multiple outcomes validating the impact of career development services. New Brunswick's and Newfoundland and Labrador's graduate surveys (*Grade 12 Exit Survey* and *Beyond High School,* respectively) are excellent steps forward in this regard, but there is much to do to support better evaluation of career education in the Atlantic Provinces' schools.

Recommendations

The Atlantic Provinces have clearly invested heavily in career education and there is a wealth of good practice upon which to build. There is no shortage of programs, resources and tools or innovative approaches to their delivery. The Environmental Scan and SWOT analysis would suggest, however, that there is a lack of consistent commitment, appropriate training for career educators, integration and follow through to implementation, evaluation and accountability and, consequently, inconsistency with respect to engagement and commitment to career education among administrators, school staff, community and students.

The recommendations contained herein seek to build upon strengths/opportunities and address weaknesses/threats gleaned from the Environmental Scan and SWOT analysis and to reflect Canadian and international best practice. The recommendations align with six key imperatives.

- An Atlantic Career Education Strategy

- Adequate Training and Professional Learning for Educators and Administrators

- Early Integration of Career Education

- Follow through to Implementation

- Engagement with Key Stakeholders

- Evaluation for Accountability, Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

1. **An Atlantic Career Education Strategy**

    At a time when youth unemployment and underemployment looms at the top of policy agendas and the public priorities, there is an opportunity for the Atlantic Provinces to position themselves as visible leaders nationally and internationally by publishing an Atlantic Career Education Strategy. Although there has been a significant investment in career development programming, tools and resources across the Atlantic Provinces, career education clearly remains on the fringes of the public school system and is not adequately supported in policy. Evidence of this permeates all aspects of career education and is reflected in the other five areas of recommendation: the lack of even the most basic training for deliverers, commitment to integration within schools and follow through to implementation, stakeholder engagement, quality standards or evaluation.

    In the absence of a Career Education Strategy, the clear message to administrators, educators, students, parents and the community is that career education is secondary to other subject areas. Any teacher with a free slot is "good enough" to deliver career education. There is an absence of current and tailored LMI to support educators and students. Student progress and outcomes related to career education are not measured and do not contribute to graduation requirements, so career education is easily expendable.

    In a world in which time and resources are extremely limited, career education would appear to remain low on the list of imperatives. Although this may not be the intent of decision-makers across the Atlantic Provinces, the absence of a vision, standards and rigour sends a clear message to those on the front-lines and in the community that career education is not a priority.

This stands in stark contrast with international best practice exemplars where:

- Career education is embedded in legislation as a basic citizen right, supported by policy and adequate funding mechanisms;

- Frameworks clearly articulate the vision, goals and outcomes of career education and guide its implementation and evaluation;

- Educators and students are resourced with proven programming, curricula and tailored LMI;

- Quality standards are established and associated progress and outcomes are tracked and analyzed to ensure evidence-based practice.

Best practice research points to the power of a global vision, standards and guidelines as a precursor and support to provincial/local action.

> **We recommend developing and publishing an Atlantic Career Education Strategy to provide just such a global benchmark.**

Prince Edward Island has developed a document detailing the activities, resources and programming that support career education across grade levels. This is a good start. A robust framework to guide the delivery of quality career education would:
- Articulate a vision and guiding principles;

- Establish roles and responsibilities;

- Set standards related to student access, deliverer competence and student outcomes; and

- Include evaluation, accountability and quality assurance.

Several strategy models exist: Australia has published a *National Career Development Strategy* as well as an *Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy*; Denmark and Finland also offer examples of robust policy positions. In Canada, the Northwest Territories and, more recently Nunavut, have published frameworks for career development service delivery across the lifespan. We have the *Canadian Standards for Career Development Practitioners* (S & Gs) articulating benchmarks for deliverer competency. We have the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* for assessment of student graduation learning. We have a nationally endorsed evaluation framework developed by the *Canadian Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development* and protocols to support accountability. The elements required to create

an Atlantic Career Education Strategy are readily accessible and the benefits of doing so are multiple and significant:

- The Atlantic Provinces are established as visible leaders;

- Provinces have a road map to guide implementation planning. They maintain the independence for tailored action, but also the potential economic efficiencies of collaboration and cost-sharing across Provinces; and

- Benchmarks and evaluation support quality assurance and reportable student success outcomes.

2. **Training and Professional Learning for Educators and Administrators**
Systemic weakness exists across all Atlantic provinces with respect to the training and professional development of subject teachers, career educators, guidance counsellors and administrators.

> **We recommend a tailored needs-based approach so that teachers have basic career and labour market awareness, career educators and guidance counsellors have specialized training reflective of the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners and administrators understand the role of career education within their broader purview.**

Best practice research points to the importance of integration, linking academic subject to employability skill development and real world labour market opportunity. This assumes pre-service training for subject teachers to ensure a basic understanding of career education and/or professional development to support linkages between subject content and today's labour market.

Career education tends to be taught by new teachers and turnover is high. The assumption would appear to be that no particular expertise is required to deliver career development programming. The SWOT analysis suggests that this approach is not working. Superb curricula and programming falters when delivered by those without adequate training and support.

There are national competency standards and abundant training already developed. The *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners* (S & Gs) articulate the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for quality, ethical service. This standard was used as the basis for the competency framework adopted by the *International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance* and is the standard

for its *Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner (EVGP) Certification*. It is also the foundation for all provincial certification for career development practitioners in Canada and for most post-secondary education programs in the field.

Many provinces have invested in competency-based training for career development practitioners working with adults. Both New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador have instituted province-wide training of their Employment Counsellors. This training is aligned with the S & Gs and leads to international certification. These programs are typically offered via a blended approach, mixing face-to-face with distance delivery.

There are also a range of online training programs available (e.g. Life Strategies Ltd., Conestoga College, Athabasca University, University of Calgary, Yorkville University and Dalhousie University). A full listing of Canadian training programs is provided by the Canadian Council for Career Development.

Yet, with the exception of Quebec, no province has articulated or enforced basic competency standards for career educators or guidance counsellors or provided training and professional development to support this standard. This is a significant weakness that could and must be readily addressed if the goal is quality career education.

Finally, administrators set the tone within schools, establishing the culture, priorities and possibilities. Administrators need to understand the moral, economic and educational imperatives associated with career education in order to promote and support it.

When assessing the cost of investing in training and professional development, it is important to consider as well the cost of not making this investment. Significant investment is being made in curriculum and programming. Yet we know youth are faltering along their pathways to secondary school graduation, post-secondary attainment and labour market attachment at a significant cost to the public purse.

3. **Early Integration of Career Education**
   Research points to the benefits of starting early and integrating career education across the curriculum, both through cross-curricular infusion of career themes and through targeted mandatory offerings.

   The SWOT analysis confirmed the desire for earlier intervention among students, parents and educators. This is consistent with best practice trends internationally and exemplary Canadian programs, such as *Career Trek* in Manitoba.

> **We recommend having a developmental approach that engages students early (Grade 5) and provides age-appropriate opportunities for skills building, experiential learning and career planning. It is recommended that the approach integrate both mandatory elements linked to graduation requirements and infusion of career/labour market themes across subjects.**

4. Follow Through to Implementation

Canada has a long and rich history of program/resource creation and pilot projects in career education. It does not, however, have a strong track record for sustained implementation. Career education remains on the periphery and programs seem to come and go without being linked to an overall framework, without being supported by adequate teacher preparation and without being evaluated. Significant resources seem to be invested in development; much less would appear to be invested in ensuring quality implementation. As a result, it is unclear what is really being delivered, what is working and what is not working.

> **We recommend that each Atlantic Province build onto an Atlantic Career Education Strategy with regionally-tailored implementation plans that are consistent with the Atlantic vision, meet common standards but also reflect local priorities, needs and realities. These plans should address human resource needs (including training and time) and evaluation.**

In order to be successful, career education must be an explicit priority of administrators and be spearheaded within each school by educators with expertise/certification in career development or external career development practitioner positioned to implement key programming and support other educators to infuse career development strategically into their subject areas.

5. Engagement with Key Stakeholders

Engagement is all about relationships and connections. These can only happen if there is person-time available to develop and nurture relationships with students, parents, community groups and employers. Nova Scotia's *Parents as Career Coaches* program has endeavoured to reach out to parents and New Brunswick's *école communautaire* is seeking to build community connections. Nova Scotia is working to prepare students so they are safety conscious and work-ready in their efforts to engage employers. All provinces note that these relationships and efforts take dedicated time – something that is in scarce supply.

> **To increase the engagement of students, we recommend that the Atlantic Provinces integrate career experience/exposure programming within career development courses. Students should have multiple opportunities for work experiences in K-12, especially at key transition years (minimally once prior to entry into secondary and 2-3 times across the secondary grades).**

Experiential learning does not need to be limited to a co-operative education course, but co-operative education should be in place in every jurisdiction. The co-operative education model found in Nova Scotia should be considered as a best practice. The flexibility of placement time and hours increases student uptake and engagement.

With parents, encourage participation in all career events and/or consider dual generation career development workshops. Parents clearly stated their need and desire for practical and tailored information to support them to support their children. In order to truly engage parents, however, educators will need to be vigilant in terms of issues of social inclusion. It's likely fair to say that most parents want to support their children, but not all parents know how or have equitable access to information and supports.

Barriers to access are often subtle or even hidden and educators need to understand the barriers to eliminate them.

To reach all students in career education programming, it is important that schools ensure that faces and voices of all students and their families are seen and heard in the context of career education.

6. **Evaluation for Accountability, Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement**

What gets measured and reported gets done. A robust Atlantic Career Education Strategy must include an evaluation plan. Evaluation is critical, not only in guiding staff decisions regarding how to best engage and support students, parents, employers and community members, but also in tracking the impact of career education on these key stakeholders. Evaluation is needed to position career education as a strategic investment, contributing integrally to priority educational, social and economic outcomes, rather than an expendable budget line. Adequate and stable funding is critical to the success of any learning program. Career education must demonstrate that it warrants investment relative to other subject areas.

There are multiple approaches to evaluation. Often it is reduced to the lowest denominator: tracking participation and/or satisfaction. There is some merit in tracking these. If a standard is set for career educator training/certification, for example, it is important to know that this

standard is upheld. It is also important to hear directly from stakeholders regarding their responses to career education initiatives. But to truly evaluate impact and have the data needed to inform programming/policy, evaluation must demonstrate the connection between career education and real change (in knowledge, skills, personal attribute, educational and/or labour market status). With this in mind, core elements of the evaluation ideally could include:

- Number of teachers and counsellors who hold professional credentials or training certificates in career development;

- Assessments of student career management competence (as outlined by the *Blueprint for Life-Work Designs*) in all career education related courses which is integrated into the formal reporting of student achievement;

- Development of a list of common student, parents and community indicators that are tracked through user benefits and satisfaction reports and shared with all levels of staff and administration;

- Tracking number of transitions to post-secondary and graduate attainment levels, progression and leaver rates, the extent to which post-secondary choice/employment is consistent with student's career plans, student confidence and satisfaction – including particular attention to these results for under-represented groups;

- Participation and uptake levels by students, parents and employers across career programming;

- Career program connections: school-to-parent, school-to-community, school-to-employers and the associated qualitative impacts of these connections; and,

- Level of administrative support.

Currently significant investments are being made in career education, but virtually no investment in assessing its return with respect to stakeholder outcomes. Canada is a world leader in evidence-based research in the area of career development. The *Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-based Practice, CCDF, SRDC* and others have conducted rigorous evaluations of the impact of LMI and career development interventions/approaches. Protocols and tools to support evidence-based research and practice are now freely accessible and could be readily adapted for application.

> **It is recommended that targeted evaluation be adopted as a priority and the results reviewed at least annually and used to guide and refine ongoing planning and delivery. Prior to and during the implementation of an evaluation plan, it will be critical that the Atlantic Provinces have accountability teams in place with the expertise and resources required to develop and oversee the implementation of the evaluation plan.**

Implementation Plan

Given these recommendations, CCDF suggests that CAMET undertake the following:

- Create an **Atlantic Career Education Strategy** complete with **Atlantic Career Education Quality Assurance Model**;
- Individual provinces can then use this to guide the development of **Provincial Career Education Implementation and Evaluation Plans.**

Creation of an Atlantic Career Education Strategy

As stated in the Best Practice and Recommendations sections, there are many models that CAMET can refer to as they build an Atlantic Career Education Strategy. Common elements across these models that could be considered for the Atlantic Strategy include:

Background

This section sets the context and rationale for the Strategy. While globally articulated for the Atlantic region, this section highlights the specific economic and labour market considerations of individual provinces which pertain to the vision of the strategy. The career education needs of the broader student community should be described as well as any needed considerations for specific student populations in each jurisdiction.

Vision

A career education strategy includes a vision statement defining career education. This is often used to define the scope of the strategy and what is meant by this in terms of services offered in schools. The vision for the strategy could also consider how it relates to existing vision statements in other strategy documents in the provinces and/or for other groups within the provinces (equity groups and adults). As many career development strategies being developed internationally are all-age approaches, CAMET may want to discuss how this strategy fits with service for adults and youth outside the school system.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles in the strategy document should inform the design and delivery of career education in the Atlantic Provinces. These may encompass principle statements addressing the findings of the Scan and the SWOT. Given the results of this research, guiding principles could include:

- Career education in schools will target all students, beginning at least by Grade 5-6 and focusing particularly on key transition points;
- Career education will foster career management skills (including financial literacy) as outlined by the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* and resilience among students;

- Career education will be student-focussed and strive to balance individual, community and labour market needs;

- Standards and quality assurance processes both for delivery and deliverers will be implemented to ensure effective outcomes for career education;

- As such, deliverers of career education will be trained and demonstrate needed competencies as outlined in the *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners* to deliver quality services;

- Career and labour market information tools and resources provided to students will be current, relevant and reliable; and,

- Community, business and parents will be invited to have greater involvement in career education both to increase their understanding of career education and to provide or seek out career exposure opportunities for students.

Goals

Similar to the Australian model, the Atlantic Strategy will need to recognize that there is not one single path to achieving the vision. Provinces and regions within provinces will need a diversity of approaches to meet their unique realities and priorities. While a diversity of approach is important, having a common set of goals will help to support commonality in outcome.

In setting goals for the strategy, CAMET will need to set tangible goals for which progress can be measured.

Outcomes

Following the goal statements, should be the intended outcomes of the strategy and the establishment of a timeframe for meeting the intended outcomes.

Quality Assurance and Evaluation

Best practice examples cited in this report have invested in the development of quality assurance models that are backed by evaluation standards and plans that allow for these jurisdictions to continually examine their career education systems and resources to ensure that outcomes and standards for ethical practice are being met. These practices also use quality assurance models and evaluation processes to support the sharing of promising and best practices and as a way of finding efficiency through collaboration and committing to the sustainability of programing and resource provision.

As the Atlantic Provinces craft this section, it is important to note that Canada has best practice resources from which to draw. There is the *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career*

Development Practitioners (S & Gs) articulating benchmarks for deliverer competency and ethical practice, the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* for assessment of student graduation learning, and a nationally endorsed evaluation framework developed by the *Canadian Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development* and protocols to support accountability.

Roles and Responsibilities (Accountability)

Finally, a vital part of the Strategy is the articulation of roles and responsibilities for CAMET, the Departments of Education, school boards, administrators, career educators and subject teachers. Consideration may also be made in terms of the roles and responsibilities of students, parents, employers and community leaders and members. The importance of stating the roles and responsibilities is one of accountability and helps to ensure that the strategy is integrated fully where everyone has a role to play in the success of the strategy. Here the Strategy should at minimum articulate those who are accountable for the outcomes of the strategy, the roles and responsibilities of those delivering service and who is responsible for the evaluation of the strategy.

Provincial Implementation and Evaluation Plans

With the Strategy in place, each Atlantic province will need to develop implementation and evaluation plans to set out how they intend to meet the goals and the outcomes of the Strategy. The first step in this process would be for the provinces to catalogue current programming and resources for career education from K-12. Some provinces already have this completed. For others, the Environmental Scan may be a helpful resource in completing this task.

Once a catalogue of available programming, curricula and career and labour market information and associated supports (e.g. human resources, training and professional development) has been done, the provinces would then examine the objectives set out by the strategy and connect what they are currently doing with respect to each objective. In doing this, each province will want to simultaneously analyse their current career education provision using the Environmental Scan, the SWOT and best practice research to consider from what they have learned what needs to be adapted/expanded, eliminated or requires new development in order to enact their implementation and evaluation plan.

Once the province has completed this analysis they will want to connect each program and resources to each objective in the Strategy. Some programs /resources will target multiple objectives and some only one. The following chart could be used/adapted to build the implementation and evaluation plan for each of the Strategy's objectives:

Provincial Implementation and Evaluation Plan			
Atlantic Career Education Strategy **Objective # 1:**			
Timeframe to Meet the Objective			
Actions to meet the objective (List each program and resources currently available or recommended to adapt or develop to meet this objective)	Program/ Resource #1:	Lead Responsibility	Who is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the programs and resources listed?
		Human Resource Need	What are the staff requirements and what are their roles and responsibilities?
		Training and Professional Development Requirements	What competencies are required for each person delivering services under this objective and how will these staff members be trained and/or demonstrate these competencies?
		Links to Other Initiatives	Are there links to other programs/initiatives that are not part of this Ministry?
		Partners	List the partners required to undertake and effectively implement the program or resource.
		Communication Requirements	Who needs to know about the program/service? Who is responsible for communication with whom about the program/service? How is the program/service promoted to students/parents and the community?
		Deliverables	What are the deliverables of the program/services?
		Measurable Outcomes	What are the intended outcomes of the program/service and how do they help the province meet this objective of the strategy?
		Plan for Evaluating the Outcomes/Impacts	What is the Province's plan for evaluating the program/service to demonstrate that it meets the intended outcomes and the objective of the strategy? How will the data be collected? Who is responsible for ensuring that the evaluation is taking place? What resources are needed to ensure that evaluation will take place? How are the results reported and to whom?
		Cost (financial/in-kind)	All associated costs required by the province and those that will be provided by other stakeholders

Once completed, each province will have a detailed implementation and evaluation plan with communication requirements to inform students and other key stakeholders of individual programs and practices. Programs and resource provision will be rationalized in the larger context of the broader Atlantic Strategy. Evaluation will be rooted in implementation and build toward a culture of continuous improvement and good practice. Human resource competency needs and training will be tailored and, as a result, consistency and quality of programming will be assured.

The implementation and evaluation plans should be reviewed annually based on evaluation results.

Conclusion

These recommendations are respectfully submitted as the basis for a quality career education framework. CCDF recommends a common and integrated Atlantic Strategy with tailored provincial implementation and evaluation drawing the best from each province and pooling resources to fill identified gaps. CCDF welcomes the opportunity to support CAMET in its critical next steps and establishing the Atlantic Provinces as world leaders in career education.

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Appendix A - SWOT Protocols

Focus Group Protocol: Secondary Students

PART 1: INTRODUCTION
- Welcome
- Introduction
- Brief description of project/goal of focus group
- Outline focus group (how it will proceed, time, norms)
- Confidentiality; permission to record
- Questions before get started

PART 2: FG QUESTIONS

1. As you look ahead to leaving high school, what are your plans (PSE – public/community college, university, apprenticeship, private training institution – work, other, don't know)?
   NOTE TO FACILITATOR: You will need to be very sensitive to participants who do not yet have a plan, acknowledging this and engaging their perspectives in subsequent questions.

2. Some kids start thinking about what they want to do when they get older at a pretty young age. What about you? When did you start thinking about what you might like to do in life?
   PROBE: Were there any activities/discussions at school, home or in your community that made you start thinking about it? How has your thinking evolved over time? What/Who has influenced this evolution?

3. What kind of help has been available to you so far in building a plan (whether you actually took advantage of it or not)?
   PROBE: information, resources and/or supports from teachers, guidance, administration, career-related high school courses, other CD courses or workshops, co-operative education opportunities, building a personal portfolio, community, family, friends, financial assistance, other

4. What help/supports have you actually accessed?
   PROBE: re kind of help/support and extent to which it was helpful

5. If there was help/support you did not use, what steered you away from it?

6. What/Who has been the biggest influence on your plan so far?
   PROBE: Have you felt "pushed" in any particular direction? Explore +/- aspects of influencers

7. What/Who has gotten in the way or made planning for this transition more difficult?
   PROBE: lack of information, resources, supports, financial assistance

8. To what extent do you feel you've really considered your options?
   NOTE TO FACILITATOR: This is an exploratory question that may need considerable probing. The goal of the question is to scratch the surface beyond how they "feel" in terms of preparation to explore in what areas they actually did/didn't prepare.
   PROBE: For students planning to pursue PSE – Did they consider the full range of PSE options (public/community college, university, apprenticeship, private training institutions)? Did they consider a range of programs and connect their program choice to a solid understanding of personal and labour market realities? Are they clear on costs and potential financial supports? Have they planned for housing, budgeting, cooking, waking up for class, managing deadlines, living away?
   PROBE: For students going directly to work – Did they explore a wide range of work options? Do they feel sure that their chosen direction is a good fit for them and their interests/strengths? Have they talked to someone actually doing that work or had some experiential exposure? Do they know the entry requirements and prospects?

9. What fears or concerns do you have as you look ahead to your transition?
   PROBE: Dealing with rejection by post-secondary institutions or prospective employers, financial capacity, prospect of leaving home, prospect of not leaving home, fitting in socially, getting by academically, coping with pressure to succeed, lack of preparation for living independently, lack of clarity about what really want to do

10. On a scale of 1-10, how clear and confident do you feel about your plan right now?

11. What information, resources or supports haven't you gotten yet that you think could really help you?
    PROBE: What would help you now? What could have helped you earlier (in primary/middle school or earlier in HS?

Online Survey Protocol: PSE Students & Young Adults not in PSE

We are seeking your input to help us better understand what is available, useful and/or needed to help youth plan for their learning and work lives after high school. You've already made your transition from high school and so your perspective is really valuable! The survey will take 30-40 minutes to complete. By doing this, not only are you contributing to better career services but you'll also be entered in draw for a brand new iPad if you complete the full survey and answer the final question!

Your participation is voluntary and your responses are anonymous and confidential. Your name will not be shared and, once the review has been completed, all raw data from electronic files and in hard copy formats will be deleted and/or destroyed.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Sareena Hopkins at s.hopkins@ccdf.ca

The survey will remain open until midnight EST September 30, 2013

Thank you!

Both cohorts
1. What is your gender?
    ____Male
    ____Female

2. What is your age?
    ____< 18
    ____18
    ____19 – 20
    ____21 – 24
    ____24 – 30
    ____>30

3. Certain groups are currently under-represented in post-secondary education. Would you self-identify as any of the following? Check all that apply.
    ___ African-Canadian
    ____First Nations, Métis or Inuit
    ____Low-income
    ____Parents/Guardians did not attend post-secondary

4. What is the highest level of education you've completed?

_____Grade 9 or less
_____Some high school but did not graduate
_____Completed high school
_____Adult Basic Education Diploma
_____GED Credential
____ Some form of Post-Secondary Education (diploma, degree, certificate, apprenticeship)
____ Other (please specify)

5. As you were planning for what you wanted to do after high school, how useful were each of the following sources of information, advice or support in helping you make your decisions and pursue your plan?

For this question, use the 4-point scale to indicate the degree of usefulness for each source of information and/or advice. On this scale, a '1' is 'Not at All Useful', '2' is 'Not Very Useful', '3' is 'Somewhat Useful', '4' is 'Very Useful', and 'N/A' is 'Not Applicable'.

Source of Information and/or Advice	1	2	3	4	N/A
Parents/guardians					
Teachers					
Guidance counsellors					
Representative from university/college/etc.					
Website from university/college/etc.					
Print materials from university/college/etc.					
Career-related courses in high school					
Classroom presentations					
Friends					
Career Cruising					
Media (TV, radio)					
Career planning centres					
Career specialists					
Career fairs					
School assemblies					
Student aid representative					
Student Financial Aid/Assistance website					
Student Financial Aid/Assistance school presentation					
Apprenticeship Offices					
Banks/financial institutions					
Labour market documents					
Other (please specify)					

6. What impact did courses and activities in high school have on shaping your plans for after high school?

   For this question, use the 4-point scale to indicate the extent of the impact each course/activity had on your decision to attend a post-secondary institution or not. On this scale, a '1' is 'No Impact', '2' is 'Almost No Impact', '3' is 'Some Impact', '4' is 'A Lot of Impact', and 'N/A' is 'Did Not Participate in the Course/Activity'.

Course or Activity	1	2	3	4	N/A
Overall high school experience					
Extra-curricular activities					
Career education course					
Co-operative education					
Skilled trades courses					
Advanced placement courses					
International Baccalaureate					
Information Interviews					
Job shadowing					
Job mentoring					
Career Cruising					
School assemblies					
After school employment					
Summer employment					
Other (please specify)					

7. Have you decided on a career direction?
   ____Yes, please specify _____
   ____No

   If No, give the reasons why you have not decided yet. Check all that apply.
   ____I don't have enough information.
   ____I don't know what I am good at doing.
   ____There are so many choices, it is confusing.
   ____I need to work first to earn money for a post-secondary education.
   ____I need to upgrade my marks first.
   ____Other (please specify)

8. When did you start thinking about and/or planning your career future?
   ____K-Grade 5
   ____ ____Grade 6
   ____Grade 7
   ____Grade 8

_____Grade 9
_____Grade 10
_____Grade 11
_____Grade 12
_____Since high school graduation

9. Do you think high school adequately prepared you for deciding on a career direction and making the transition (to post-secondary education, work or whatever you chose)? Why? Or Why not?

10. What kind of information, resources or supports do you WISH you had had to help you with your career direction and transition? Please include anything you think would have helped and when/how it should have been made available.

11. Are you currently attending a post-secondary institution?
    _____Yes (Go to Question 11.)
    _____No (Go to Question 21.)

Attending Post-Secondary
12. What type of post-secondary institution are you attending?
    _____University
    _____Public/Community College
    _____ _____Private College
    _____Other (please specify)

13. What type of program do you wish to achieve?

    _____
    _____1 - 2 year certificate/diploma
    _____3 year diploma
    _____Certified Journeyperson
    _____Undergraduate Degree
    _____Graduate Degree
    _____Professional designation (e.g., doctor, accountant)
    _____Have not decided

14. How long is the program?
    _____At least 4 years
    _____2 – 3 years
    _____1 year
    _____Less than 1 year
    _____Unsure

15. At what stage are you in your studies?

      ____1st year

      ____2nd year or later

16. For this question, use a 4-point scale to indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement. On this scale, a '1' is 'Strongly disagree', '2' is 'Disagree', '3' is 'Agree', '4' is 'Strongly Agree', and 'N/A' is 'Not applicable'

Statement	1	2	3	4	N/A
When I left high school, I felt really clear about my post-secondary education choice because I knew it was a good "fit" for me.					
While in high school, I had opportunities to check out my field of interest (talking to people in the field, observing or actually trying out some work) before committing to a post-secondary education program.					
Employment opportunities/prospects influenced my choice of program.					
I was knowledgeable about the potential for employment in this field.					
The earning potential of a career in this field influenced my choice of program.					
The opportunity to do at least some of the program (courses) in my home community influenced my choice of program.					
I have an interest in the subject area in my program of choice.					
The expectations of my family influenced my choice of program.					
The opportunity to do at least some of the program (courses) using distance learning influenced my choice of program.					
The cost of completing the program (tuition, books, and accommodations) influenced my choice of program.					
The amount of personal time required for classes and study influenced my choice of program.					
Financial assistance programs to cover basic educational and living expenses are adequate.					
The extent to which the program provides the skills needed for related employment influenced my choice of program.					
I would not be able to attend a post-secondary institution without a student loan.					
My parents (guardians) are my main source of financial support.					
I have to work during the academic year to meet my financial commitments.					
I would not be able to attend a post-secondary institution without summer employment.					
The financial support provided to students is satisfactory.					

The student loans I have received meet my needs.					
The process for obtaining a student loan is easy to follow.					
The cost of a post-secondary education is much higher than I realized.					
Leaving home to go to a different community for post-secondary education was challenging.					
Now that I'm in my post-secondary education program, I feel as sure or even more sure about my choice.					

17. How did you first learn about the institution/program you are attending? Choose all that apply.
    ____Website
    ____Speaker from the institution
    ____Teachers
    ____Guidance counsellors
    ____Friends
    ____Family/relatives
    ____Career fairs
    ____Internet
    ____Media (magazines/books/radio/TV)
    ____Dual Credit Program
    ____Career Cruising
    ____Other (please specify) _____

18. Why did you choose this **institution**? Choose all that apply.
    ____Tuition
    ____Cost
    ____Located in or close to home community
    ____Family influence and support
    ____Friends
    ____Availability of program
    ____
    ____Student/school facilities
    ____Size of school
    ____Extracurricular activities available
    ____
    ____Availability of work terms
    ____
    ____
    ____Other (please specify) _____

19. Did you research other **institutions** before choosing this one?
    ____Yes
    ____No

20. Was this your first choice for a post-secondary **institution**?

_____Yes (go to Question 22)

_____No (go to Question 21)

21. If this wasn't your first choice for a post-secondary **institution**, why did you choose this one? Choose all that apply.

_____Not accepted for first choice

_____Did not have the prerequisites for first choice

_____Accepted at this institution

_____Financial reasons

_____Not available in my home community

_____No space in program

_____Long waiting list

_____

22. Why did you choose your **program**? Choose all that apply.

_____Tuition

_____Cost

_____Located in or close to home community

_____Family influence and support

_____Friends

_____Availability of program

_____Length of program

_____

_____

_____Employment opportunities

_____Earning potential

_____Availability of work terms

_____Opportunity to travel with job

_____Interest in subject

_____Other (please specify) _____

23. Did you research other **programs** before choosing this one?

_____Yes

_____No

24. Was this your first choice of **program**?

_____Yes (go to Question 26)

_____No (go to Question 25)

25. If this wasn't your first choice for a **program**, why did you choose this one? Choose all that apply.

_____Not accepted for first choice

_____Did not have the prerequisites for first choice

_____
_____Financial reasons
_____Not available in my home community
_____No space in program
_____Long waiting list
_____Accepted for this program

26. Since you started post-secondary, have you **changed** programs?
_____Yes (go to Question 27)
_____No (go to end

27. If you have changed programs, what were your main reasons for doing so?
_____First program wasn't a good fit for me in terms of my interests/skills
_____First program wasn't going to lead to the kind of work I want to do
_____Gained insight through work experience
_____Gained insight through life experience
_____First program more challenging than expected
_____First program less challenging than expected
_____Other (please specify)

Not Attending Post-Secondary

28. What are you currently doing?
_____Working full time
_____Working part time
_____Self-employed
_____Employed but temporarily laid-off
_____Unemployed and looking for work
_____Unemployed and not looking for work
_____Returning to high school to improve grades
_____Other (please specify) _____

29. Since you left high school, did you enrol in an education or training program but then withdrew without finishing it?
_____Yes
_____No

If Yes, what were the reasons for withdrawing from the program? Check all that apply.
_____Program was not what I expected
_____Realized the program was not a good "fit" for my interests/skills
_____Realized the employment prospects after graduations were not good
_____Difficulty of program
_____Failing courses
_____Financial issues
_____Lost interest in the program

_____Undecided on a career direction
_____Personal/family issues
_____Health issues
_____Employment
_____Other (please specify) _____

30. You are not attending a post-secondary institution at this time. For this question, statements which may have influenced your choice are provided. Use the 4-point scale to indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement. On this scale, a '1' is 'Strongly disagree', '2' is 'disagree', '3' is 'Agree', '4' is 'Strongly Agree', and 'N/A' is 'Not applicable'

	1	2	3	4	N/A
I feel that a post-secondary education will not help me get a job.					
I want to take a break from school.					
I plan to do some travelling before attending a post-secondary institution.					
I have not decided on my career direction.					
I do not have sufficient information on post-secondary options.					
I may attend sometime in the future					
Post-secondary education is too expensive.					
The program I want to take is too expensive.					
I do not have enough money to attend.					
I am afraid of having too much debt.					
I did not meet the entrance requirements for the institution I wanted to attend.					
I did not meet the entrance requirements for the program I want to do.					
I am back in high school upgrading my marks.					
I am waitlisted for the program I want to do.					
I do not want to leave my home community to attend school.					
I have family commitments which prevent me from attending post-secondary institution.					
Health reasons prevent me from attending a post-secondary institution.					
I am currently employed and therefore cannot attend a post-secondary institution at this time.					
I am looking for work to earn money for post-secondary education.					
I am looking for work to support myself.					
I am working to help my family.					
I would prefer getting a job over attending a post-secondary institution.					

31. Is there anything that could make you re-consider your decision to not go to post-secondary education? Check all that apply to you:

___Nothing would make me attend post-secondary

___Clarity about my own career direction

___Affordability

___Local access (I could stay in my community)

___Program that has good job prospects

___Program that is a good "fit" for my interests and skills

___Program that is flexible (online, part-time)

___Program that I can complete quickly

___Other (please specify)

AT END FOR BOTH COHORTS: If you want to be entered into the draw for a new iPad, please complete the following:

Name:

Address:

Email:

Telephone:

THANK YOU!

Focus Group Protocol: Parents

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Introduction
- Brief description of project/goal of focus group
- Outline focus group (how it will proceed, time, norms)
- Confidentiality; permission to record
- Questions before get started

PART 2: FG QUESTIONS

12. The transition from high school to PSE (public/community college, university, apprenticeship or private training institution), work or other endeavours is a significant one. As you look ahead to your son/daughter leaving high school, what preparation/planning have they been involved in at school, at home or in the community?

PROBE: How clear are they about their transition plan? How well-researched and thought-through is it? Are you confident in their capacity to achieve it?

13. If your son/daughter has a plan/idea of what they want to do after high school, what has supported them over the years in developing or acting on that plan?

PROBE: information, resources and/or supports from teachers, guidance, administration, CD courses/workshops, co-operative education opportunities, development of a portfolio, community, family, friends, financial assistance, other (currently/previously.

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: If many do not have a plan, you may want to explore earlier what might have helped them to develop one.

14. What role, if any, do you think parents have to play in helping their sons/daughters prepare/plan for their transition after high school?

4. Parents may also have needs as their kids make career plans. Was there any information, resources or supports that you used as your son/daughter was preparing for their transition?

PROBE: re kind of help/support and extent to which it has been helpful

5. What/Who do you think has influenced your son/daughter the most so far in terms of their future planning?

PROBE: Explore +/- aspect of influencers

6. What/Who has gotten in the way or made planning for this transition more difficult?
PROBE: lack of information, resources, supports, financial assistance

7. To what extent do you feel your son/daughter has really considered their options?
PROBE: For students planning to pursue PSE – Did they consider all the full range of PSE options (public/community college, university, apprenticeship, private training institution)? Are they clear on costs and potential financial supports? Have they planned for housing, budgeting, cooking, waking up for class, managing deadlines, living away?
PROBE: For students going directly to work – Did they explore a wide range of work options? Do they feel sure that their chosen direction is a good fit for them and their interests/strengths? Have they talked to someone actually doing that work or had some experiential exposure? Do they know the entry requirements and prospects?

8. What fears or concerns do you have as you look ahead?
PROBE: Dealing with rejection by post-secondary institutions or prospective employers, financial capacity, prospect of them leaving home, prospect of them not leaving home, fitting in socially, getting by academically, coping with pressure to succeed, lack of preparation for living independently, lack of clarity about what really want to do

9. On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that your son/daughter has a clear plan that is meaningful to them and achievable?

10. What additional/different information, resources or supports could really help you and/or your son/daughter?
PROBE: What would help you now? What could have helped you earlier (in primary/middle school or earlier in HS?

Key Informant Interview Protocol: Educators

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

- Introduction
- Brief description of project/goal of interview
- Permission to record
- Questions before get started

PART 2: ONLY IF REFERRED AS KEY CONTACT FOR SPECIFIC INNOVATIVE PRACTICE, PROGRAM OR RESOURCES

15. Can you tell me about X?
PROBE: target group, purpose/intended outcomes, key content, mode of delivery

16. What kinds of positive changes/outcomes have you seen as a result of X?

17. What about X, in your view, makes it work?
PROBE: human/financial/community resources required, systemic requirements

18. To what extent is X replicable more widely (across whole province or across multiple provinces)? What would need to be in place?
PROBE: human/financial/community resources required, systemic requirements

PART 3: QUESTIONS ABOUT BROADER STATE OF CAREER EDUCATION

19. Broadly speaking, what career development curriculum/courses/help/support is available to youth in their primary, middle and secondary school years?
PROBE: career and labour market information, resources and/or supports from teachers, guidance, administration, CD courses or workshops, co-operative education opportunities, community, family, friends, financial assistance, other

20. Of these, what help/support is most widely accessed and why?

21. Of those not accessed, what are the impediments in your view?

22. In your view, which ones are or could be most effective and why?

23. What/Who do you think has the most influence on youth in terms of their future planning?
PROBE: Explore +/- aspect of influencers

24. Which youth are being best served by career education programming/supports in your school(s)? Which ones are not? Why is this? What needs to be in place to better support these students?

PROBE: lack of information, resources, supports, financial assistance; what has gotten in the way or made transition planning particularly difficult for this group?

25. To what extent do you feel youth leave HS having really considered their options (public/community college, university, apprenticeship, private training institution, work, other)?

PROBE: For students planning to pursue PSE – Did they consider the full range of PSE options (public/community college, university, apprenticeship, private training institution)? Are they clear on costs and potential financial supports? Have they planned for housing, budgeting, cooking, waking up for class, managing deadlines, living away?

PROBE: For students going directly to work – Did they explore a wide range of work options? Do they feel sure that their chosen direction is a good fit for them and their interests/strengths? Have they talked to someone actually doing that work or had some experiential exposure? Do they know the entry requirements and prospects? Did they consider post-secondary education and, if so, what typically led them to NOT pursue it?

26. On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that the average youth is leaving HS with a clear career plan that is meaningful to them and achievable?

27. In a perfect world, what would you put in place to help them?

PROBE: in primary/middle school and in HS, career-related curriculum/courses, staff training/professional development

28. What are the barriers to making this happen?

PROBE: policy, programming, financing, implementation, training/professional development of staff, graduation requirements, school schedules

29. What do you think needs to happen to address these?

Appendix B - Online Survey with Young Adults

Part I: Summary

(1)   Respondent profile

445 people completed the survey

Majority of group:
- Completed the survey in English (89.9%)
- Were female (71%)
- Were less than 25 years of age (76.9%)
- Went to school in New Brunswick (50.8%) or PEI (26.1%)
- Currently live in New Brunswick (49.4%) or PEI (35.3%)
- Live in an urbanized area (75.3%)

(2)   Usefulness of various sources of information in helping to plan for the future

Most useful sources of information (i.e., high percentage listed it as very useful)
- Parents/guardians (57.6% stated they were very useful)
- Website from university/college/apprenticeship (43.5%)

Source majority identified as least useful (i.e. high percentage listed it as not at all/not very useful)
- Blog (75.5%)
- School assemblies (61.7%)
- Apprenticeship Offices (60.6%)

(3)   Impact of various activities on planning for the future

Courses/activities with the most impact
- Overall high school experience (33.9%)
- Summer employment (37.8%)
- Volunteer work (36.2%)

Courses/activities with the least impact
- International Baccalaureate (70.6%)
- School assemblies (63.5%)

(3)   Career goals

87.2% (392/445) have decided on a career path

- The main reason why the others have not decided was that 'there are so many choices. It is confusing'.

- Young people typically stated thinking about career planning during or after high school. This was the case for 41.1% and 29.0%, respectively.

(4) Effectiveness of high school in preparing students for their future

- 31.9% felt high school adequately prepared them for deciding on a career path

The three main ways students felt it prepared them was:
- School provided them with the chance to discover their likes and dislikes through the various courses and experiences (e.g., co-op program)
- School helped them develop the skills and/or knowledge needed to help them succeed (study skills, work load, etc.)
- Teachers/Guidance counselors provided information and/or support to help students decide on a career path

- 53.0% felt it prepared them for making the transition to the next stage (post-secondary, work, etc.)

Three main ways high school helped them to make the transition
- In order to succeed in high school, students had to develop such skills as time management, study skills, note taking, working independently, setting deadlines, etc. These skills helped them during their post-secondary studies.
- The high school courses they completed helped prepare them for post-secondary (e.g. AP courses, academic level courses had similar content to first year post-secondary courses)
- Teachers prepared students by telling them about the different level of expectations and work load they will experience in post-secondary. In some cases, teachers delivered high school courses similar to post-secondary

(5) Enrolled in post-secondary studies

87.2% are attending a post-secondary institute

Of this group,
- 57.7% are attending a public/community college and
- 33.0% are attending university

As expected,
- 52.3% intend on completing a 1 or 2 year certificate/diploma program, and
- 23.7% an undergraduate degree

Close to two thirds (64.7%) are in their first year of the program.

5.1 Attitudes towards post-secondary studies

In many statements, there was no clear 'winner' between agree and disagree. 16 of the 23 statements had a 60/40 to 50/50 split between the percentage in agreement and disagreement.

Over 70% of respondents were in agreement with the following statements:
- I have an interest in the subject area in my program of choice.
- Now that I'm in my post-secondary education program, I feel as sure or even more sure about my choice.
- The extent to which the program provides the skills needed for related employment influenced my choice of program.
- I would not be able to attend a post-secondary institution without summer employment.
- I was knowledgeable about the potential for employment in this field.
- The cost of a post-secondary education is much higher than I realized.

70% disagreed with the following statement
- The opportunity to do at least some of the program (courses) using distance learning influenced my choice of program.

5.2 Picking an institute and program

People typically learned about the post-secondary institution/program they are attending -
- through their website (cited by 55.7%) and/or
- from their friends (49.2%)

They mainly picked their institution because
- It was close or in their home community (51.8%), and/or
- Availability of the program (56.7%)

- 78.4% researched other institutions before picking theirs
- 73.2% went with their first choice

People typically selected their program of choice based on: the/their:
- Their interest in the subject (69.9%), and/or
- The employment opportunities (57.7%)

- 76.3% researched other programs before choosing and
- 76.8% went with their first choice.

The majority (78.4%) do not change programs once they started. The main reason why the remaining 21.8% changed programs was that it "wasn't a good fit for me in terms of my interests /skills".

(6)   Not enrolled in post-secondary studies

This section is based on the responses of **57** respondents who were not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

61.4% were working full time

Debt appears to be the main factor keeping these people away from postsecondary studies

While they believe a post-secondary education will help them get a job
- 83.7% felt that post-secondary education is too expensive
- 73.8% were afraid of taking on too much debt
- 71.1% do not have enough money to attend, and
- 63.9% stated the program they wanted was too expensive.

However, 73.7% stated they may attend sometime in the future.

When asked what could make them reconsider their decision not to attend post-secondary, the top two were

- Affordability (40.4%) and
- (Finding a) Program that is a good "fit" for my interests and skills (38.6%)

PART II: DATA TABLES

Note:
For the questions where 'Not applicable' was an option, the breakdown of responses excludes those who made this selection. In other words, percentages are based on the number who actually used an item/resource/etc. The n-values for each statement are listed in the table.

SECTION A: RESPONDENT INFORMATION

	English	French	Total
Total number who accessed the survey (i.e. clicked on the link and went to the survey page)	877	157	1,034
Total number who started but did not finish the survey	485	79	564
Number removed because they were not in the target group*	2	33	35
Total number of valid responses	**400**	**45**	**445**

* These 35 were intermediate level students.

SECTION B: RESPONDENT PROFILE/DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

	n	%
Male	129	29.0%
Female	316	71.0%
Total	**445**	**100.0%**

Age

	n	%
19 or younger	170	38.2%
20 - 24 years	172	38.7%
25 - 29 years	57	12.8%
30 - 34 years	27	6.1%
35 years or older	19	4.3%
Total	**445**	**100.0%**

Highest level of education **completed**?

	n	%
Some form of Post-Secondary Education (diploma, degree, etc.)	150	33.7%
Completed high school	265	59.6%
Adult Basic Education Diploma/GED	20	4.5%
Did not complete high school	10	2.2%
Total	**445**	**100.0%**

Where did you go to high school?

	n	%
New Brunswick	226	50.8%
Newfoundland and Labrador	25	5.6%
Nova Scotia	27	6.1%
Prince Edward Island	116	26.1%
Other, please specify:	51	11.5%
Total	**445**	**100.05**

Where do you live now?

	n	%
New Brunswick	220	49.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	23	5.2
Nova Scotia	25	5.6
Prince Edward Island	157	35.3
Other, please specify:	20	4.5
Total	**445**	**100.0**

What type of region do you live in now?

	n	%
Urban/suburban area with a population of 1,000 or more	335	75.3

	n	%
Rural area with a population of less than 1,000	110	24.7
Total	**445**	**100.0**

Certain groups are currently under-represented in post-secondary education. Would you self-identify as any of the following? Check all that apply. **(n=445)**

	n	%
African-Canadian	8	1.8%
First Nations, Métis or Inuit	26	5.8%
Low-income	122	27.4%
Parents/Guardians did not attend post-secondary (college, university, apprenticeship)	102	22.9%
None of the above	250	56.2%

Breakdown of the **195 respondents** who met one of the four conditions
(i.e. 445 total – 250 none of the above = 195).

	n	%
African-Canadian	8	4.1%
First Nations, Métis or Inuit	26	13.3%
Low-income	122	62.6%
Parents/Guardians did not attend post-secondary (college, university, apprenticeship)	102	52.3%

SECTION C: PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

(Q1)   As you were planning for what you wanted to do after high school, how useful were each of the following sources of information, advice or support in helping you make your decisions and pursue your plan?

	n	Very useful	Some what useful	Not at all/ not very useful
Parents/guardians	434	57.6%	32.0%	10.4%
Teachers	425	31.5%	39.1%	29.4%
Guidance counselors	409	30.6%	29.8%	39.6%
Representative from university/college/apprenticeship	406	37.2%	42.4%	20.4%
Website from university/college/apprenticeship	425	43.5%	38.6%	17.9%
Print materials from university/college/apprenticeship	418	37.6%	37.8%	24.6%
Career-related courses in high school	360	28.9%	33.3%	37.8%
Classroom presentations	381	18.6%	44.1%	37.3%
Friends	434	32.9%	38.7%	28.3%
Career Cruising	364	21.4%	35.4%	43.1%
Media (TV, radio)	397	10.1%	34.3%	55.7%
Career planning centres	320	20.6%	24.4%	55.0%
Career specialists	302	19.2%	33.8%	47.0%
Career fairs	371	25.9%	39.1%	35.0%
School assemblies	371	8.1%	30.2%	61.7%
Student financial aid/assistance representative	343	23.0%	27.4%	49.6%
Student financial aid/assistance website	347	17.9%	30.3%	51.9%
Student financial aid/assistance school presentation	323	15.8%	30.3%	53.9%
Apprenticeship Offices	254	12.2%	27.2%	60.6%
Banks/financial institutions	336	13.4%	27.4%	59.2%
Labour market information	327	17.4%	30.0%	52.6%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, etc.)	367	20.2%	32.4%	47.4%
Blog	282	7.1%	17.4%	75.5%
Some other source*	29	41.4%	34.5%	24.1%

29 people identified some other support
- Word of mouth/networking   (18 respondents)
- Volunteering/internship (6)

- Internet in general (5)

(Q2) What impact did the following courses/activities in high school have on shaping your plans for after high school? (n/a removed)

	n	A lot of impact	Some impact	None/ almost no impact
Overall high school experience	436	33.9%	42.7%	23.4%
Extra-curricular activities (sports, clubs, societies, etc.)	381	32.0%	29.1%	38.8%
Career education course	291	17.5%	38.8%	43.6%
Co-operative education	217	30.4%	25.8%	43.8%
Skilled trades courses	230	24.3%	30.9%	44.8%
Advanced placement courses	224	22.3%	33.9%	43.8%
International Baccalaureate	143	11.9%	17.5%	70.6%
Information interviews	208	15.4%	40.9%	43.8%
Job shadowing	245	33.1%	33.1%	33.9%
Job mentoring	208	19.2%	36.1%	44.7%
Career Cruising	292	16.1%	37.0%	46.9%
School assemblies	359	5.8%	30.6%	63.5%
After school employment	358	31.3%	36.3%	32.4%
Summer employment	400	37.8%	34.8%	27.5%
Volunteer work	376	36.2%	32.4%	31.4%
Teacher mentorship	257	19.5%	32.3%	48.2%
Student leadership	288	22.2%	35.4%	42.4%
Some other course or activity	40	30.0%	42.5%	27.5%

40 listed some other course or activity
- Talking/networking (7)
- Courses (23)
- Programs focusing on transition/career exploration taken outside of high school (10)

(Q3)   Have you decided on a career direction?

	n	%
Yes	392	87.2%
No	57	12.8%
Total	**445**	**100.0%**

(a)   What reason(s) did the 57 give for not deciding on a career direction?

	n	%
I don't have enough information.	18	31.6%
I don't know where to look for useful information.	10	17.5%
I don't know what I am good at doing.	25	43.9%
There are so many choices, it is confusing.	38	66.7%
I need to work first to earn money for a post-secondary education.	12	21.1%
I need to upgrade my marks first.	7	12.3%
Some other reason	12	21.1%

(b)   What career direction have you decided on?

	n	%
Social services sector	95	24.5%
Business sector	83	21.4%
Health care sector	64	16.5%
Natural sciences sector	39	10.1%
Arts, culture and sport sector	35	9.0%
Service supervisors and specialized service occupations	26	6.7%
Computer related	23	5.9%
Skilled trades sector	21	5.4%
Farming/agriculture	2	0.5%
Total	**388**	**100.0%**

Career field (broad)	Classification based on National Occupation Coded	Specific Examples	Number	% (n/388)
Social services sector	Professional occupations in education services	• School teacher	23	5.9%
	Professional occupations in law and social, community and government services	• Social Worker • Psychologist • Counsellor	28	7.2%
	Paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community and education services	• Early Childhood Educator	10	2.6%
	Occupations in front-line public protection services	• Police Officer	8	2.1%
	Care providers and educational, legal and public protection support occupations	• Home support workers • Residential care workers • Youth care workers	26	6.7%
	Total		95	24.5%
Business sector	Start own business - not specific	•	9	2.3%
	Professional occupations in business and finance	• Accountants • Sales and marketing	38	9.8%
	Administrative and financial supervisors and administrative occupations	• Administrative assistant/secretary • Office administrator	36	9.3%
	Total		83	21.4%
Health care sector	Medicine/health care - not specific	•	10	2.6%
	Professional occupations in nursing	• Nurse	17	4.4%
	Professional occupations in health (except nursing)	• Physician • Dietician	14	3.6%
	Technical occupations in health	• Licenced Practical Nurse • Speech Language Therapist • Paramedics	23	5.9%

Career field (broad)	Classification based on National Occupation Coded	Specific Examples	Number	% (n/388)
	Total		64	16.5%
Natural sciences sector	Professional occupations in natural and applied sciences	• Power Engineer • Mechanical Engineer • Electrical Engineer • Biologist	24	6.2%
	Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences	• Environmental Tech • fuels technician. • Wind Turbine Technician • Architectural Technology	14	3.6%
	Total		38	9.8%
Arts, culture and sport sector	Professional occupations in art and culture	• Artist • Musician • Journalist	10	2.6%
	Technical occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	• Fashion designer • Interior decorator • Photographer	24	6.2%
	Total		34	8.8%
Service supervisors and specialized service occupations	Service supervisors and specialized service occupations	• Chef • Baker	14	3.6%
	Service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations	• Travel and tourism • Food services • Esthetics	13	3.4%
	Total		27	7.0%
Computer related	Professional occupations in natural and applied sciences	• IT • Programmer	24	6.2%
	Total		24	6.2%

Career field (broad)	Classification based on National Occupation Coded	Specific Examples	Number	% (n/388)
Skilled trades sector	Trades - not specific	•	3	0.8%
	Industrial, electrical and construction trades	• Carpenter • Welder • Electrician	13	3.4%
	Maintenance and equipment operation trades	• Millwright • Heavy equipment operator	5	1.3%
	Total		21	5.4%
Farming/agriculture	Workers in agriculture	• Farmer	2	0.5%
	Total		2	0.5%

(Q4)   When did you start thinking about/planning your career future?

(a)   By stage

Grade Level	n	%
Have not thought about it yet	4	0.9%
Primary/elementary (K- Grade 6)	60	13.5%
Intermediate (Grade 7 - 9)	69	15.5%
High school (Grade 10 – 12)	183	41.1%
Since high school graduation	129	29.0%
Total	**445**	**100.0%**

(b)   By grade

	n	%
Have not thought about it yet	4	0.9%
K-Grade 5	41	9.2%
Grade 6	19	4.3%
Grade 7	20	4.5%
Grade 8	11	2.5%
Grade 9	38	8.5%
Grade 10	48	10.8%
Grade 11	73	16.4%
Grade 12	62	13.9%
Since high school graduation	129	29.0%
Total	**445**	**100.0%**

SECTION D: **EFFECTIVENESS OF HIGH SCHOOL IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THEIR FUTURE**

(5)   Do you think high school adequately prepared you for deciding on a career direction?

	n	%
Yes	142	31.9%
No	303	68.1%
Total	**445**	**100.0%**

(a)   Why do you think high school prepared you for deciding on a career?

	n	%
Interests	50	35.2%
Skills/courses needed to succeed	35	24.6%
Teachers/Guidance counselors/Info sessions	34	23.9%
Courses/school	8	5.6%
Not answered/not specific	15	10.6%
Total	**142**	**100.0%**

	Defined
Interests	School provided them with the chance to discover their likes and dislikes through the various courses and experiences (e.g., co-op program)
Skills/courses needed to succeed	School helped them develop the skills and/or knowledge needed to help them succeed (study skills, work load, etc.)
Teachers/Guidance counselors/Info sessions	Each of these provided information and/or support to help students decide on a career path
Courses/school	No other information provided
Not answered/not specific	Response does not seem to be related to the question

(b)   Why do you think high school did not prepare you for deciding on a career?

	n	%
Not enough career information/support provided	100	33.0%
Did not have a wide range of courses available to help them explore their interests	77	25.4%
Did not prepare them for post-secondary studies/life after high school	44	14.5%
Career guidance was biased towards certain programs	34	11.2%
Too young	29	9.6%
Other	34	11.2%
	303	100.0%

(6)   Do you think high school adequately prepared you to make the transition to post-secondary studies, work, or whatever else you chose?

	n	%
Yes	225	50.6%
No	216	49.4%
Total	445	100.0%

(a)   Why?

	n	%
Develop the necessary skills	68	30.2%
Knowledge (derived from courses) prepared them	58	25.8%
Teachers/school environment	62	27.6%
Non specific	20	8.9%
Prepared them for work	10	4.4%
Other	7	3.1%
Total	225	100.0%

	Defined
Develop the necessary skills	In order to succeed in high school, students had to develop such skills as time management, study skills, note taking, working independently, setting deadlines, etc. These skills helped them during their post-secondary studies.
Knowledge (derived from courses) prepared them	The high school courses they completed helped prepare them for post-secondary (e.g. AP courses, academic level courses had similar content to first year post-secondary courses)
Teachers/school environment	Teachers prepared students by telling them about the different level of expectations and work load they will experience in post-secondary. In some cases, teachers delivered high school courses similar to post-secondary
Non specific	School helped but the response does not clearly show how (e.g. of these responses… • because it's like a job and I think of this transition as a promotion • Hard work to get there.)
Prepared them for work	HS prepared them for work (via co-op program, career fair, etc.)
Other	Some other way

(b)   Why not?

	n	%
Teachers did not prepare them/provide realistic view of PS	88	40.0%
Did not learn the necessary skills (life skills, study skills, etc.)	38	17.3%
Little/no career planning/teacher apathy	35	15.9%
HS does not reflect the real world	20	9.1%
Other	10	4.5%
Answer does not apply	29	13.2%
Total	**220**	**100.0%**

Teachers did not prepare them/provide realistic view of PS	Teachers were too forgiving in high school. They didn't set realistic deadlines, treated the students like children. When they went to post-secondary, they were not prepared. (More about high school and teachers in general. The following theme is more specific)
Did not learn the necessary skills (life skills, study skills, etc.)	Students state they did not develop specific skills in high school needed for success at the post-secondary level (study skills, time management, etc.)
Little/no career planning/teacher apathy	There was little of no career planning or course selection advice given.
HS does not reflect the real world	Sample answers • High school life is nothing compared to the real work life. • High school is completely different from anything else, the teachers … didn't really tell us or talk to us about how the real world is going to be, they teach us things that we didn't need to know. • High school doesn't teach you anything useful. We're thrown into the real world with no knowledge on financing or taxes or mortgages or even buying a car. But thank the lord we know that we can't pass Grade 12 math and that means we can't even go to university and we finally realize that people who say "you can be whatever you want" are liars. • High school doesn't prepare you for anything. • High school did not teach us about real life. It taught us things like math, which was irrelevant when we
Other	Some other reason
Answer does not apply	

(7)   What kind of information, resources or supports do you WISH you had had to help you with your career direction and transition? Please include anything you think would have helped and when/how it should have been made available.

374 people responded to this question.

	n	%
More info on a broader range of careers	162	43.3%
Hands on experience	61	16.3%
Life skills training/university prep	53	14.2%
Offer more electives	25	6.7%
Guidance counselors/teachers should be better prepared	25	6.7%
Have a course focusing on career exploration	14	3.7%
Provide information earlier	12	3.2%
Skills Inventory Assessment	10	2.7%
Other	12	3.2%
Total	**374**	**100.0%**

	Defined
More info on a broader range of careers	Respondents felt more information should be provided on a broader range of careers. This must go beyond simply focusing on university programs. It can include such things as having career fairs, providing labour market information, inviting school reps to the school and providing students a chance to meet 'regular' people who are working in a career.
Hands on experience	A good way to make an informed decision about a career path is to provide students with a chance to get 'hands on' experience. This could be through job shadowing, co-op placements or internships.
Life skills training/university prep	It would be helpful during high school if students had the opportunity to develop and practice the skills needed for life after high school. This would include such things as basic life skills (budgeting) and university preparation (study skills, dealing with increased workload).
Offer more electives	Schools should offer more electives to provide students with the chance to explore their interests by trying courses in different fields (e.g.. electives in the skilled trades)
Guidance counselors/teachers should be better prepared	Guidance counselors and/or teachers have to be better prepared to support students in career planning. It is not enough to only provide them with an application, or assume that university is the

	Defined
	only way to proceed. Rather, they must be there for, or be available to listen to students.
Have a course focusing on career exploration	There should be a course(s) that specifically deal with career planning.
Provide information earlier	Career planning is too big of an issue to leave until Grade 12. Discussion should start earlier in high school.
Skills Inventory Assessment	It would be nice if students could have taken some type of assessment or skills inventory (e.g. Meyers-Briggs) to show what they were good at.
Other	Some other way/ Non specific

(8)   Are you currently attending a post-secondary institution (public/community college, university, apprenticeship or private training institution)?

	n	%
Yes	388	87.2%
No	57	12.8%
Total	**445**	**100.0%**

Section E: Engaged in Post-Secondary Studies (N=388)

(9)   What type of post-secondary institution are you attending?

	n	%
University	128	33.0%
Public/Community College	224	57.7%
Private College	33	8.5%
Other (please specify):	3	0.8%
Total	**388**	**100.0**

Of the 3 others:
- 2 are upgrading,
- 1 in Adult Ed

(10)   What type of credential do you wish to achieve?

	n	%
1 - 2 year Certificate/Diploma	203	52.3%
3 year Diploma	11	2.8%
Certified Journeyperson	11	2.8%
Undergraduate Degree	92	23.7%
Graduate Degree	34	8.8%
Professional Designation (e.g., doctor, accountant)	19	4.9%
Have not decided	18	4.6%
Total	**388**	**100.0%**

(a)   How long is the program?

	n	%
At least 4 years	124	32.0%
2 - 3 years	189	48.7%
1 year	57	14.7%
Less than 1 year	15	3.9%
Unsure	3	0.8%
Total	**388**	**100.0%**

(b)   At what stage are you in your studies?

	n	%
1st year	251	64.7%
2nd year or later	137	35.3%
Total	**388**	**100.0%**

(11)   How much do you agree with the following?

	n	Agree	Disagree
When I left high school, I felt really clear about my post-secondary education choice because I knew it was a good "fit" for me.	381	54.9%	45.1%
While in high school, I had opportunities to check out my field of interest (talking to people in the field, observing or actually trying out some work) before committing to a post-secondary education program.	379	43.3%	56.7%
Employment opportunities/prospects influenced my choice of program.	375	58.1%	41.9%
I was knowledgeable about the potential for employment in this field.	381	71.9%	28.1%
The earning potential of a career in this field influenced my choice of program.	378	58.2%	41.8%
The opportunity to do at least some of the courses in the program in my home community influenced my choice of program.	324	50.6%	49.4%
I have an interest in the subject area in my program of choice.	373	95.4%	4.6%
The expectations of my family influenced my choice of program.	380	49.7%	50.3%
The opportunity to do at least some of the program (courses) using distance learning influenced my choice of program.	259	29.7%	70.3%
The cost of completing the program (tuition, books, and accommodations) influenced my choice of program.	368	49.5%	50.5%
The amount of personal time required for classes and study influenced my choice of program.	374	37.7%	62.3%
Financial assistance programs to cover basic educational and living expenses are adequate.	335	54.9%	45.1%
The extent to which the program provides the skills needed for related employment influenced my choice of program.	365	85.2%	14.8%
I would not be able to attend a post-secondary institution without a student loan.	361	60.7%	39.3%
My parents (guardians) are my main source of financial support.	373	37.8%	62.2%
I have to work during the academic year to meet my financial commitments.	362	61.9%	38.1%
I would not be able to attend a post-secondary institution without summer employment.	365	75.1%	24.9%
The financial support provided to students is satisfactory.	333	45.6%	54.4%
The student loans I have received meet my needs.	239	47.7%	52.3%
The process for obtaining a student loan is easy to follow.	272	38.6%	61.4%
The cost of a post-secondary education is much higher than I	375	69.6%	30.4%

	n	Agree	Disagree
realized.			
Leaving home to go to a different community for post-secondary education was challenging.	266	53.0%	47.0%
Now that I'm in my post-secondary education program, I feel as sure or even more sure about my choice.	375	87.2%	12.8%

(12)   How did you first learn about the institution/program you are attending?

	n	%
Website	216	55.7%
Speaker from the institution	98	25.3%
Teachers	112	28.9%
Guidance counselors	78	20.1%
Friends	191	49.2%
Family/relatives	169	43.6%
Career fairs	89	22.9%
Internet	159	41.0%
Media (magazines/books/radio/TV)	76	19.6%
Dual Credit Program	3	0.8%
Career Cruising	30	7.7%
Other	30	7.7%

(13)   Why did you choose this institution?

	n	%
Tuition	114	29.4%
Cost	130	33.5%
Located in or close to home community	201	51.8%
Family influence and support	103	26.5%

Friends	95	24.5%
Availability of program	220	56.7%
Student/school facilities	108	27.8%
Size of school	140	36.1%
Extracurricular activities available	38	9.8%
Availability of work terms	56	14.4%
Other (please specify):	57	14.7%

(14)   Did you research other institutions before choosing this one?

	n	%
Yes	304	78.4%
No	84	21.6%
Total	**388**	**100.0%**

(15)   Was this your first choice for a post-secondary institution?

	n	%
Yes	284	73.2%
No	104	26.8%
TOTAL	**388**	**100.0%**

(b)   Why did you choose this institution? (N=104)

	n	%
Not accepted for first choice	2	1.9%
Did not have the prerequisites for first choice	7	6.7%
Accepted at this institution	50	48.1%
Financial reasons	51	49.0%
Not available in my home community	13	12.5%
No space in program	6	5.8%
Long waiting list	7	6.7%
Other (please specify): _____	35	33.7%

(16)   Why did you choose your program?

	n	%
Tuition	86	22.2%
Cost	90	23.2%
Located in or close to home community	141	36.3%
Family influence and support	116	29.9%
Friends	82	21.1%
Availability of program	163	42.0%
Length of program	139	35.8%
Employment opportunities	224	57.7%
Earning potential	156	40.2%
Availability of work terms	80	20.6%
Opportunity to travel with job	93	24.0%
Interest in subject	270	69.6%
Other (please specify): _____	23	5.9%

(17)   Did you research other programs before choosing this one?

	n	%
Yes	296	76.3%
No	92	23.7%
Total	**388**	**100.0%**

(18)   Was this your first choice for a program?

	n	%
Yes	298	76.8%
No	90	23.2%
Total	**388**	**100.0%**

(b)   Why did you choose this program? (N=90)

	n	%
Not accepted for first choice	12	13.3%
Did not have the prerequisites for first choice	8	8.9%
Financial reasons	15	16.7%
Not available in my home community	9	10.0%
No space in program	8	8.9%
Long waiting list	10	11.1%
Accepted for this program	39	43.3%
Other (Please specify): _____	33	36.7%

(19)   Since you started post-secondary, have you changed programs?

	n	%
Yes	84	21.6%
No	304	78.4%
Total	**388**	**100.0%**

(a)   What were your main reasons for doing so?

	n	%
First program wasn't a good fit for me in terms of my interests/skills	56	66.7%
First program wasn't going to lead to the kind of work I want to do	41	48.8%
Gained insight through work experience	23	27.4%
Gained insight through life experience	35	41.7%
First program more challenging than expected	15	17.9%
First program less challenging than expected	3	3.6%
Other (please specify): _____	13	15.5%

SECTION F: THOSE NOT CURRENTLY ATTENDING A POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION (N=57)

(20) What are you currently doing?

	n	%
Working full time	35	61.4%
Working part time	3	5.3%
Self-employed	2	3.5%
Employed but temporarily laid-off	0	0.0%
Unemployed and looking for work	4	7.0%
Returning to high school to improve grades	2	3.5%
Other (please specify):	11	19.3%
Total	**57**	**100.0%**

(21) Since you left high school, did you enrol in an education or training program but then withdrew without finishing it?

	n	%
Yes	13	22.8%
No	44	77.2%
Total	**57**	**100.0%**

(a) What were the reason for withdrawing from the program (N=13)

	n	%
Program was not what I expected	5	38.5%
Realized the program was not a good "fit" for my interests/skills	5	38.5%
Realized the employment prospects after graduations were not good	3	23.1%
Difficulty of program	1	7.7%
Failing courses	1	7.7%
Financial issues	4	30.8%
Lost interest in the program	3	23.1%
Undecided on a career direction	3	23.1%
Personal/family issues	4	30.8%
Health issues	0	0.0%

	n	Agree	Disagree
Employment	2	15.4%	
Other (please specify): _____	5	38.5%	

(22)   The following list contains statements that may have influenced your choice not to attend a post-secondary institution at this time. To what extend do you agree with each statement?

	n	Agree	Disagree
I feel that a post-secondary education will not help me get a job.	44	18.2%	81.8%
I want to take a break from school.	37	48.6%	51.4%
I plan to do some travelling before attending a post-secondary institution.	34	35.3%	64.7%
I have not decided on my career direction.	41	19.5%	80.5%
I do not have sufficient information on post-secondary options.	37	43.2%	56.8%
I may attend sometime in the future	38	73.7%	26.3%
Post-secondary education is too expensive.	43	83.7%	16.3%
The program I want to take is too expensive.	36	63.9%	36.1%
I do not have enough money to attend.	38	71.1%	28.9%
I am afraid of having too much debt.	42	73.8%	26.2%
I did not meet the entrance requirements for the institution I wanted to attend.	35	22.9%	77.1%
I did not meet the entrance requirements for the program I want to do.	35	25.7%	74.3%
I am back in high school upgrading my marks.	31	22.6%	77.4%
I am wait listed for the program I want to do.	30	16.7%	83.3%
I do not want to leave my home community to attend school.	38	31.6%	68.4%
I have family commitments which prevent me from attending post-secondary institution.	38	34.2%	65.8%
Health reasons prevent me from attending a post-secondary institution.	35	14.3%	85.7%
I am currently employed and therefore cannot attend a post-secondary institution at this time.	39	33.3%	66.7%
I am looking for work to earn money for post-secondary education.	37	48.6%	51.4%
I am looking for work to support myself.	38	68.4%	31.6%
I am working to help my family.	42	57.1%	42.9%
I would prefer getting a job over attending a post-secondary institution.	38	39.5%	60.5%

	n	%
I am unable to attend a post-secondary institution due to childcare responsibilities.	31	32.3%	67.7%
I have accessibility needs that cannot be met at the institution of my choice.	29	6.9%	93.1%
I have a physical, mental or learning disability.	30	23.3%	76.7%
I plan to start my own business.	34	32.4%	67.6%

(23)   Is there anything that could make you re-consider your decision to not go to post-secondary education? Check all that apply to you.

	n	%
Nothing would make me attend post-secondary	0	0.0%
Clarity about my own career direction	15	26.3%
Affordability	23	40.4%
Local access (I could stay in my community)	13	22.8%
Program that has good job prospects	20	35.1%
Program that is a good "fit" for my interests and skills	22	38.6%
Program that is flexible (online, part-time)	15	26.3%
Program that I can complete quickly	12	21.1%
Other (please specify): _____	25	43.9%