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## SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

*Youth with disabilities are amongst the most marginalized and poorest of the world's youth. Although, they face the same issues as their non-disabled peers, societal prejudices, barriers, and ignorance further exacerbate their concerns. – Youth at the United Nations - 2010*

February 16, 2011

## SROI CASE STUDY

### **FAST FACTS – Introduction to Supported Employment Program - Saskatchewan Abilities Council**

In 2009, the Yorkton Branch of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council delivered a pilot project as part of the overall Employment Services Division range of services. The Introduction to Supported Employment Program provided intervention to 7 participants throughout a 12 month period. At the end of the program 7 young adults, ranging from 18 to 22 years of age, secured part-time employment. One young adult obtained a seasonal job while the remaining participants had permanent positions and continued to maintain employment after 6 months. All of the employment opportunities were entry-level and starting at minimum wage. The participants were able to achieve the above outcomes by engaging in the following activities:

- Self-discovery process by participating in the Vocational Evaluation
- Social interactions by attending daily vocational life and employment skills classes in a group setting over a 3-6 month period
- Career Exploration by participating in arranged work experiences
- Community engagement by connecting with community members and attending weekly guest speaker seminars

### **SUBJECT of SROI: Introduction to Supported Employment**

Currently, the Employment Services Division of the Yorkton Branch provides a wide range of employment readiness and job maintenance supports to individuals that are marginalized. Our current evaluation model focuses on outcome based results. For years we have been aware that the services we provide have a significant impact on our clients and the society at large. The SROI project management framework has provided us with tools that will allow us to conduct a qualitative and quantitative assessment of our services. To test out this framework we chose to do SROI on the Introduction to Supported Employment program which is a partnership between Christ the Teacher and Good Spirit School Division. This report highlights the social value created and compares it to the investment made by the Supported Employment Transition Initiative to implement this program. The stakeholders in this program are internal and external and represent the program participants, parents, funders and community organizations.

### **BACKGROUND: Need for Resources**

Students with disabilities and their families experience anxiety and stress during the difficult transition from school to adult life. Prior to the Introduction to Supported Employment program there was no link between the schools, communities and employment services. This resulted in lack of supports, services and post secondary opportunities for young adults with disabilities. These individuals often applied for social assistance to meet their basic needs and lived below poverty levels. Along with their families they attempted to determine which community services would best match their needs. Parents and youth found it very difficult to channel through the complicated processes and protocols of accessing agencies that could facilitate community connections. As a result, years went by with young adults not receiving the same opportunities as their peers leading to segregation and an increase in negative stigmas. The segregation and the stigmas associated with a disability often led to decreased self-esteem, lack of social relationships, lack of skills needed to become independent and loss of hope for the possibility of having the same opportunities as their peers. In particular, it is our experience that lack of smooth transition to employment services during high school years led to increasing number of individuals presenting with multi-barriers. As adults, these individuals often need multiple interventions and a longer period of time to become job ready. The interventions required include social assistance, mental health programs, addiction services and health care services. The three way partnership was developed with a focus on the needs of young adults with disabilities leaving the school system and entering the labor market. The program connects individuals to post-secondary employment opportunities and community supports. The goal of the pilot project was to bridge the gap between schools, employment and community based services.

### **THEORY OF CHANGE**

*If young adults with disabilities participate in learning opportunities that enhance their life skills, personal management skills and employability skills they will be more likely to secure and maintain employment and avoid a lifetime of dependency on social assistance programs.*

### **KEY STAKEHOLDER: Introduction to Supported Employment Participant Profile**

The young adults in the ISE program have all been diagnosed with a cognitive or learning disability. As a direct result they have struggled to fit into mainstream community services

including school programs and activities. These young adults have often relied on the Educational Assistants to support their educational, personal and employment development. The schools' focus has been on teaching academic and daily skills to enhance the students' ability to reach full potential. The students had been exposed to the world of work through in-school or community based work experiences. Young adults lacked clear understanding of the employer/employee roles and responsibilities. Although many of the program participants were motivated to secure employment and demonstrated basic employability skills they lacked appropriate interpersonal skills that are necessary for job maintenance. The program provided daily social interactions within a structured and well supervised setting where participants were able to learn and practice social skills that are considered appropriate in the workplace.

### Social Value Created

Supported employment transition programs, designed for young adults with disabilities, promote collaboration and establish linkages with other services and employers. Students with disabilities remain in the school setting until age 21. Upon completion they may attend the Day Program and apply for social assistance. Both outcomes require additional funding from the Government of Saskatchewan derived from tax payer's dollars, therefore, young adult with disabilities who do not secure employment have an impact on all of society. In addition, lack of paid employment opportunities leads to low self-esteem and confidence which in turn may lead to increased mental health, addictions and doctor's appointments. The ISE program

generates opportunities that result in paid employment at an earlier age (average student in 2010 was 19 years of age) and increased positive social interactions lead to increased self-esteem and confidence. Once the participants experience increased self-worth they are more likely to be ready for employment. By teaching life skills, vocational skills and personal management skills the youth with disabilities were prepared to secure a job at an earlier age. This early intervention approach led to 7 participants gaining employment, avoiding social assistance or eliminating their social assistance reliance. This resulted in cost savings of \$42,420. Participants have become contributing members of society by earning income (collectively \$84,175) and next year being responsible for paying taxes. The ISE program also provided an alternative service to teachers and students allowing the young adults to transition from school at an earlier age. By avoiding staying in school 3 years past their peers or entering the day program services, the graduates of the pilot project experienced fitting into mainstream society. The ISE program avoided further cost increases to alternative programs thus allowing for the most efficient use of government and taxpayer dollars.

### PARTICIPANT QUOTE

*"Without this program I would honestly have stayed in school until I was 21, and then I don't know what I would have done or where I would end up."*

**Table 1: Annual SROI Introduction to Supported Employment**

Introduction to Supported Employment: Social Value Calculation			
SROI Indicators Included:	Total Value YR1	Notes	
1	Avoidance of Social Assistance	\$ 42,420	5 participants avoided applying for social assistance and 2 participants were able to stop relying on social assistance, 7 x \$505/month = \$3,535 x 12months = \$42, 420
2	Avoidance of Day Program Fees	\$ 33, 105	\$684,177/62 participants = \$11035/participant, 3 participants would have attended the day program if ISE did not exist
3	Avoidance of School Support and Attendance Fees	\$ 20, 000	Staff salaries = \$75,000/15 students = \$5000/participant, 4 students would have stayed in school until the age of 21.
4	Increased quality of life	\$35, 000	Currently, AEEI is willing to pay up to \$5000/client to assist them with obtaining and maintaining employment, therefore, this amount was used to determine the worth of increased quality of life
5	Part-time earned income	\$ 84, 175	On average participants worked 25hrs/week @ \$9.25/hr (SK min. wage rate) = \$231.25/wk x 52 weeks
Social Value Created Annually		\$214, 700	
Total Program Investment		\$ 56,360	
One year SROI return		\$3.81	