



S U C C E S S
S K I L L S C E N T R E

**A Formative Evaluation of
Skills for Success:
Internationally Educated Women's Digital
and Work-Related Training
(A Women's Employment Readiness Project)**

Highlights Report

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Kaplan Research Associates Inc.**

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Success Skills Centre's Managers and Staff

Monika Feist.....	Chief Executive Officer
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SSC staff were instrumental to the success of the WER project. They participated in developing evaluation measures and research instruments, with some reviewing and approving the release of the final report. The ability of the project to elicit interest from about 200 prospective participants, and the participation of 54 employers across many sectors, demonstrates the positive perceptions of the organization on the part of both newcomers seeking employment in their chosen fields and Winnipeg-based employers.

In addition, the Labour Market Specialists also facilitated many of the pre-employment sessions provided prior to the commencement of the participants' internships. Three external facilitators also provided instruction. They included:

Ianthe Warner.....	Microsoft Office Instructor (Cohorts One and Two)
Nitin Gupta.....	Microsoft Office Instructor (Cohort Three)
Alka Kumar.....	Business Writing Instructor (Cohorts One, Two and Three)

The WER Project Participants

All participants completed their forms and evaluation surveys, giving extensive thought to their responses. Their well-considered assessments of the project activities, pre-employment topics, the effectiveness of the project, and their work experiences contributed to the value of the information they provided. Virtually all participants attended their graduation ceremonies, which demonstrates their commitment to the project and SSC, and the relationships they developed with participants in their cohorts. Special thanks to the participants who attended the focus group.

The WER Project Employers

The 54 employers who accepted project participants as interns require special thanks. Many have a long history of supporting SSC, which was obvious based on their kind words about SSC at the graduation ceremonies and their comments on their evaluation surveys. Their rates of attendance at the ceremonies and the 100% response rate to the Employers' Surveys is a testament to their commitment to their participants and SSC. Thanks to the employers who attended the focus group or wrote in their responses.

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With thanks to you all,
Gerry Kaplan. MSW
Kaplan Research Associates Inc.

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If you would like a copy of the [WER Evaluation Full Report](#), please contact Success Skills Centre through [Monika Feist](mailto:mfeist@successcentre.ca) at mfeist@successcentre.ca

I) Background

This report provides the highlights of a formative evaluation of **Success Skills Centre's Skills for Success: Internationally Educated Professionals (IEP) Women's Digital and Work-Related Training**, referred to as: a **Women's Employment Readiness (WER) Project**. This is a multi-methods evaluation which included specifically designed intake, assessment and closure forms completed by project participants and their Labour Market Specialists, an Evaluation Questionnaire completed by participants' employers, and findings taken from participant and employer focus groups. The project was funded by **Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)**. This evaluation was undertaken by **Kaplan Research Associates Inc.** The highlights report is comprised of the introduction to the full report, the summary of the findings, and the related conclusions.

1.1) An Overview of the Success Skills Centre¹

Success Skills Centre (SSC) started with ten immigrant women professionals in 1985, under the auspices of the federal **Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC)**, delivering a seven-month full-time gap training program (four months in-class, and three months with employers). It combined occupational language, individually purchased related external courses, job search skills training and work experience placements. The program was in such demand that in 1990 the Centre was expanded to serve 50 immigrant professionals, both men and women. To make best use of the federal government funding, the Centre started to deliver in-house courses such as WordPerfect (later MS Word), AutoCAD, accounting and spreadsheet applications, and the **Business Development Bank of Canada's Starting a Business Program**. The success rate for permanent work placements was 96%, with several participants establishing private businesses. Success rates over the years have consistently ranged from 80% to 86% of participants achieving employment in their related or similar occupations.²

When the federal government devolved its funding to the Province of Manitoba in 1998, the Centre's funding moved from the federal department of **Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)** to the provincial **Department of Education and Training** for 100 program participants per year and 100 participants under the provincial **Department of Labour and Immigration**.

Due to the growing **Provincial Nominee Program** from 2004 to 2012 the Centre was tasked by the Government of Manitoba to provide services to 1,200 participants per year. In 2012 there was a devolution back to the Federal Government, **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)** in 2012 took on Success Skills Centre with a reduced annual participant base of 350, with **Manitoba Start** taking on the first stages of settlement and introductions to working in Canada.

In 2016, Success Skills Centre separately incorporated its training centre to a not-for-profit social enterprise to accommodate the growing demand, external to its funded programs, for its fast-track, career-specific gap training, and to meet the varying time-needs and price affordability of learners and employers than is generally available. The 'just-in-time' skill-based courses are designed to address the needs of today's labour market, and are delivered by contracted qualified professionals in the field. The practical courses can be completed in days, weeks or months, depending on what is selected and the efforts of the learners. Since 2018

¹ The information in this section has been provided by the Success Skills Centre.

² Based on data from SSC.

Success Skills Centre has delivered **Services Canada** youth programs for immigrant professionals under 30 years of age. When the Centre has a federal or provincial contract to deliver its programs there is no additional charge to program participants.

Success Skills' Vision

Success Skills Centre is a community-based, not-for-profit organization, dedicated to the recognition of the skills, training, education and knowledge of immigrant professionals and skilled workers, leading to workplace participation appropriate to their credentials.

Success Skills' Mission

The mission of Success Skills Centre is to provide specialized immigrant professional training in the areas of related occupational job search and employment, such as interview skills, self-marketing techniques, and labour market awareness. Staff assess participants' skills, training, education, and experience acquired outside of Canada, and offer one-on-one employment counselling assistance, related to their professions, with résumés adjusted accordingly, cover letters and job search. They also provide employment maintenance support for participants and employers where identified. The pillars of its mission include:

Training: Providing training in the areas of employment, such as interview skills, self-marketing techniques, and labour market awareness.

Assessments: Assessing the skills, training, education, and experience of clients, acquired outside of Canada.

Partnerships: Continuously seeking opportunities for business and community partnerships.

Counselling: Offering employment counselling assistance with résumés, cover letters and job searches, and provide employment maintenance supports where identified.

Advocacy: Acting as employment advocates between employers and clients to secure appropriate work experience/internships and employment placements.

Networking: Developing labour market relationships.

Success Skills' Values

In all activities the staff work to:

- The highest standards of professional ethics.
- Accomplish goals by incorporating positive attitudes and innovative approaches.
- Achieve the integration and full participation of immigrant professionals and skilled workers into the labour market.
- Fully respect all individuals, regardless of background.
- Imbed compassion into all words and deeds to ensure our participants experience the best Canada has to offer.

1.2) An Overview of the Women's Employment Readiness (WER) Project

The **Goal** of IEP Women's Digital and Work-Related Training Project (WER) is to address the need for newcomer racialized women professionals and skilled workers to become digitally literate and employment-ready for the Canadian workforce. SSC used a staggered intake cohort model that designed to serve 45 participants. The 15-month project took place in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the staggered intake was designed to include three cohorts of fifteen

participants each. Participants were tested and evaluated for pre-employment and skills development, preparation, training support, and receive 16 weeks' paid internship at matched employer sites. Employers were first sought to ensure that their needs appropriately match participants' sectors and occupations of choice, or at least those aligned with these.

In the end, **54 participants** were served through this project as follows: 19 in Cohort One, 21 in Cohort Two, and 14 in Cohort Three.

The **Vision** of the project is that it will empower 45 racialized newcomer women who are unemployed or underemployed internationally educated professionals (IEPs), to become digitally literate and employment-ready for the Canadian workforce. The end goal of the project is for the women interns to be hired by the participating employers or for the Centre to help them find another employer to work in their occupation, and thus, contribute economically to the Canadian society.

The **Objectives** of the project include:

- Providing and testing the pre-employment and skills development supports, which are foundational and transferable skills training and wrap-around supports
- Providing test models to improve workplace inclusivity
- Working with employers to improve access to employment and retention in the workplace for one or more of the target groups - racialized newcomer IEP women
- Consulting with employers to identify pre-employment skills desired by them

The **Measures of Success** for the project include:

Recruiting and training 45 racialized, unemployed/underemployed Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) into related occupations in the labour market:

- Training IEPs with the highest standards of professional ethics, delivered through SSC, Hands-On Practicum series webinars, and one-on-one career coaching
- Providing IEPs with foundational and transferable skills training including Essential Skills using the Skills for Success model and digital literacy
- Providing IEPs with accreditation assistance and linkages such as access to skilled training, FAST (a free online assessment program), Recognitions Counts, and other occupational bridging assistance programs including the Connector Program, and accreditation through World Education Services (WES) and provincial professional associations
- Supporting the IEPs to transition into related employment through 16 weeks' paid career-related internships
- Working with IEPs' employers and their staff to test, design, and deliver employer in-house inclusivity models

The Scope of the Project

The following deliverables are in scope for this project:

- Hire a project manager, staff and evaluator
- Create a project steering committee that will provide project and program advice and guidance

- Prepare the communication plan, materials for employers and participants
- Carry out employer recruitment and confirmation of employers who agree to participate in the pilot project
- Carry out cohort participant recruitment and selection based on employers' and participants' needs.
- Develop, with the contracted evaluator, an evaluation plan and surveys/focus group(s) to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the project
- Hold regular steering committee meetings³

Recruiting Interns and Employers

When recruiting prospective interns for the project, it was important to match newcomer racialized women professionals and skilled workers, to the extent possible, with companies or organizations that all align with their sectors and occupations. It was believed that this would provide the project participants with Canadian work experience that many employers may be seeking from job applicants. While employers may not hire Interns immediately following the end of the internships because they may not have the budget to pay them at that time, they may be motivated to hire them when the funds are available at a later date.

The process to recruit interns was conducted by providing the criteria for interns directly to all agencies serving the target populations, as well through newsletters and websites of the **Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO)**, the **Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology (MITT)**, **Red River Community College**, **Reaching Equality**, **Manitoba Possible**, and the **Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg**. It is estimated by SSC that 200 people applied to be part of this project.

When recruiting prospective employers, staff went through their employer data-base and approached those that had successfully employed former clients in relevant sectors with which SSC had had positive experiences, as well as reaching out to selected **Sector Councils**. Some project staff also had employers they have used in the past who seemed like a good match given the education and experience of the project participants.

Pre-Employment Education and Training

Early in participants' involvement with the WER Project they completed the **Employability Skills Assessment Tool (ESAT)**, which provides a process and online supports for the assessment and development of social and emotional skills. The **foundational skills** component of this evaluation are part of ESAT.^{4 5}

Prior to the commencement of the internships participants attended a **Hands-On Practicum (HOP) of education and training** and employers participated in a **2.5 hour webinar on Immigrant Inclusion and Diversity in the Workplace**. Many of the topics were provided by SSC's Labour Market Specialists. Three were provided by external facilitators, including: Ianthe Warner - Microsoft Office Instructor (Cohorts One and Two); Nitin Gupta - Microsoft Office Instructor (Cohort Three); and Alka Kumar - Business Writing Instructor (Cohorts One, Two and Three). The topics covered in participants' Hands-On Practicum included:

³ This was done by staff a whole due to the complexity of the three cohorts and a lack of regular availability of the identified external parties.

⁴ Developed by Futureworx, Nova Scotia, Canada.

⁵ cf <https://futureworx.ca/employability-skills-assessment-tool/>

- Resume Renovation - Learn How to Stand out from the Crowd
- Communication Skills -Telephone and Email Etiquette
- Cover Letters - How to Match to a Job Advertisement
- Powerful First Impressions - Develop Strategies for Turning Job Interviews into Job Offers
- Numeracy Skills
- Conflict Resolution in the Workplace
- Workplace Communication, Soft Skills and Cross-Cultural at the Workplace
- Interview Practice
- Indigenous Canadians; Welcome New Canadians
- Working with Others
- Job Search Program
- Recognition Counts Program Workshop
- Gender Equality and Manitoba Human Rights
- Employment Standards
- Continuous Learning
- Winnipeg Connector Partnership – Networking/Relationships
- Newcomer Employment Hub
- Employer Expectations - Guest Speaker
- Document Use
- How to Keep a Job and Work
- Workshop Evaluation

The themes covered by the Employers' **Immigrant Inclusion and Diversity in the Workplace webinar** included:⁶

- The Benefits of Cultural Diversity in the Workplace
- Practical and Effective Approaches to Becoming More Inclusive Organizations (Related Principles)
- Prioritizing and Customizing Your Roadmap to Being Inclusive
- Related Challenges Which Need Our Attention
- Cultural Integration Interview Questions
- Best Practices for Working With Different Cultures in the Workplace
- Moving Forward - Am I Doing Enough? What Else Can I Do?
- On-Boarding Immigrants
- Providing a Thorough Orientation Including Professional and Cultural Considerations
- Providing Newcomers with Buddies
- Including Cultural Integration Questions as Part of Regular Performance Reviews
- Providing Regular Workplace Developmental Sessions
- Considering providing English as an Additional Language (EAL) Supports for Newcomers
- When Considering Promotions, Clarifying the Process and Expectations with Skilled Immigrants
- Providing Support for Existing Employees to Help Them with Integration

II) The Evaluation Framework

2.1) Our Methodology

This is a formative evaluation of **Success Skills Centre's Women's Employment Readiness Project** (WER). It was conducted by **Kaplan Research Associates Inc.** in full collaboration with the managers and staff at the Centre. This is a multi-methods evaluation using three participant forms and one employer questionnaire, as well as conducting focus groups with selected program participants and employers. All aspects of this evaluation were undertaken in

⁶ Taken from the webinar: **Immigrant Inclusion in the Workforce**, developed by Monika G. Feist, CEO, Success Skills Centre.

collaboration with the organization, including the questions included in the forms and survey, and the focus group questions. Participants completed **Intake** and **Assessment Forms** at the start of the project and a **Closure Form** at the end. Employers completed an **Employer's Survey** at the end of the project.

Where possible **validated scales** were used in this analysis. We also ensured that areas of inquiry requested by the funder were also included. The evaluation report has been reviewed by SSC prior to publishing the final report. The participant forms were developed using the **TELEform** scanning suite to facilitate automated data entry, and the online employer questionnaire was developed using **Qualtrics**. All quantitative data were analyzed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences** (SPSS), while the quantitative data, including responses to the open-ended survey questions and the focus group results were subjected to **content analyses**.

In addition to exploring participants' characteristics and employment history, there are many instances where we analyzed participants' changes over time, based on the use of **repeated measures**. This means that for the analysis of participants' indicators over time to be undertaken, data for each question would have to exist at both junctures: that is at Intake (Time-One) and at Closure (Time-Two) using **paired T-Tests**. As each form comprised its own SPSS datafile, it was necessary for each form to contain unique and non-identifying **participant codes** to merge these files. Employers were assigned codes that aligned with their interns' codes.

2.2) Our Areas of Inquiry

i) Participants' Forms

Questions Taken From the Participant Intake Forms

- Identifying information (excluded from this analysis)
- Date of Birth and Gender
- Marital status
- Numbers and ages of their dependents
- Dates of Arrival in Canada and their landing dates
- Driving status and access to a vehicle
- Countries of origin
- Primary and secondary languages spoken
- Their willingness to leave Winnipeg for employment
- Their employment sector in their home countries
- Their occupations or specialties in their home countries
- Length of employment in their occupations or specialties
- Kinds of occupations or specialties they are seeking for long-term employment
- Their Employment Equity categories
 - Youth (under 30)
 - Visible minorities
 - Have disabilities
 - Women
 - Immigrants
 - LGBTQ2
- Current employment status
- Current sources of income
- Current employer (name excluded from this analysis)
- Current occupation or specialty
- How they heard about SSC
- Who referred them if applicable (name of organization provided in this analysis)
- Whether they received pre-arrival services in home country
- Whether they have family members living in Canada

- Entry into Canada:
 - Through the Federal Government Department of Immigration, Refugees
 - Through the Provincial Government Nominee Program
 - Through other programs
- Status: Permanent Resident or Canadian Citizen
- English language proficiency
- Highest level of education attained
- Major or specialty of study
- Years of education
- Additional training or skills they have attained
- Whether they received training while in Canada
- If they are currently unemployed, length of time looking for work
- If they are unable to work in their former occupation or specialty, what other kind(s) of work would they like to do
- Whether they are currently attending an English language course, and which ones
- Whether they are taking any other courses or programs, and which ones

Questions Taken From the Participant Assessment Forms

- Participants' reasons for attending the Women's Employment Readiness Project
- Their employment history:
 - Ever been employed in any job?
 - Ever been employed in their chosen fields?
 - Currently employed in any job?
 - Currently employed in their chosen fields?
 - Number of jobs past five years?
 - End date of last employment?
 - Type of employment?
 - Average weekly hours of employment?*
 - Average hourly rate of pay?*
- Their confidence at intake that they will find any work^{*7}
- Their confidence at intake that they will find work in their chosen fields*
- Their perceived barriers to getting and keeping jobs in their chosen fields*
- Whether they came to Canada as refugees
- Whether they have ever experienced trauma
- Whether they have ever experienced abuse
 - If 'yes,' describe the trauma or abuse experienced
 - Did this impact their ability to look for jobs, or keep their jobs?
 - Did they receive support to deal with these experiences?
- Are they are currently receiving support?
- Conditions they have experienced (pick-list)
- What resources they will require to be able to get a job (pick-list)
- Participants evaluating their foundational skills to find and keep employment, at intake*
- Labour Market Specialists evaluating participants' foundational skills to find and keep employment at intake^{*8}
- Participants evaluating their job search skills at intake*
- Participants completing the **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale***
- Participants completing **the self-efficacy subscale***
- Participants completing the **hope subscale***

⁷ *Indicates that these questions are replicated in the WER Assessment and Closure Forms.

⁸ Labour Market Specialists answered these questions after participants completed the form to reduce bias.

Questions Taken From the Participant Closure Forms

- Participants' reasons for leaving the project
- The sector of their work placement
- Their occupation or specialty at their work placement
- Their average weekly hours of work*
- Their average hourly rates of pay*
- Their current employment status*
- Their current sources of income*
- What resources they have received
- The degree to which they achieved their objectives for attending the project
- Participants evaluating their foundational skills to find and keep employment, at closure*
- Labour Market Specialists evaluating participants' foundational skills to find and keep employment at closure*
- Their confidence at closure that they will find any work*
- Their confidence at closure that they will find work in their chosen fields*
- Participants evaluating their job search skills at closure*
- Participants completing the **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale***
- Participants completing **the self-efficacy subscale***
- Participants completing the **hope subscale***
- Participants evaluating their work placements
- Participants evaluating their WER Employment Counsellors
- Evaluating the overall effectiveness of the services and programs provided by the project
- Evaluating the overall helpfulness of the topics covered during the Hands-On Practicum
- Evaluating how likely they are to recommend the project to a friend or family member
- What they liked most about the project (open-ended)
- What changes they would make to the project if they could (open-ended)

ii) Employers' Survey

Questions Taken From the Employers' Survey

- Employers' sectors
- The occupations or specialties their interns filled
- Whether employers directly supervised their interns
- Whether their interns received support or advice from other employees
- The number of weeks their interns worked
- How employers evaluated their interns' attendance
 - If workdays were missed, what were the reasons for this?
- Overall, did their workplaces benefit by having their interns working there?
 - If 'yes,' what benefits did their workplaces experience as a result of having the interns working there?
 - If 'no,' what concerns did employers experience?
- Employers evaluating participants' foundational skills at the beginning and end of their internships*⁹
- Whether employers had contact with Labour Market Specialists during their internships
- Employers evaluating their contacts with Labour Market Specialists
- Whether employers would have liked additional supports during their internships
 - If 'yes,' what were they? (open-ended)
- The likelihood of employers accepting other interns from SSC

⁹ Their assessments of interns at the beginning of their internships would be based on employers' retrospective perceptions of these women at that juncture.

- The likelihood of employers recommending SSC to others in their fields

iii) Focus Group Questions

For the Interns' Focus Group

- 1) Introductions and welcome
- 2) The WER project provided several weeks of pre-employment training to the interns, cover a range of topics to prepare you for your internship experience.
 - Which sessions or topics did you find most helpful to prepare you for your internship or to find employment in your sector or field?
 - Which sessions did you find too difficult?
 - Are there other sessions, not provided, that would have been helpful?
- 3) Has your internship prepared you to find employment in your sector or field?
- 4) What are the main barriers to employment that others in your sector or field may experience?
- 5) What are your hopes regarding future employment?

For the Employers' Focus Group

- 1) The Women's Digital & Work-Related Training Pilot Project provided a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion information session for employers. How did you feel about these sessions?
- 2) Why did you decide to hire an intern for this project?
- 3a) Are you aware of any inclusivity barriers in your workplace, particularly for a woman from another race/culture?
- 3b) Are you aware of any inclusivity barriers in your sector, particularly for a woman from another race/culture?
- 4) Do you believe that your Intern will be more employable following her experience with your company or organization?
- 5) Do you have any suggestions for Success Skills to improve the WER project?

Three questions asked of SSC staff

- 1) Given the success of the WER project, based on the findings from interns and employers, the screening process for interns worked very well. Why do you think it worked so well?
- 2) What do you feel were the greatest strengths and benefits of the project, first for interns and for their employers?
- 3) What changes would you have made to the project, if any?

Evaluation Summary and Conclusions

I) Background

This section provides a summary of the results of a formative evaluation of the **Success Skills Centre's Skills for Success: Internationally Educated Women's Digital and Work-Related Training Project**, referred to as the **WER Project**, along with conclusions based on the findings. Formative evaluations are used when assessing a new program or project. It is part of the learning and development process. Audiences for formative evaluations are broad, including other organizations that may be considering implementing a process similar to that under study.

Conclusion One: Given the findings of this evaluation, it is concluded that the WER Project has achieved or exceeded its objectives and its measures of success, based on the following observations:

- The project was funded to hire 45 interns in three cohorts. When it was first advertised 200 racialized women applied to participate in the project with 54 being selected, thereby exceeding the number of prescribed participants in the project by nine. The project was also successful in accessing 54 companies and organizations to support these interns.
- The large majority of participants completed the project, with 81.2% completing 11 to 16 weeks of employment, and 73.6% of these completing the full 16 weeks of employment. Several of these participants have had their internships extended, up to two-years in one case.
- In most cases the internships were well-matched with interns' occupations or areas of specialization in their countries of origin, with many of these being employed in their chosen fields or adjacent fields.
- Regarding participants' occupations:
 - The largest percentage of participants (45.3%) reportedly worked in managerial or administrative occupations in their home countries
 - At intake 52.8% of the participants were looking for careers in managerial or administrative occupations
 - Just prior to intake 27.0% of these participants had been employed in these occupations
 - At closure employers reported that 61.8% of the participants had been employed in these occupations
- When asked for their reasons for leaving the project, 83.6% reported that their 16-week internships had been completed, and 9.1% reported that they had achieved employment in their chosen fields. This was a multiple response question with a small amount of overlap regarding these two reasons for closure.
- The project created and provided 20 topics for its two-week Hands-On Practicum, as part of pre-employment preparation for participants. Some of the topics included:
 - Job-search skills
 - Communications skills
 - Conflict resolution skills

- Numeracy skills
 - Computer skills
 - Employment standards
 - Employers' expectations
- The project also included a webinar on Immigrant Inclusion and Diversity in the Workplace that was delivered for the project's employers and their staff.
 - Participants reported that most of their objectives for attending the project had been very much achieved, especially among those who indicated at intake that these objectives were very important for them. This mostly applied to objectives related to being able to find, get and keep employment, including: improving their resumes and cover letters, knowing how to look for a job, and their awareness of the Canadian work culture.
 - There were statistically significant decreases in participants' perceived barriers to employment over time, and statistically significant improvements in their related foundational skills over time. Employers, in particular, noted highly significant improvements in their interns' foundational skills from the point at which they began and ended their internships.
 - From a qualitative perspective, interns generally evaluated their Labour Market Specialists very positively. 100% of the interns globally felt that services were at least somewhat effective, with 83.3% of these evaluating them as being very effective. In addition, 100% of these participants felt that the workshop topics were at least somewhat helpful for them, with 69.8% of these feeling that they were very helpful.
 - 92.3% of the employers felt that their companies or organizations had at least somewhat benefited by having WER participants working for them as interns, with 67.3% of these feeling they had very much benefited in this regard.
 - Employers provided equally positive evaluations of SSC's Labour Market Specialists with whom they had contact. This included staff being there when they and their interns needed them; giving both interns and employers advice, support and encouragement when this was needed; helping interns learn the skills needed to succeed at work; and providing employers with information about the Success Skills Centre.
 - All participants were at least somewhat likely to recommend that a friend or family member attend this program if it is offered again, with 90.7% of these being very likely to make this recommendation.
 - All of the employers (100%) were at least somewhat likely to accept an intern from SSC in the future, with 96.2% of these being very likely to do so. Also, 100% of these employers were at least somewhat likely to recommend that others in their fields of practice accept WER interns in the future, with 96.3% of these being very likely to make this recommendation.

II) A Summary of the Evaluation Findings

2.1) Participants' Characteristics

The participants were mostly well-educated, married or in a common-law relationships, on average 39 years of age, and generally had an established work history in their countries of origin. On the other hand 67.3% were unemployed when they became involved with the WER Project. About two-thirds were immigrants and four (7.5%) were refugees. They came from 14 countries, but primarily from Nigeria, India, the Philippines, Syria, China and Sri Lanka. Over half reported that English was their primary language and 70% reported it as a secondary language.

Just under half of these participants (45.1%) had Bachelor degrees and 39.2% had Master degrees. A few had Doctorate degrees, with one participant having a Medical Doctor's Degree. On average they had attended 16.5 years of education with a median of 17.0 years. Their primary employment sectors in their countries of origin were Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (34.0%); Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Rental/Leasing (28.0%); Education (Private/Public) (22.0%); Public Administration/Crown Corporation (14.0%); Construction (12.0%); and Healthcare/Social Services (8.0%).

Their primary occupations or areas of specialization in their countries of origin were: Managerial/Administrative (54.7%); Construction/Trades Occupations (18.9%); Technological/Computer Occupations (17.0%); Teaching and Related Occupations (13.2%); Clerical and Related Occupations (11.3%); Machine/Product Fabrication/Repairs Occupations (7.5%); Service Occupations (7.5%); and Social Services/Religious Occupations (7.5%).

They worked an average of 11.6 years in their last occupations in their countries of origin, with a median of 13.0 years. In their countries of origin, 88.7% of the participants had been employed in any job and 69.4% had been employed in their chosen fields. Upon entering the project 27.8% were currently employed in any job and 6.0% (N=3) in a job in their chosen fields.

Their primary occupations at the time of intake into the WER Project included: Managerial/Administrative Occupations (40.5%); Service Occupations (18.9%); Clerical and Related Occupations (13.5%); Technological/Computer Occupations (10.8%); Sales Occupations (8.1%); Teaching and Related Occupations (8.1%); and Occupations in Medicine/Health (8.1%).

The least important objectives for these participants related to improving their written, reading and spoken English skills, which is consistent with the fact that English is a primary language for most of them. They were also less inclined to identify improving their self-esteem as an important objective for attending the project.

Conclusion These participants had many positive characteristics coming into the project, along with a positive work history, given their long-standing employment in several professional and technical fields. They are also generally proficient in the English language. These are positive attributes as they are seeking employment in Canada. Any issues they had appeared to primarily relate to challenges to find, get and keep employment, and a relative lack of awareness with Canadian work culture.

2.2) Participants' Most Important Project Objectives, Their Challenges For Getting and Keeping Employment and Their Employment-Readiness

The most important objectives for participants were related to developing skills and knowledge to help them find, get and keep employment, especially in their chosen fields, and to become familiar with the Canadian work culture. The percentages who felt that these objectives were *very important* to them are provided below:

- To improve their self-marketing skills to find employment (88.0% reported this as a very important objective)
- To be more hopeful for their future employment situations (83.3%)
- To gain interview skills (79.6%)
- To be aware of the kinds of jobs available in their fields in Manitoba (78.4%)
- To gain job search skills (77.4%)
- To better understand the Canadian work culture (75.9%)
- To get help developing their cover letters (66.7%)
- To get help developing their resumes (62.3%)
- To work toward accreditation (62.0%)
- To improve their problem-solving skills (54.7%)
- To improve their computer skills (51.9%)
- To learn how to work better with co-workers (49.0%)
- To improve their budgeting/Financial management skills (45.1%)
- To improve their self-confidence (43.4%)
- To improve their decision-making skills (42.5%)
- To improve their coping skills (40.4%)
- To improve their time-management skills (40.0%)
- To improve their English writing skills (37.7%)
- To improve their English speaking skills (35.8%)
- To improve their self-esteem (35.2%)
- To improve their English reading skills (28.8%)

Upon entering the WER Project the most serious perceived barriers to participants finding, getting and keeping jobs were, in ranked-order:

- Not being accredited in their chosen fields in Canada (32.5% identifying this as a very serious problem)
- A lack of experience with the Canadian work culture (32.1%)
- To develop their social skills in line with Canadian expectations (30.8%)
- A lack of experience with technology used in their fields (9.4%)

The employment-readiness factors they felt were the greatest impediments toward this end at intake, were in ranked-order:

- Not knowing where to look for jobs (40.0%)
- Not being able to get jobs (36.6%)
- Not having an effective cover letter (35.9%)
- Not being able do a job search independently (21.0%)
- Not having an effective resume (17.0%)

Conclusion Many of the topics related to assisting participants to successfully attain Three: employment were covered during participants' pre-employment education and training sessions, which participants positively evaluated.

Conclusion Four: On the other hand, given their successful work experience in their countries of origin, and their educational attainment, many participants seem to already possess skills and knowledge that elevate their self-esteem, self-confidence, their coping skills and their decision-making capabilities, which are among some of the foundations for employment that were deemed less important to these participants to focus on through the project.

2.3) Participants Achieving Their Objectives for Attending the WER Project

Participants who reported that each objective to attend the WER Project *was very important to them* were most likely to feel that they had very much achieved them. This applied to the following objectives:

- Improving their self-confidence (with 87.0%¹⁰ very much achieving this)
- Better understanding the Canadian work culture (85.4%)
- Improving their self-esteem (84.2%)
- Being more hopeful for their future employment situations (82.1%)
- Gaining interview skills (81.4%)
- Learning how to work better with co-workers (80.8%)
- Improving their time-management skills (80.0%)
- Getting help developing their resumes (75.8%)
- Gaining job search skills (75.6%)
- Improving their decision-making skills (74.0%)
- Improving their English reading skills (73.3%)
- Improving their problem-solving skills (72.4%)
- Improving their coping skills (71.0%)
- Improving their English writing skills (70.0%)
- Improving their computer skills (66.6%)
- Being aware of the kinds of jobs available in their fields in Manitoba (66.6%)
- Getting help developing their cover letters (66.6%)
- Improving their self-marketing skills to find employment (66.0%)
- Improving their English speaking skills (63.2%)
- Working toward accreditation (61.3%)
- Improving their budgeting and financial management skills (57.0%)

Conclusion Five: It is apparent from these findings that participants overall felt they had very much achieved each objective that was very important to them. This also applies to objectives related to improving participants' English language skills, in terms of reading, writing and conversing in English, when these were very important objectives for them.

Conclusion Six: Participants entered the WER Project with many strengths and positive attributes. These included their education in their chosen fields, their extensive work histories in their countries of origin, their familiarity with the English language, and having the support of a spouse or partner. They have a positive sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. They also have hope for their future employment outcomes. What they needed was assistance regarding the development of their employment-

¹⁰ Percentages of participants who reported that each objective was important to them who also reported very much achieving these objectives.

readiness skills, which was a primary focus of the pre-employment component of this project and the purpose of their internships.

2.4) Measuring Change - Participants' Significant Improvements Over Time

This evaluation measures participants' growth for several areas of inquiry based on the use of **repeated measures** through **paired T-Tests**; comparing responses from the WER assessment and closure Forms.

i) Significant Reductions in Participants' Perceived Barriers to Employment Over Time

There were statistically significant reductions in the perceived seriousness of the following six barriers to participants being able to find, get and keep employment in their chosen fields:

- Not being accredited in their chosen fields in Canada
- Lacking experience with the Canadian work culture
- Needing to develop their social skills in line with Canadian expectations
- Not having appropriate work clothes
- Lacking experience with technology used in their fields
- Lacking experience with computer software used in their fields

ii) Significant Improvements in Participants' Employment-Readiness Over Time

There were statistically significant improvements, over time, regarding the following eight aspects of participants' employment-readiness:

- Being able to meet the expectations of employers
- Having the skills they need for employment
- Handling rejection when they don't get jobs
- Having effective resumes
- Having effective cover letters
- Being able to job search independently
- Being able to get jobs
- Knowing where to look for jobs

iii) Significant Improvements in Participants' Foundational Skills Over Time

A key area of analysis for this evaluation related to participants' foundational skills regarding employment. Eighteen factors were assessed. This was measured as part of participants' Assessment and Closure Forms, and as part of the Employers' Survey. Participants did a self-evaluation of their foundational skills over time (pretest-post-test measures). Participants' Labour Market Specialists also evaluated their Foundational skills at both junctures, after their participants completed and returned their respective forms. Participants' employers received one survey at the end of the internships and were asked to base their initial assessment of their interns retrospectively regarding when they began working in their companies or organizations and at the point when the internships ended. The 18 foundational factors included participants':

Adaptational skills	Coping skills	Problem-solving skills
Availability for employment	Creative skills	Reading skills
Budgeting/Financial skills	Decision-making skills	Self-Esteem/Confidence
Collaborative skills	Document use	Teamwork skills
Communication skills	Personal insight	Time-management skills
Computer skills	Positive social supports	Writing skills

Participants' Self-Evaluation of Their Foundational Skills Over Time

Participants self-evaluated their Foundational skills at intake quite positively, and maintained these positive self-perceptions over time. As a result, there was only one foundational skills for which there was a statistically significant change over time, participants'

- Adaptational skills (which actually *went down marginally but significantly* over the course of their internships)

Labour Market Specialists Evaluating Their Participants' Foundational Skills Over Time

There were nine foundational skills that participants' REW staff assessed more positively over time. They included participants'

Budgeting/Financial skills	Creative skills	Positive social supports
Computer skills	Decision-making skills	Problem-solving skills
Coping skills	Document use	Time-management skills

Employers Evaluating Their Interns' Foundational Skills: Retrospectively at Intake and at Closure

When employers retrospectively assessed their interns' foundational skills as they perceived them at the beginning of their internships there were very few skills that were assessed as being 'very good' by these employers. This was consistent across the 54 employers each of whom was based in a separate company or organization and across sectors. For the large majority of these foundational factors, the percentages who were rated as being 'very good' at the outset ranged from 1.9% to 5.6%. However, when it came to assessing their foundational skills at the closure of their internships their employers' assessments were much more positive, to the degree that the improvements were highly statistically significant for each of these 18 foundational skills over time. They included:

Adaptational skills	Coping skills	Problem-solving skills
Availability for employment	Creative skills	Reading skills
Budgeting/Financial skills	Decision-making skills	Self-Esteem/Confidence
Collaborative skills	Document use	Teamwork skills
Communication skills	Personal insight	Time-management skills
Computer skills	Positive social supports	Writing skills

iv) Significant improvements Regarding Scales Incorporated into this Evaluation

There were three scales incorporated into this evaluation, two of which showed statistically significant improvements over time. They include:

- The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: with a mean score of 34.7 out of 40 at intake, and a mean score of 36.6 at closure (Paired N=52, T=2.95, DF=51, P=.005)
- The Self-Efficacy Subscale: with a mean score of 16.2 out of 20 at intake, and a mean score of 17.8 at closure (Paired N=50, T=4.25, DF=49, P<.001)
- The Hope Subscale: with a mean score of 18.1 out of 20 at intake, and a mean score of 18.7 at closure (Paired N=48, T=1.71, DF=47, P=.09)¹¹

¹¹ Author's note: While there was no statistically significant improvement in the scores for the Hope Subscale over time, the score of 18.1 at intake reflects the 91st percentile which is a positive score, and it is maintained at 18.7 at closure which reflects the 94th percentile.

v) Participants' Hopes for Future Employment

The primary occupations that participants were hoping to attain in Canada include: Managerial/Administrative Occupations (69.8%); Technological/Computer-related Occupations (22.6%); Clerical and related Occupations (17.0%); Occupations in Medicine/Health (13.2%); Construction/Trade Occupations (13.2%); Teaching and related Occupations (11.3%); Service occupations (9.4%); and/or Social Services/Religious Occupations (7.5%).

Participants were asked, at intake and closure, how confident they were that they would attain employment in any field, and then in their chosen fields.

- When it came to their hopes for employment in any field, 90.8% of participants at intake were at least somewhat confident that this would occur, with 66.7% of these being very confident about this. At closure, 100% of the participants were at least somewhat confident about attaining employment in any field, with 72.7% of these were very confident about this. This represents a marginal improvement over time.
- At intake, 76.0% of the participants were at least somewhat likely to feel they would attain employment in their chosen fields, with 51.9% of these being very confident about this. Upon closure, 98.0% of these same participants were at least somewhat confident about attaining employment in their chosen fields, with 66.7% of these feeling very confident about this: a notable improvement
- There was a statistically significant improvement, over time, in participants' confidence that they would be able to attain employment in their chosen fields. In fact, at closure they were virtually as confident about attaining employment in their chosen fields as they were about attaining any employment.

Conclusion There is evidence of many statistically significant improvements in the lives of participants in the WER Project. To briefly recap:

- They perceived fewer barriers to employment
- They appear to have increased employment-readiness
- Their Labour Market Specialists and employers perceive them having many significantly improved foundational skills needed to successfully find, get and retain employment
- They appear to have improved levels of self-esteem and self-advocacy, based on the results of scales administered through this evaluation
- They appear more confident that they will attain employment in their chosen fields

2.5) Participants in Their Workplaces

This section explores participants' experiences in their workplaces, as well as the degree to which the employers felt their workplaces benefited by having the interns there. Participants, overall, felt very positive about their experiences as interns in their workplaces. This is reflected by the percentages who responded 'very much' to the following questions:

- Did they relate well with their direct supervisors? (86.0% responding very much)
- Were they supported by their co-workers to help them adjust to working in their work environments? (83.6%)
- Did they feel welcome at work? (81.8%)
- Did they relate well with their co-workers? (81.0%)
- Were they able to understand what was being said to them? (e.g., people speaking too quickly; problems with accents, etc.) (76.4%)

- Were they supported by their direct supervisors to help them adjust to working in their work environment? (76.4%)
- Did their direct supervisors provide them with clear expectations? (61.8%)

Conversely, when the employers were asked whether they felt their workplaces benefited by having WER interns working there, virtually all (92.3%) reported that this was at least somewhat true, with 67.3% of these reporting that this was very true.

As a corollary to the preceding question, employers were asked how their workplaces benefited by having the interns working there. These were their responses:

- The Interns were punctual (89.6%)
- They got along well with their supervisors (79.2%)
- They got along well with their co-workers (79.2%)
- They had the skills and training to do their jobs (77.1%)
- They worked hard (77.1%)
- They understood what was expected of them at work (66.7%)
- They got along well with customers, if applicable (64.6%)
- They met their supervisors' expectations (64.6%)
- They missed little or no work (62.5%)

Three employers felt that their interns were not a benefit to their workplaces, with some interns experiencing multiple challenges. Their reasons for reporting this included:

- The intern lacked the skills/training to do the job
- She did not understand what was expected of them
- She did not get along well with their co-workers

Conclusion Eight: The overall positive perceptions participants had of their workplaces, along with employers' feelings that their workplaces benefited by having the interns working with them, demonstrates that the Labour Market Specialists did a very good job matching interns with employers.

From the perspective of the employers, virtually all of these (92.3%) felt that their companies or organizations benefited from having participants working for them as interns, with 67.3% of these feeling that they benefited from them. As a corollary to this question employers were able to identify ways in which their interns were a benefit, including the interns:

- Being punctual (89.6%)
- Getting along well with their supervisors (79.2%)
- Getting along well with their co-workers (79.2%)
- Having the skills and training to do their jobs (77.1%)
- Working hard (77.1%)
- Understanding what was expected of them at work (66.7%)
- Getting along well with customers, if applicable (64.6%)
- Meeting their supervisors' expectations (64.6%)
- Missing little or no work (62.5%)

Conclusion Nine: It is apparent that both participants and their employers benefited through their participation in SSC's WER Project. It is suggested that this information be shared with prospective employers when seeking their participation in future SSC projects.

2.6) Participants Positively Evaluated Their Labour Market Specialists

Participants provided very positive evaluations of their Labour Market Specialists. Of the 11 adjectives or phrases used to describe their staff, each was deemed to be at least 100% somewhat positive. The percentages who rated them as being very good ranged from a high of 95.0% to a relative low of 79.6%). The results of this analysis is provided below:

- They respected participants' confidentiality (with 95.0% responding 'very much')
- They treated participants with dignity and respect (94.0%)
- They were available when needed (88.9%)
- They were reliable (88.9%)
- They ensured participants got resources and supports, if needed (88.2%)
- They were knowledgeable about Manitoba's labour market (86.8%)
- They believed in their participants' abilities to achieve their employment goals (85.2%)
- They meaningfully responded to participants' concerns (85.2%)
- They effectively assisted participants to achieve their employment goals (84.9%)
- They provided services in ways that are culturally sensitive (83.3%)
- They meaningfully listened to what participants had to say (79.6%)

Conclusion Since their Labour Market Specialists represent the project for each Ten: participant, it is essential that they be perceived in a positive light. This was certainly the case regarding this analysis.

2.7) What Participants and Other Stakeholders Liked About the WER Project

For participants this information came from an open-ended question in their Closure Forms. For selected participants, Labour Market Specialists and employers, they came from comments made at their focus groups.

i) What Participants' Liked About the WER Project

Participants noted 13 things they liked about the WER Project, with a few of these being put forward by one or two participants. Their comments included:

- Learning new skills and gaining new knowledge (66.7% making this comment)
- The Labour Market Specialists (43.3%)
- The *Pre-Employment Hands-On Practicum Training* (43.3%)
- Gaining experience in the Canadian work culture (33.3%)
- Being able to network (26.7%)
- Gaining paid employment as interns (26.7%)
- Being employed in their fields of practice (23.3%)
- Feeling that the project was designed well (10%)
- Developing their confidence (6.7%)
- The project being a great resource for new immigrants (3.3%)
- Providing the graduation exercises (3.3%)
- Providing or facilitating daycare services (3.3%)

ii) What Labour Market Specialists Felt Were the Project's Greatest Strengths^{12 13}

The Strengths for Participants

[The project] worked very well because It helped to match the intern's background with a specific employer. This matching would be difficult if the screening was not conducted in a very attentive way

The program provided pre-employment and training support to women who faced barriers to employment.

The WER project works well because of the solid teamwork. Group members' needs are met regarding expectations, deadlines and responsibilities.

The greatest strengths of the project have been the dedicated staff and elaborated materials that were used throughout the whole project in its all steps.

I think it worked well due to the dedication, commitment and hard work of the SSC staff, regardless of the many challenges we encountered in the process.

Interns benefited from the project by acquiring the necessary training to be able to enter the Canadian workforce.

The greatest strengths and benefits for interns is that they gain additional work-related experience, digital and employment preparation skills, English writing, cross-cultural and soft skills.

The Strengths of the WER Project expressed by Employers

The employers received trained employees at no cost.

It is like a method to help employers remove barriers women face in the workplace. For example, employer-created activities that include identifying barriers women face in the workplace and removing them.

It involves working with employers to help remove barriers in the workplace for women.

Employers got highly qualified professionals with new ideas that made their teams more effective and efficient.

iii) Why Employers Hired WER Project Interns

Five employers participated in a focus group and two others provided their comments via email. When they were asked why they hired interns through SSC's WER Project, these are their responses:

The interns available through the WER Project had the skills we needed.

Having new immigrants in the workplace can broaden the experiences of other employees.

Wanting to assist a new immigrant overcome her challenges.

Newcomers have positive work habits.

¹² Based on their open-ended responses.

¹³ Staff include project managers and the Labour Market Specialists.

2.8) Changes Participants and Other Stakeholders Would Make to the WER Project

i) Participants' Responses

Twenty-four participants responded to this question. While five participants (20.8%) felt that no changes were needed to the WER Project, 19 specific suggestions were made to improve the project by the remaining participants. It should be noted that most of these suggestions were provided by one or two participants, and therefore do not indicate systemic issues or needs. The suggested changes included:

- Enhancing the computer training component of the hands-on training (33.3%)
- Lengthening the duration of the project (20.8%)
- Increasing the hourly wages (16.7%)
- Suggestions regarding business writing training as part of the hands-on training (8.3%)
- Increasing the number of participants in the project (8.3%)
- Providing this service for newcomer men (4.2%)
- Paying for time spent on pre-internship training (4.2%)
- Lengthening the time for pre-training (4.2%)
- Shortening pre-internship training time (4.2%)
- Changing the program format (i.e., different times, online training) (4.2%)
- Providing more support to attain accreditation (4.2%)
- Providing a transportation allowance (4.2%)
- Providing more information for prospective participants (4.2%)
- Assisting interns with childcare services (4.2%)
- Providing a program for gender-neutral participants (4.2%)
- Offering a job fair at the end of the internships (4.2%)
- Providing virtual pre-internship training (4.2%)
- Seeking feedback on "tutors" (4.2%)
- Facilitating changes in internships [if problems arise] (4.2%)

ii) Labour Market Specialists' Suggestions

Three Labour Market Specialists provided suggestions to improve the Project. They included:

Significant social changes affect how we work, live, and learn and require us to constantly adapt to change. The change I would have to make to the project is to give more women with the same barriers more opportunities to find and keep their jobs.

I would have sought better digital skills training staff; would have tested language skills and digital skills to determine [participants' skill levels]; would have delivered advance digital skills separately from introductory; would have had more upfront soft skills training.

I would have paid for interns' [to attend] pre-employment training. Women who approached our program needed to pay bills and for that reason we lost several good participants who chose to accept survival jobs and not prepare themselves and get exposure in their [chosen] occupations.

iii) Employers' Suggestions

Two employers suggested that Success Skills Centre create online portals for employers to access former clients' resumes, a third suggested that SSC continue to do its job-matching:

[There is] no portal for employers to review participants' resumes.

Posting resumes of past participants. There is credibility being associated with the Success Skills Centre.

Job-matching.

Four employers used this opportunity to thank SSC for providing the WER project:

I think this is an amazing opportunity for the women professionals educated abroad to start their professional lives in Canada. It is a big commitment by the Government of Canada to guarantee the inclusion and diversity for women in the Canadian labor market. All the best to your future cohorts.

We appreciate the help we got from you, especially Nubia Duran, who with patience and professionalism, got the right candidate to fill the gap that [our] company had. Thank you very much for your support and for the opportunity to be part of this program.

Great program, giving people opportunity to advance.

Continue to pursue grants related to the placement of newcomers.

Conclusion Eleven: That SSC review all of the aspects of the WER Project the participants Labour Market Specialists and employers provided to determine what aspects of the project should be retained. Some of these comments may be appropriate to proposals for future grants and/or as a way to attract participants and prospective employers for other programs provided by the organization.

Conclusion Twelve: In terms of the suggested changes regarding future employment project or services, it is suggested that SSC review all comments made, even those put forward by single individuals, to weigh the merit of each.

Conclusion Thirteen: The overall positive findings from this evaluation are notable and speak to the extensive benefits that both internationally educated professionals and their employers can experience from the services and supports provided by SSC. It is suggested that these findings be shared with both constituencies, and with referring organizations.