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TIES 2 Work – The First Year



Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction	3
Year One Learning	4
Participant Referral	6
Program Content and Delivery	6
Employer Recruitment and Participation.....	8
Appendix A: Quotes from Participating Employers.....	11
Appendix B: Participant Quotes.....	13
Appendix C: Personal Stories from Participants.....	16

Executive Summary

TIES 2 Work is a three-year demonstration project, entering its second year, funded by the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. TIES 2 Work facilitates matches between employers and potential employees through 12 weeks of job-specific, essential-skills training, which results in employment at a minimum starting wage of \$10.00/hour.

The 12-week program is guided by a 16-member team that meets quarterly and includes representatives from employers, government, education, and the non-profit community. The Learning Exchange, Vibrant Communities, UNBSJ, and Fortis Properties are among those who provide ongoing support of the program. Strong ties in the community greatly helped the outreach to potential employers in the program's early days.

The first year of the program was a success. It included two rounds of recruitment, 13 clients, and eight employers. Partnerships among the various sectors worked well, and the government showed a willingness to be flexible for the sake of the participants. Learners and employers alike have had a high level of satisfaction with the program. Employers report enthusiasm from the participants, while participants report pride in their work and increased self-esteem generally. Participants in the program work on interpersonal and team skills, as well as the essential skills needed in the workplace. After the work placement, they return to the classroom for feedback and to prepare for their new job.

In Round 1 of the program, four out of six participants secured employment. In Round 2, six out of seven were successful. Two of the three unsuccessful participants still see the program as a positive experience. Potential candidates who do not enter the class have been referred to other programs for academic and personal development.

Continuous improvement in the program is sought through interviews, focus groups, and tracking tools. Changes that have been made since the start of the program include a better documentation and referral process, a recognition of the need for contingency plans should an employer-participant match fall through, and a commitment to build an inventory of employers and participants.

Due to participant feedback, the program includes a more project-based learning approach, which allows the participants to apply classroom skills to authentic workplace situations. These projects are tailored toward the specific job placements.

Ten employers have been secured for the next round.

In short, an inspiring and innovative new approach to training was developed and started in the past year, and it continues to provide opportunities to individuals living in poverty as well as interested employers. The success and lessons learned will guide the program as it moves into its second year of operation.

Introduction

TIES 2 Work is a three-year demonstration project funded by the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL). It began in January 2009. Its purpose is to develop and implement a workforce partnership model that uses essential-skills training¹ to address the needs of job seekers with low levels of education and interested employers. Its main objectives are as follows:

- Meet the needs of employers challenged to fill entry-level positions with a living wage;
- Provide additional pathways for adults challenged by low levels of education;
- Build on the assets of individuals and organizations; and
- Utilize workplace-essential-skills training targeted to the needs of specific employers.

TIES 2 Work facilitates matches between employers and potential employees through 12 weeks of job-specific, essential-skills training, which results in employment at a minimum starting wage of \$10.00/hour. The first year of the program included two rounds of recruitment, eight employers, and 13 participants. The participants and their families were significantly impacted by the program, its support network, and related employers. Also, it is encouraging to note that 10 employers have been secured for the next round.

The innovative TIES 2 Work training approach has captured the interest of many partners in the Saint John community. It brings together the resources and expertise of the Saint John Learning Exchange, Vibrant Communities, employers, government, and education institutions. A 16-member leadership team of business, government and community representatives meets quarterly to guide and champion TIES 2 Work. Its founding chair, the dean of business at UNBSJ, has moved to Vibrant Communities Saint John, while the CEO of Fortis Properties has agreed to be the new chair. An evaluation committee -- with representation from government, educational institutions, and the non-profit community -- guides the work of an evaluation consultant. A front-line team of government departments, Learning Exchange and Vibrant Communities participates in the ongoing recruitment of employers, participants and delivery of the program. These structures build ownership and credibility for the initiative, provide strategic guidance, and encourage change among the sectors themselves.

This three-year demonstration project provides for ongoing evaluation and learning. Interviews with employers, focus groups with participants and front line workers, as well as the development of tracking tools, all contribute to continuous improvement.

This report describes the impact on participants, employers and partners, as well as our learnings during the first year of operation.

¹ The nine essential skills are reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning. Source: www.hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills

Year One Learning

The foundational year of TIES 2 Work has been a success. An essential feature of that success has been the effective partnerships in support of this initiative. These partnerships have included business, government, educational institutions, and not-for-profit organizations. With these various partnerships, we have been able to make early steps toward workplace-essential skills acceptance, flexibility with certain policies of the provincial government, and a rethinking for employers about workplace training practices, as well as the GED requirement for certain career paths.

In the program, our government partners have demonstrated significant flexibility in removing barriers for the participants. For example, Social Development agreed to remove the wage exemption policy while learners were on the three-week work placement that is part of the program; the participants could keep their social assistance cheque and their employment earnings without being penalized. Barriers to employment and long-term sustainability have been examined and confronted with the help of all partners involved in the program. Partners have helped the learners succeed in finding and securing employment.

Over the past year, learnings have been generated in the following areas:

- Referral process
- Curriculum development
- Prior learning assessment process (PLA)
- Employer recruitment
- Documentation process
- Participant screening

This first year of this three-year demonstration project has been one of momentum and change, as well as learnings that continue to positively impact our community. Learners that have participated in the TIES 2 Work program have reported high levels of satisfaction. They have gained the essential skills needed for success in their career path, as well as the self-worth and confidence to continue in lifelong learning. The participants are actively engaged in their own success and are extremely proud to be working towards sustainable employment.

Employers have also reported high levels of satisfaction in the program. Many are thrilled with the quality and enthusiasm of their new staff members. Employers are integral to the success and longevity of this program, and interest in this alternative method of hiring individuals is building.

The documentation and referral process has been firmed up to enhance communication with the case managers and employment counselors. This will keep us better connected to the participants and more likely to retain them.

The skill match between the participant and the employer is essential for a successful placement and longevity in employment. It has been identified through the evaluation process that a participant with clearly defined goals results in a better match with the employer.

Round 1 – Four out of six participants secured employment. One participant who is working for Coast Tire is also working on the GED at night at the Learning Exchange, with the goal of an apprenticeship at Coast Tire.

This round also brought with it a challenge: Two participants were not hired at the end of the three-week placement. With the assistance of PETL we were able to extend the length of the work term for the participants. We also provided a retention specialist to help the participants and employer look at a different approach to training. Despite these interventions, these participants were not hired. However, one participant still indicated she learned a lot from the experience and was provided positive feedback from the employer. She is now working with her case manager on a new plan of action.

Round 2 – Six out of seven secured employment. The seventh participant successfully completed the work placement, but the employer’s needs changed and they were unable to hire. The team continues to seek a suitable opportunity for her. It should also be noted that one of the six participants is working for a different employer than originally planned, due to changes in the workplace.

This round brought the challenge of one employers’ changing business needs. They were unable to hire the participant as planned. We learned that a contingency plan for this type of scenario is necessary for the reassurance of the participant and the authenticity of the program. As a collective partnership we again worked together to secure another employer. This took a lot of troubleshooting, brainstorming, and our connections to the community. The participant was cited as saying that she felt better being in the program and being surrounded by so many people invested in helping her find work. See Appendix B for the complete story.

Employer feedback during the three-week placement is key for growth and success. It helps the facilitators address issues immediately, in order to provide an optimal chance for success in the workplace.

Early on in the process, it was identified that an inventory of employers and participants is required so that each round will have a collection of potential candidates ready to go. This approach would alleviate the rush for referrals by case managers and employment counselors just as the program is scheduled to start. Some employers have seasonal cycles to their business and may be able to participate more at certain times of year. An ongoing referral and inventory list would identify and match candidates as each round starts and stops. This should help provide a more continuous stream of participants.

Participant Outcomes

Early indications suggest that the TIES 2 Work program is positively affecting the program participants. There is excellent participation to date: program attendance is high, and facilitators note high levels of class engagement.

Participants indicate high satisfaction with the program and consistently report that they feel it has effectively prepared them for the work experience. Over 90 per cent of participants indicate

that the program has ‘significantly helped them’, and approximately 10 per cent of participants indicate the program has ‘somewhat helped them.’

Participants are proud of their accomplishments both in class and in the work placement. Many report increases in their self- confidence -- an assessment that is supported by the observations of the program’s facilitators. Participants are building both individual and team skills. Those team skills include holding each other accountable, problem solving as a group, and giving and receiving constructive feedback.

Participant Referral

Overall, the calibre of candidates who have been referred to or have self-referred to the TIES 2 Work Program have been appropriate in terms of skill level and experience. The intake interviews revealed a strong sense of the candidates, their goals for the program, and their academic abilities.

Challenges included confusion over who is responsible for maintaining referrals, how the referrals are coordinated, and what information about job opportunities can be provided to case managers, employment counselors, and participants. One example was uncertainty over who a potential participant would remain in contact with as the program progressed -- the case manager from Social Development or the student liaison coordinator from The Saint John Learning Exchange who conducted their intake.

These challenges led to a more comprehensive process for referring candidates and ensuring improved communication between partners. In addition, new forms have been developed to facilitate the referral process and ensure retention of potential program participants.

Our ongoing marketing strategy will have an increased emphasis on recruitment at the neighborhood level and with community agencies, to broaden the referral base.

Candidates for TIES 2 Work who were not matched with suitable employment and did not enter the class were referred to other programs for academic/personal development. Currently, one is enrolled in our full-time CALP (Community Adult Learning Program) and another entered the “Key to Well-Being” program.

Program Content and Delivery

TIES 2 Work is a full-time program; its hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday to Friday for the first eight weeks. At Week 9 the participants start a three-week paid job placement with hours determined by their prospective employer. The final week is back in the classroom to address any areas of concern and to make plans for their future employment. At the end of the 12 weeks participants are hired by their matched employer, unless unforeseen circumstances prevail.

The approach taken for program content and delivery supports the program’s overall objectives. The first two weeks of the program focus on interpersonal and team skills. All participants were

involved in a Personality Dimensions workshop. They also utilized daily journals to record the learnings that would be beneficial on the job. Participants stated that they now have a broader understanding of personalities they will interact with in the workplace. Participants also viewed a video, *How Difficult Can It Be*, which brought awareness of the many learning styles. The information is helpful for the work site and when assisting their children with homework, the clients said. One former TIES 2 Work participant gave a personal testimony about how the program helped him gain full-time employment. Clients engaged in a question and answer discussion with Mr. Lewis, a former successful participant. A second round participant volunteered to attend the third TIES 2 Work round. He sees this as a way of “being a help to someone’s success.”

A geocaching activity took place at Rockwood Park. Geocaching is a GPS activity where the participants work together to solve math and logic puzzles to reveal coordinates to locate hidden objects. Participants demonstrated team work, continuous learning, physical endurance and problem-solving skills. One participant said it was the first activity she had participated in without her husband or children. She felt empowered by this and said she felt supported by the group.

Participants gained awareness of the ways they use the essential skills in their workplace. Document use, reading text and numeracy were covered. Activities were completed using material from BowValley College, T.O.W.E.S., H.R.S.D.C. Indicators, and Skill Plan. The group listened to various guest speakers from the Community Loan Fund, Credit Counselling Services, Job Coach Assistance, Public Library, and PETL / SD.

The participants completed individual projects about “Who I Am” and made oral presentations to the group. They were introduced to “Project Based Learning” and given outlines of the employer-specific projects to be completed by the end of the program. The students demonstrated time management skills, document use, reading text, computer skills, continuous learning, communication, giving /receiving feedback, and problem-solving skills.

One-on-one evaluation meetings were held with the participants to address any issues following the first two weeks of the program. We addressed concerns with tardiness and the importance of asking for assistance. We also encouraged participants that felt they were not learning as quickly as some. In return, it provided an opportunity for the participants to express how the program was or was not meeting their expectations.

Project Based Learning (PBL)

Upon feedback from participants and reflection from facilitators, the curriculum was changed to include a more project-based learning approach. Project-based learning (PBL) allows participants to apply the skills learned in the classroom to authentic workplace situations. It is part of the ongoing effort to strengthen the relevance of essential-skills training to the workplace. It also holds the participants more accountable for their learning.

All the projects include company history, essential skills (related to their position), health and safety, summarizing the job, and what ifs (participants research and make plans for any problems they may encounter such as breakdowns and bus routes, etc.). Each project also had

an employer/position focus. For example, at the John Howard Society the learner had to research conflict and anger management in young offenders.

This addresses soft skills such as accountability, focus and motivation, and allows participants to produce the project to their preferred learning style. A visual learner may create a report incorporating pictures and drawings where as an auditory learner may create a power point presentation using sound. Verbal learners would create a project in written form such as a report. PBL also allows access to the more cognitive essential skills, such as writing, document use, problem solving, researching, and numeracy.

Employer recruitment and participation

The purpose of TIES 2 Work: A Framework for An Employer-Specific Essential Skills Strategy is to develop and implement a workforce partnership model that addresses the needs of job seekers with low levels of education and/or work experience and their potential employers.

As indicated in our initial proposal, employers are integral to the success of the initiative. The approach of TIES 2 Work was new, and the following briefly describes the activities used to reach employers. It also highlights key learnings from our experience with the first two rounds.

Creating interest among the business community

As TIES 2 Work is a new approach, it was essential that a number of partners assisted the Learning Exchange in promoting the program. Members of the leadership team promoted it among their networks, provided us with suggestions of possible employers to approach, and frequently made initial contact themselves. The chair of the leadership team (dean of Business at UNBSJ) raised its profile among her colleagues at the university. Two of the members became employers in the first round, one of who is connecting us to an employer for the third round.

Enterprise Saint John (also a member) assisted in organizing information sessions with interested employers. The Board of Trade provided free space for an article in their Currents magazine and sent notices out to their members on TIES 2 Work. Presentations were made to many different groups, including committees with the Board of Trade, Uptown Saint John, Enterprise Saint John, Fusion, and Activate (a provincial conference with business leaders concerning the issue of poverty).

Most recently, our chair and the two member-employers from the first round presented to the committee of senior business leaders with the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative. There was lots of interest in this new model from leaders such as J.D. Irving and Moosehead's Derek Oland. They wanted to be kept informed of our progress and offered to assist us in recruiting employers that we wanted involved.

These activities are beginning to produce results and a business recently approached the Learning Exchange to be involved in the third round. The owner had heard about the program through one of our leadership team members and the Currents magazine.

Recruitment of employers

For both rounds we connected with a number of employers, then met with a smaller number to provide more detailed information on the role of businesses and expectations in TIES 2 Work. For the first two rounds 26 businesses were contacted, which led to eight committed employers. We were surprised initially by this challenge but began to recognize that recruitment requires patience, relationships, timing, proven track record, and flexibility. We are encouraged by the participating employers. Eight employers representing private, government, and non-profit sectors participated in the first two rounds of the program: Acadian Stained Glass, Atlantic Health Sciences Corporation, Centenary-Queen Square Adult Day Care Centre, City of Saint John, Coast Tire and Auto Service, Fortis Properties, John Howard Society, and YMCA-YWCA. Ten private sector employers have confirmed their participation for the third round and there is strong interest coming from five other employers, two of which are hosting introductory meetings.

There were a number of reasons that employers gave for not being able to participate. They include: a freeze on hiring due to the economic downturn; an inability to expand their business; personnel issues; not paying the required wage of \$10/hour; GED requirements (mostly from the provincial government); and uncertainty about whether TIES 2 Work could provide the skill level required. Also, there were situations where no candidates were interested in a position, either because of transportation requirements or hourly wage expectations.

It has been very encouraging to have a staff position from Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour to provide a lead role in recruitment of employers for the third round. While a staff person from the department had assisted in Round 1 and 2, that position focused more on assessing the needs of the employer once they were identified. This position works closely with the Learning Exchange, Vibrant Communities, and other partners. It has already resulted in more meetings with employers and potential positions for the third round.

Learning from our experience

There are significant learnings related to the timing of hiring, formalizing information and expectations, strengthening the matching process, and seeking input from potential participants on where they want to work.

Our experience to date is changing different aspects of the program. Consideration is being given to an additional spring intake with individuals ready to work in the fall, to coincide more with the hiring needs of specific employers. The information package has been improved with clear expectations for employers and a method to seek their requirements. Also, we have been rethinking the suitability of employers offering only casual work hours.

Whether a large or small employer, each has its own unique culture and work environment including different benefits, opportunities for advancement, and approaches to training. While the required documentation will help to clarify the responsibilities of employers, caution is needed with small employers including non-profit organizations, to better assess their potential for hiring. We also recognized that senior management, human resources, front-line supervisors and unions (where appropriate) each can have a different approach and interpretation to their participation in this initiative. Ensuring that the employer has broad-based support for their participation is essential to its success.

The recruitment of employers and participants occur somewhat simultaneously, each influencing the other to some degree. It is desirable to have an inventory of both employers and potential participants, but this is not always possible.

In addition, relationships are essential in recruiting employers. If someone knows an employer and can make initial contact, then the program can begin to sell itself on its own merits. Influential partners including the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative as well as members of our leadership team contribute to opening doors for employers.

Success builds success. The experience of employers from the first round contributes to helping other employers understand the benefits and responsibilities associated with TIES 2 Work. Recently an information brochure describing our experiences has been developed to aid in the recruitment efforts with employers.

Conclusion

This past year has focused on the development and implementation of an inspiring and innovative new approach to training that has and will continue to provide opportunities to individuals living in poverty and interested employers. The success and learnings will guide the program as it moves into its second year of operation.

A number of new efforts in the upcoming year will build on our experiences in the first year. The growing community interest and involvement brings exciting opportunities to work more closely with partners such as the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative in efforts to reach employers.

TIES 2 Work will be broadening its referral base in the upcoming year through outreach efforts in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty and with community agencies and government partners. The high level of satisfaction and engagement from participants to date will help promote the program, probably in more effective ways than any other effort.

The evaluation process encourages responsive growth to what is a very new and unique program. It is a catalyst to strengthen partnerships with front line government staff, to ensure the curriculum and overall approach meets the needs of employers and most importantly to provide opportunities for individuals committed to change in their own lives.

Appendix A: Quotes from Participating Employers

From Evaluation, June 2009

Fortis Properties

There has been great communication between Fortis and all the parties involved (PETL, Learning Exchange, VCSJ, etc.). Fortis liked that there was a great deal of resources (different partners involved) and that there were experienced people in these roles. They liked the support from all parties involved. This variety made it easier to overcome any barriers that arose and to stay on track.

Each participant was matched with a trainer who worked fairly closely with them for the first three weeks.

The participants were more enthused to be with them than many non-TIES participants; they knew they had barriers to overcome and, as much as they struggled, they still worked hard to do so.

Coast Tire and Auto Service

The main reason they make use of these sorts of programs is to find employees. Right now in Saint John the market is tight and other dealerships cannot find employees. They often have difficulty recruiting because of the nature of the work – people don't want to get their hands dirty, work that hard, or do physical labour – so finding the right match is very important.

Programs like TIES 2 Work show them that there are potential employees right in their backyard who otherwise may not have had a chance because of a barrier that is easy to overcome through this type of program. Participating in TIES 2 Work makes them feel good as an employer because they are helping someone get on their feet.

Coast Tire and Auto Service likes TIES 2 Work because the participants go through essential skills training. Having the essential-skills training ensures that they have a good, solid base. One example is that they will run some employees through their apprenticeship program, but to qualify they need to pass a test, and these essential skills help give them the base they need to do this.

Coast Tire is willing to waive its requirements that employees have a high school education if they have the experience to make up for it, so they are flexible in their hiring practices.

Both participants have been mentored in the sense that they were paired with another employee to show them how to do the job. They have also worked with the participants to identify their strengths and fit them to suitable roles.

Re: the two individuals – although one is not permanent right now she is working 44-plus hours/week so she is getting more than full-time hours. When they transition her to full-time, they will waive the waiting period for some of her benefits. For the other individual, they expect he will also have permanence within a year. Because he has the mechanical aptitude, his potential is excellent.

City of Saint John

The individual travels all over the city doing labour on the sports fields. He likes the schedule (four days on with 10-hour days). He works one day a weekend when there is no foreman, which shows they find him to be trustworthy and reliable.

Appendix B: Participant Quotes

John

Teamwork

Teamwork for me is like having a family. Without your family you have no real support. With teamwork you have other team members who can help you with any problem that you may have, and you can also help team members with any problems that they may have, so you are able to reach your goals or achievements and deadlines at a fast, better pace. Also I find that teamwork helps with your oral communication skills. With the team that I was working with for the last 12 weeks, I have to say it's been the best team I have ever worked with. Thanks to Bill, Melissa, Mark, Norm, Cindy, Chris and Sheri. I now know when to speak up and voice my opinion or ideas. They all helped me with my communication skills and my time management skills with our team projects. So I would like to thank all the people who made this program possible for people like me who needed the help.

Mark

Essential skills program

The essential skills program has helped each of us in many ways. This program has taught us how to interact with different personalities and walks of life. We all have different goals in life. Some have children, some of us don't. One thing we all have in common is that we are all here to better ourselves, whether it be in our ability to perform on the job or financially provide for our families. It has also helped us know just what we have to work on to achieve our goals. We were all at different levels on the nine essential skills. Some of us have years of work experience, some of us not so much. Some have Grade 12 equivalent, some do not. This program has brought us together to learn what is needed to succeed in today's workplace. I believe that we have all benefited from the program. We have been informed on the nine skills, but we have also learnt from each other.

Bill

Transferable Skills

Are you finding it hard to gain employment or wondering what SKILLS you have? Are you ready to go to work?

Well if you answered yes to one or more of these questions, we may have the program just for you!!!

Here at "T.I.E.S. 2 WORK" you find out about the nine essential skills we have and they are transferable to any job.

Some jobs require all these skills and others require less. For example at Coast Tire we would have to display strong numeracy, reading, and continuous learning. Within Fortis Properties, particularly at Delta Brunswick, we need strong oral communications, document use, reading,

writing, and computer skills. And at the City of Saint John in Leisure Services we need strong oral communication, reading, math, and continuous learning.

These are some of the primary skills we use on an everyday basis. This does not mean the rest doesn't count. We just use different skills on different jobs, but we can take them to any future employer we may encounter.

I would like to give thanks to one or two people but that would not be gratitude to all those involved. So thank you participants, facilitators, board of directors, and employers on board.

Melissa

How this program is beneficial to everyone

How this program is beneficial to everyone: This program is beneficial for us in every way. It helps you get the skills needed for the job and keep it. You learn how to communicate with others in a positive manner, work as a team, and the motivation to learn more. This program helps you take necessary steps to better your skills, which helps you make changes for the future. When we all came to this program we didn't have all these skills required for the job. Without the facilitators and the employers we wouldn't have this program. We would like to thank everyone, because without you guys we couldn't have made this work.

Cindy

Show how you don't need a piece of paper to show that you are educated
Einstein, Elvis Presley, Elton John, Jim Carrey, John Travolta, Michael J. Fox and my mother. What do these people have in common besides the fact that they are all people I admire? Not one of them graduated from high school. Einstein was a brilliant scientist. Elton John and Elvis both sold millions of records. One has been dead for 30-plus years and still sells records to this day. Jim Carrey, Michael J. Fox and John Travolta make millions of dollars every picture they make. Not one of them has a high school diploma. My mom had to quit school in the sixth grade to help her family out with finances. She managed to get a job without going to high school. She now co-manages the kitchen at Westfield Golf and Country Club. We are telling you this to let you know that you don't need a piece of paper that says you are educated to get a job. All you need is determination and the ability to work really hard at what you do. We are not saying go out and quit school, because education is important! Sometimes, a situation comes up in life where you have no choice but to leave school, whether you are having to support a family or you just didn't get good enough grades to pass by. We all know things like that can happen. This is why some people learn better on a job site than in school. That, and when you have children to look after, school becomes less important and it becomes more important to get a job so you can feed and clothe your family. You learn great skills by taking care of your family -- from cooking to budgeting, which can be very useful in any job. You even learn how to clean and do first aid. You also learn how to change diapers. Since sometimes you have to deal with difficult family members (kids not wanting to eat veggies, etc.), you learn how to deal with customers and stressful situations. We would like to say thank you to Chris and Sheri for being there for us during these last 12 weeks. Thank you.

Norm

How this program helped me before and after:

When I first started this program, I had very little teamwork skills working with people I didn't know and poor listening skills, and trusting people hmm! People I just met.

When I got accepted to this program I was very skeptical. I have worked really hard on developing these skills. Like, for example, when we started this we all sat around brainstorming and going over topics we should write about.

The main thing I learned from this essential skills program is trusting people again and always working through my problems. Thanks to Chris and Sheri this program could not have been as much of a help as it was. Make sure you keep your sticks on the ice!!

Appendix C: Personal Stories from Participants

Mark Carty

I took an important step to increase my knowledge on the nine essential skills required for success in today's workplace. The TIES 2 Work Program did just that. This 12-week program taught me how to work as a TEAM, a team that was happy and productive. The program also provided me the knowledge to interact with various age groups, personalities, and cultures. It also helped me know what my levels were in the essential skills and bring them to what was required for my job placement. The program is designed in a way that a Grade 12 or GED was NOT REQUIRED, rather, the skill level to gain suitable employment.

Another aspect of the TIES 2 Work Program I noticed was how they partnered with the many employers in this great city. This demonstrated how the program went the extra mile to assist the clients in succeeding in a job we all deserve. At the same time helping the employers find the employee that has the job skills required to do the job. The end result, everyone benefits from this wonderful program.

My life has changed dramatically after attending the TIES 2 Work Program. I am employed at the City of Saint John doing a job I enjoy. I realized that you are never too old to learn new things or start a new life, one that is rewarding in all aspects. I am proud of who I am. It showed me that by learning the essential skills and being willing to work hard in class you can succeed in today's highly competitive job market. I THANK all those involved for the opportunity and the chance to succeed. Now the rest is up to me!

Melissa Hachey

Hi my name is Melissa and I am 30 years old. I am a single parent of two children. After I graduated from high school, I attended the Saint John Learning Exchange to prepare for employment. I then realized that there was much more to the Learning Exchange. It wasn't just for people that didn't have education; there was a little something for everybody. A few months ago I came back to the Learning Exchange because it was very hard to find a job that offered good pay and benefits. When I heard that they could help me find the type of work I was looking for, I signed up. I've struggled for years trying to make ends meet every month. I managed to survive, on a very tight budget, with the money I brought in every month. I had no car which meant I packed my children up and took the bus everywhere -- that's if I could catch it on time. Once I started the program, I realized that it was the beginning of a new start. This brought changes and new challenges to overcome. My children didn't like the idea of me going back to school or work so the change was not easy for them. I knew that this wasn't going to be a smooth ride. Well I've been working at Coast Tire and Auto Service now for five months. I love it! Great people to work for. I am writing this for everyone to know that the TIES 2 Work Program, offered through the Learning Exchange, is not just for people that don't have a GED, it's for people who want to gain the essential skills so they can succeed on the job and in life.

Lisa Porter

After finishing the TIES 2 Work program and finding out I did not get to continue working at the job placement, I was initially very frustrated and disappointed. I then went through a range of emotions quite quickly from angry.... well, maybe just angry, but I take great comfort in knowing that I have all of the wonderful people from TIES backing me up and helping me to figure out the next steps from here.

I feel that in this case the employer did not take the time to fully understand what the program was about and how it would impact the business.

If I hadn't been in the program I wouldn't have been able to accomplish moving, finding daycare and balancing work with life changes, at all. They have been vital in organizing my thoughts so that I was not overwhelmed with the changes going on. Without that I wouldn't have known where to start.

So despite the minor setback, the program was still a success for me because I am further ahead now than when I started, even without a job.