

Transition to Work

Saint John Learning Exchange



The Learning Exchange's overarching objective is to work with program participants to build their capacity to achieve education and employment goals and improve their overall quality of life. Through Transition to Work, The LE enhanced their organizational culture and support for individuals to identify and overcome barriers to employment through a goal setting and achievement recognition framework. The intention was, in part, to support participants experiencing economic marginalization and exclusion to move forward through small, measurable financial goals towards earning a sustainable (not fixed) income. TTW targeted long-term sustainable employment as the ultimate outcome. Financial incentives were paid to learners upon completion of goals in several domains (financial, wellness, academic, employment) and to job seekers for accessing and retaining employment. The project fostered a culture of work, increased motivation in participants, and improved participants' confidence.

Through collaboration with The Department of Social Development we insured the incentives earned (up to \$2000/year) were not clawed back from participants receiving income assistance. Participants frequently used their earnings to further reduce barriers to success including pursuing Driver's licenses, Criminal Record Suspensions for minor offences as well as Social Development Record Pardons. Participants also used funds to pursue elective educational opportunities, pay down debts, repair homes and vehicles, and access wellness centres.

Another impactful component of the project was the development of a soft skills or "Skills for Success" program that focused on the development of work and social skills like communication, conflict resolution, time management, and teamwork. Strong partnerships enhanced the Soft Skills workshop series, which was also offered to participants of many community organizations, including Harbour View High School and PRUDE. Project Based Learning has since been integrated into the Skills for Success program as a way for participants to test and further develop the skills they are learning in authentic environments.

A key innovation in partnership evolved between the LE and Women's Empowerment Network (SJWEN) when the two organizations amalgamated in 2023. The blending of SJWEN's programming into SJLE's operations further streamlined services and referrals for women, and continues to support transformative outcomes in education and employment, and advocacy efforts in policy and systems change to reduce barriers and support the needs of participants.

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Policy Work

SJLE was the first organization in New Brunswick to partner with the department of Post-Secondary, Education, Training and Labour (PETL) on a five-year performance-based funding model, forging a path for other community based organisations like Bee Me Kidz to benefit from the funding model. The partnership with PETL is based on collaboration, and extensive data collection and analysis of the SJLE's ability to measure targets and achieve outcomes and will continue to change how organizations providing employment assistance in NB will be funded going forward. The SJLE's performance targets are based on employment retention, focusing on quality and maintenance of employment. When the SIF funding ended, the LE continued to pay incentives for goal completion to participants through the performance payouts via PETL.

The SJLE also advanced positive change related to eligibility for the Adult High School Diploma (AHSD) certification. It is very unlikely for people without a high school credential to attach to employment with a livable wage. The SJLE identified a gap for people over the age of 25 who were unsuccessful in obtaining the GED and required an alternative pathway to high school completion to lead to better job opportunities. With the success rate for GED completion below 50%, SJLE continues to be committed to supporting a more attainable alternative. Based on the previous success of a proposal to change the age of eligibility for GOALS (AHSD program for youth) program participants from 20 to 25, the SJLE approached ASD-S with the idea that people over the age of 25 should also be eligible for the AHSD pathway to high school completion. The school district offered their support, and SJLE brought the idea to PETL management, who approved the pilot. Now adults of any age are eligible to pursue their AHSD through SJLE. Since 2021, over 150 learners have completed their AHSD through SJLE and this number continues to growth with expanded programming both youth and adults.



"I am most proud of passing 4 out of 5 GED exams. All I have left to complete is math, which might be one of the hardest subjects for me but with help from my teacher and all the encouragement I get I know I will be able to do it. One of the things I find that has changed in my life since going to the Learning Exchange is the feeling of confidence I now have in myself." – Eric