



Ontario Centre for
Workforce Innovation

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In Motion & Momentum

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Introduction

This is the final evaluation report for the **In Motion & Momentum pilot project**. Blueprint ADE was engaged by the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation (OCWI) to evaluate In Motion & Momentum.

Background

OCWI partnered with the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) to deliver and test In Motion & Momentum at three employment services sites in Eastern Ontario (KEYS Job Centre in Gananoque, CSE Consulting in Prescott, and the Employment and Education Centre in Brockville). Facilitators at each site received training from the CCDF to deliver the program.

In Motion, the first module, is a series of workshops that provide opportunities for participants to reflect and build upon their assets, experience connection and success, and enhance their confidence and sense of personal control. **Momentum**, the second module, builds upon these themes using an action-oriented learning approach that supports participants to jointly develop and implement a project that addresses a need of the group or a need in the community.

The objectives of the program are to help participants build essential skills while also enhancing their motivation, resilience, and optimism towards the future. The program was originally designed and implemented in New Brunswick to support income assistance clients requiring additional pre-employment supports.

Our approach

Our evaluation focused on understanding whether the program has achieved its key objectives and on identifying important successes, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing the program.

The evaluation had several components:

- Pre-post surveys with participants in In Motion & Momentum to measure changes in key outcomes, including well-being, social supports, and employment readiness
- Follow-up surveys with participants 2-3 months after program exit to assess employment, education, and service use outcomes after completing the program
- Focus groups with participants 2-3 months after program exit to assess perceptions of the program and perceived impact

- Surveys and debriefs with program facilitators to understand successes, challenges, and lessons learned

In this report

This report has three sections:

1. **Outcomes achieved** – Outlines participant outcomes achieved through the program
2. **Success factors and challenges** – Summarizes successes, challenges, and lessons learned from implementation
3. **Key takeaways** – Discusses key takeaways and implications moving forward

1. Outcomes achieved

This section outlines the outcomes achieved through In Motion & Momentum. Outcomes were measured using participant surveys and focus groups (see Box 1 for more details). We focused on measuring program outcomes in three areas:

- Participant gains in well-being, social supports, and employment readiness experienced over the course of the program
- Employment, education, and service use outcomes of participants after exiting the program
- Participant perspectives on program impact

BOX 1: PARTICIPANT SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Surveys

Participants in In Motion & Momentum were asked to complete up to four surveys during and after programming:

1. An input survey completed on the first day of In Motion (27 surveys completed)
2. An In Motion feedback survey on the last day of In Motion (21 surveys completed)
3. A Momentum feedback survey on the last day of Momentum (17 surveys completed)
4. A follow-up survey approximately 2-3 months after Momentum ended (16 surveys completed)

Focus groups

Blueprint ADE facilitated a focus group at each of the three In Motion & Momentum delivery sites between 2-3 months after the program ended at each site. There was a total of 14 participants in the focus groups. Participants were asked open-ended questions about what they liked or did not like about the program, their experiences since leaving the program, and the impact the program had on their lives. Participants received a \$40 gift card for participating in the focus groups.

Gains in well-being, supports, and employment readiness

In Motion & Momentum was designed to increase participants' employment readiness as well as other outcomes related to well-being and social supports. To assess the degree to which the pilot achieved these objectives, participants completed surveys that included questions about:

- Well-being (motivation, optimism about the future, happiness, self-esteem)
- Daily habits and interpersonal functioning (e.g. getting enough sleep and making new friends)
- Social supports
- Employment preparation and career activation

BOX 2: PROGRAM THEORY OF CHANGE

The theory of change for the In Motion & Momentum program posits that the participant-directed activities included in In Motion will contribute to increased self-esteem, confidence, sense of personal control and motivation. Momentum, by supporting participants to design and implement a collaborative project, will help participants build more life and employability skills, create a vision for their future, and practice setting goals and implementing an action plan that reflects those goals. Ultimately, the theory of change posits that participants will leave the program with the drive and momentum to begin moving towards their employment, education, and/or personal development goals.

The survey results demonstrate that many participants experienced positive changes that are aligned with the program's theory of change (see Box 2 for a description). After completing In Motion, many participants reported improvements in happiness, self-esteem, daily habits, and interpersonal functioning. These improvements are concordant with In Motion's focus on helping individuals build confidence and recognize their assets.

After completing Momentum, several participants experienced gains in optimism, motivation, and social supports, which likely reflect Momentum's emphasis on helping participants realize that they can achieve their goals while working collaboratively with others. Participant gains in happiness, self-esteem, and interpersonal functioning also persisted or increased during Momentum.¹

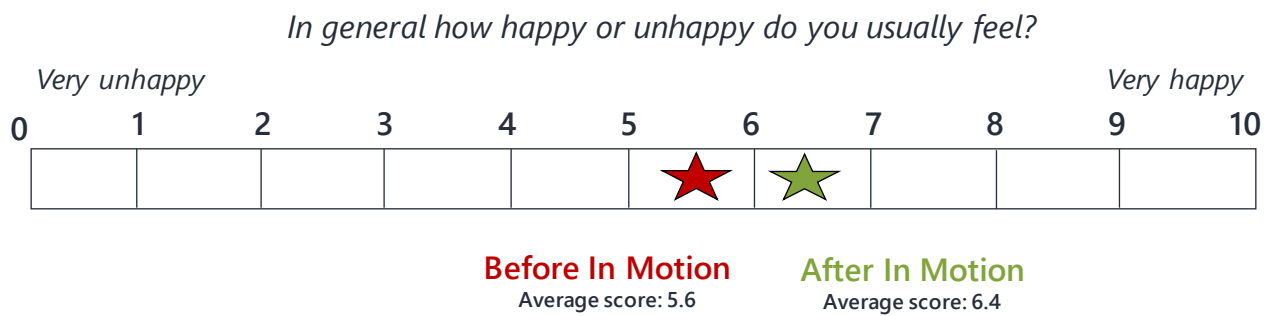
¹ Gains in outcomes for In Motion were measured by comparing In Motion input survey results to In Motion exit survey results. Gains in outcomes for Momentum were measured by comparing In Motion exit survey results to Momentum exit survey results. For participants in Momentum that had not participated in In Motion, participants completed an input survey at the beginning of Momentum which was then compared to results from the Momentum exit surveys.

As a pre-employment program, an important goal of In Motion & Momentum is to prepare participants for their next steps toward employment. Survey results also demonstrated that the program on average helped participants increase their readiness for employment, including clarity about their career goals.

Gains in self-esteem and happiness after In Motion

60% of participants in In Motion reported having higher levels of overall self-esteem at the end of the program than at the beginning. They also reported that they were on average happier after the program than when the program began (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: GAINS IN HAPPINESS FOR IN MOTION



Improvements in interpersonal functioning and daily habits

From the first day to the last day of In Motion, 30% of participants reported that they had increased the frequency with which they ate regular, healthy meals. The same proportion (30%) also increased the frequency with which they got enough sleep or rest.

Some participants also reported that they had less difficulty in interpersonal functioning in areas like making new friendships (40%), talking with people they don't know (30%), and making new friends (40%).

Gains in social supports, optimism and motivation after Momentum

As participants progressed through the Momentum module, many reported increases in the degree to which they felt supported by others and could find help if they needed it. Figure 2 demonstrates the gains in social supports experienced by participants over the course of Momentum.

FIGURE 2: GAINS IN SOCIAL SUPPORTS FOR MOMENTUM

- 40% Felt more like there were people they knew who would help them if they needed it
- 47% Felt more like they had a trustworthy person to turn to if they had problems
- 53% Felt like there were people in their life who understood them and supported their goals



53% showed overall gains in self-reported levels of social support

Many Momentum participants also reported changes in how they felt about their life and the future. Almost all participants (93%) reported that they felt either positive about the future more often, and/or felt discouraged, nervous, or unmotivated less often (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: GAINS IN WELL-BEING FOR MOMENTUM

- 33% Felt positive about the future more often
- 47% Felt discouraged about how things were going in their life less often
- 47% Felt nervous or anxious less often
- 67% Felt unmotivated or like they didn't have more energy less often

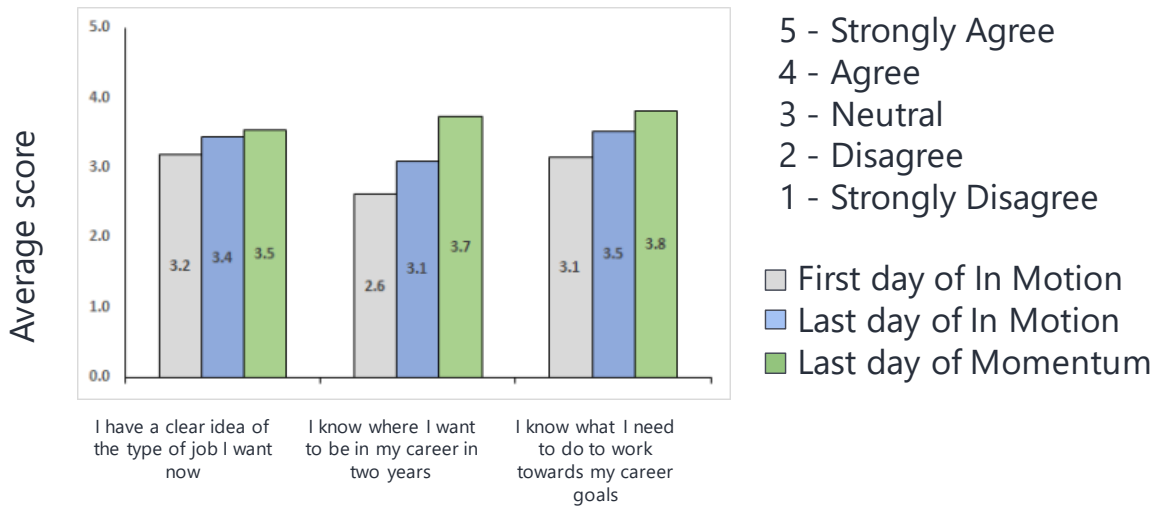


93% showed gains on at least one of these aspects of well-being

Increased career goal clarity

As Figure 4 illustrates, from the first day of In Motion to the last day of Momentum, there were sustained, modest increases in the average degree to which participants reported having clear goals related to their job and career.

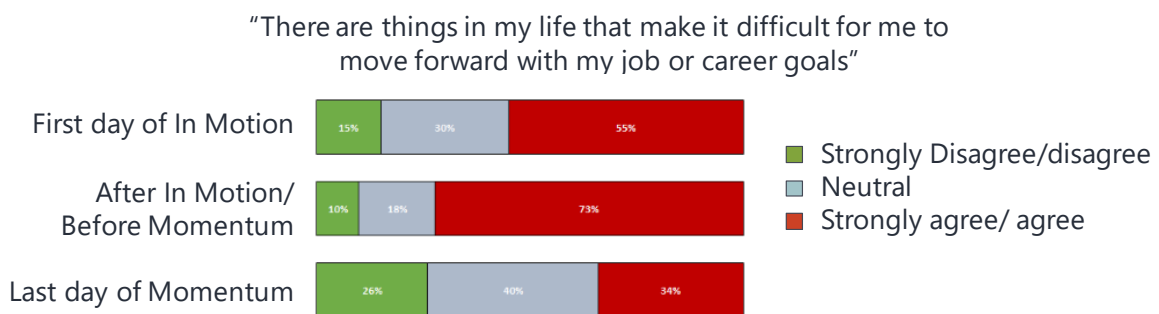
FIGURE 4: GAINS IN CAREER GOAL CLARITY



Momentum critical to helping participants realize they could overcome obstacles

After In Motion, participants were *more likely* to feel that there were obstacles preventing them from moving forward with their career goals than they had at the beginning of the program. This likely reflects the fact that In Motion was focused on helping participants identify possibilities for change and build willingness to take risks, which may have increased their awareness of potential obstacles they face. However, after Momentum participants were *less likely* to think that obstacles in their life were preventing them moving forward with their career goals, reflecting the emphasis of this module on setting goals and developing action plans to achieve those goals. Figure 5 illustrates this shift.

FIGURE 5: OBSTACLES TO ACHIEVING JOB OR CAREER GOALS



Similarities to previous evaluation results in New Brunswick

For previous In Motion & Momentum deliveries in New Brunswick, participants completed a survey on the last day of training asking them to reflect on how they felt before and after training on a range of outcomes. In addition to the pre-post surveys designed and implemented by Blueprint, we replicated the New Brunswick survey approach to enable direct comparison of evaluation results.

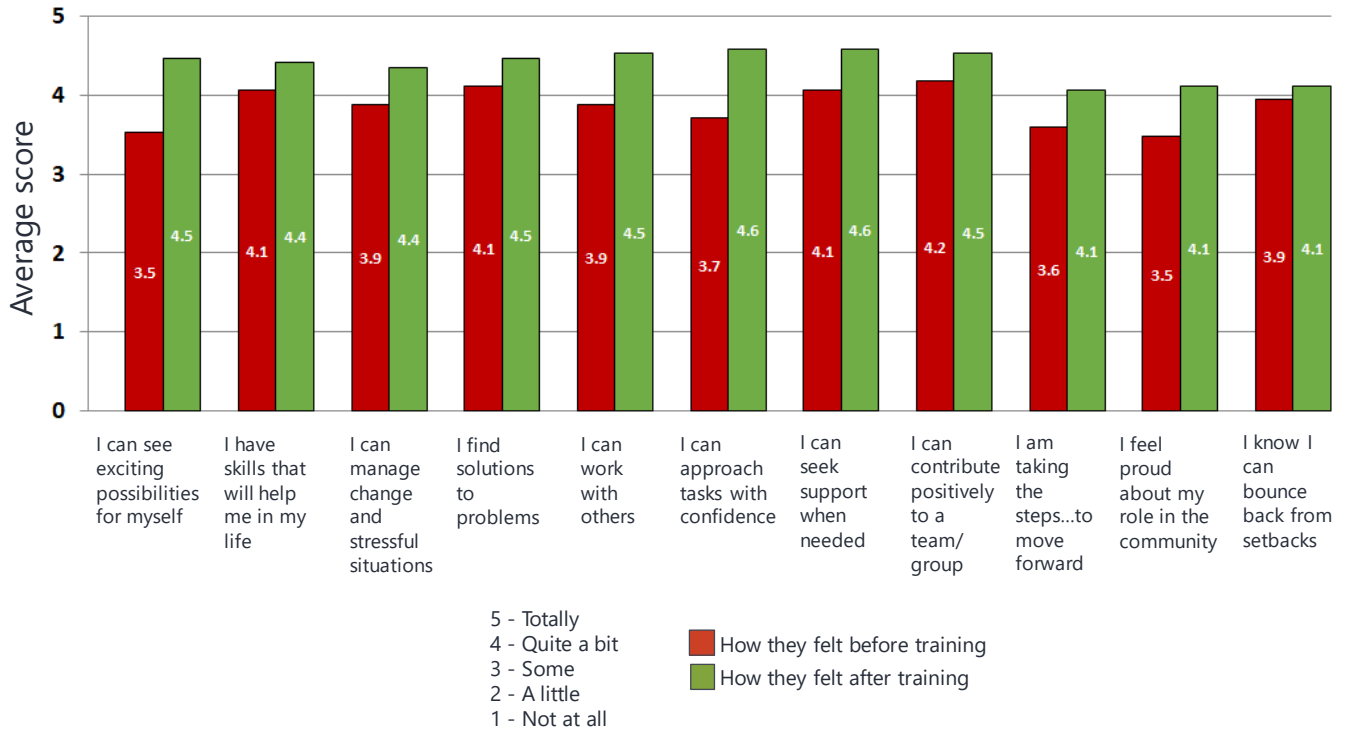
At the end of In Motion, participants reported on average that In Motion had a positive impact on how they felt in a range of areas, including their ability to have happy moments and see possibilities around them (see Figure 6). We found that the size of the reported impacts was very similar to size of the impacts reported in New Brunswick.

FIGURE 6: REPORTED IMPACTS OF IN MOTION (ONTARIO PILOT RESULTS)



At the end of Momentum, participants also reported on average positive impacts on a range of dimensions, including their ability to approach tasks with confidence, work with others, and see exciting possibilities for themselves. The impacts for Ontario participants were similar but slightly smaller in magnitude than reported impacts from New Brunswick.

FIGURE 7: REPORTED IMPACTS OF MOMENTUM (ONTARIO PILOT RESULTS)



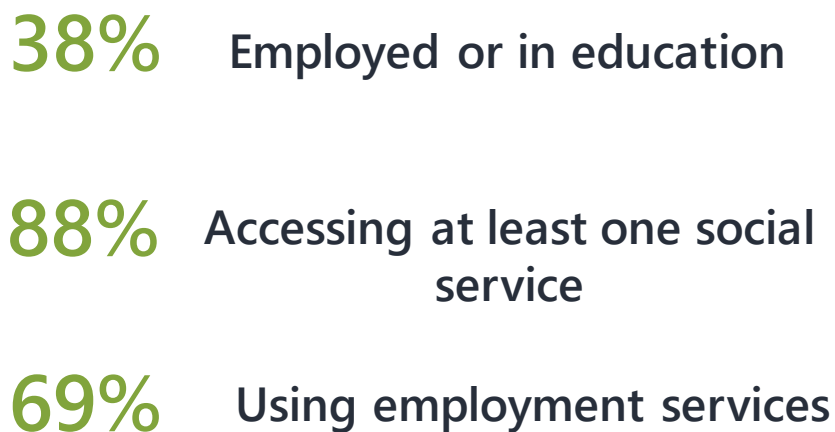
Employment, education, and service use outcomes

In Motion and Momentum is a pre-employment program designed for individuals who are relatively distant from the labour market and require some additional supports before they are ready to take the next step towards employment. Given this, it was not expected that all participants would enter employment or education and training at project exit. However, we did conduct a survey of participants approximately 2 to 3 months after they completed the program to explore whether they were in education or employment at this time.

We found that some participants (38%) were employed or in education 2-3 months after exiting the program. 31% of In Motion/Momentum participants were employed within 3 months of program completion, most of whom (80%) had found a permanent position. One additional participant had begun post-secondary education.

We also asked participants about service use to explore whether they were accessing services and supports to address employment-related or other types of needs. Almost all participants (88%) were accessing at least one social service 3 months after program exit. The most commonly used services were employment services (69%), housing supports (56%), and mental health services (25%).

FIGURE 7: PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES 2-3 MONTHS AFTER EXIT



Participant perspectives on program impact

In addition to completing surveys during and after the program, participants in In Motion & Momentum were asked to participate in a focus group to share, in their own words, the impacts that the program had on their lives. Several themes emerged from these conversations.

Confidence and self-esteem

Several participants across all three focus groups shared that the program helped increase their confidence, self-esteem, and recognition of their own strengths. They felt that the program helped them recognize they could overcome roadblocks using their assets and abilities. One participant shared that they are now less fixated on the things they can't do and more focused on proving that they can achieve their goals. Another noted that these impacts are particularly meaningful for themselves and many of the other participants in the program who sometimes struggle with everyday life and lack the confidence to complete tasks that might seem simple to others.

Happiness and optimism

Many participants in all three focus groups also shared that the program increased their happiness and improved their outlook on life. For many, the simple routine of attending the program on a regular basis had a positive impact. They reported that getting up in the morning, coming to the program, and interacting with others made them happy and gave them a sense of purpose that they sometimes lacked. One participant shared that before the program, they felt they had been "wasting their life away," but attending In Motion & Momentum had restored their sense of self and given them a much more positive outlook on life.

Mental health

A few participants in two of the three focus groups noted that the program had a positive impact on their mental health, including their ability to cope with difficult circumstances in their life. For example, one participant shared that the program had helped them overcome their anxiety. Another shared that the program had motivated them to begin seeing a counsellor to address their anxiety and depression. Another participant noted that before the program, they would have responded to setbacks by giving up, but felt they had developed more resilience and ability to cope with challenges.

Social supports

Several participants from all three focus groups reported that In Motion & Momentum helped them build connections and relationships that have had a positive impact on them. Many participants have established lasting friendships that they continue to rely on post-program, and several still maintain regular contact with program facilitators. In addition, two participants noted that since attending the program, they feel they have developed more positive relationships with others in their lives, including friends and family.

Motivation to achieve goals

Some participants highlighted that the program motivated them to begin working towards their goals. A few participants from two of the three focus of the groups mentioned that they were busy the first week after the program ended working on their resume, working with job coaches, or seeking out other services or volunteer opportunities. Many of them used phrases like being “ready to go” or “needing to move” to describe how they felt after the program ended. Most of the participants shared future goals and plans related to employment and education, and some noted that they were finding it easier to plan for achieving those goals post-program.

2. Success factors and challenges

Through our conversations with facilitators and participants, we identified several factors that contributed to the success of In Motion & Momentum. We also learned about some of the challenges experienced by both participants and facilitators.

Success factors

Addressing a need

Our evaluation highlighted that In Motion & Momentum is helping to fill a gap in the employment service continuum for individuals with complex needs. Many of the facilitators noted that the program has had positive impacts for participants who are unmotivated or struggling with everyday routines and tasks – participants who may not benefit as much from more mainstream employment and training services.

A few participants from one of the focus groups noted that this program was very different than other programs they had participated in before and highlighted unique features of the program that they liked, including the time-intensive nature of the program, the focus on identifying and building on personal strengths, and the ability to work collectively with a group on a community project.

Cohort-based delivery

Both facilitators and focus group participants felt that the cohort-based delivery model was critical to the success of the program. Many facilitators emphasized the importance of the cohort model for helping participants “come out of their shell,” build confidence, and increase their communication skills.

Many participants across all three focus groups also shared that they highly valued the group interaction that came through the program. A few shared the dramatic impact the program had on their ability to open up and ask for help or support if something was affecting them. One participant highlighted how valuable it was to be able to talk to others in the program because they were not directly connected with each other’s lives and could share their experiences openly and without judgement.

Multiple facilitators

Most facilitators noted that having two or more facilitators to deliver In Motion & Momentum was valuable. One facilitator who delivered In Motion in partnership with others, but delivered Momentum on their own, noted that having multiple facilitators was preferable because it helped them maintain their energy throughout the program and build effective connections with participants. Participants in

one of the focus groups echoed this, noting that it was valuable to be exposed to the perspectives and styles of different facilitators and that they appreciated the opportunity to build relationships with the facilitator that they felt the strongest connection with.

Flexibility and responsiveness

Both facilitators and participants also felt that the success of In Motion & Momentum was closely connected to facilitators' ability and willingness to use a flexible approach in project delivery. This ensured that the timing and structure of activities were aligned with participant needs and group dynamics. Participants in one of the focus groups emphasized that having facilitators adjust activities based on their knowledge of the group—what they would like and what they would be most likely to benefit from—was valuable and made them feel appreciated and understood.

Challenges

Participant transitions

Both facilitators and participants noted that a key challenge of In Motion & Momentum was ensuring that participants had clearly planned next steps after program exit. Facilitators noted that many participants felt anxious at the end of Momentum because they were unsure about what they would do next. Many of them have continued to work informally with participants to try to connect them to additional supports and opportunities.

Several participants across all three focus groups also shared that they struggled with next steps after program exit. Many said that they felt nervous about leaving behind the structure and daily routine of the program without a clear plan for what they would do next. While many are continuing to work with employment service providers or are seeking out additional services elsewhere, some participants felt that they were still uncertain about what their next steps would be to achieve their goals. In the words of one focus group participant, In Motion & Momentum was “half of the solution.” While the program was extremely useful for building their confidence and motivation, this individual shared that they were still struggling to achieve their employment goals just as they had been before the program began.

Recruitment

Facilitators noted that finding the time and resources to build referral networks and educate other community service agencies about the program was challenging given the pilot project timelines. They felt that additional time and resources to communicate with other community service providers about the program's purpose and intended audience could have been beneficial and helped the program reach more potential participants.

Wraparound supports

Our findings highlighted that the lack of access to wraparound supports was a challenge for some participants. Facilitators noted that many participants experienced transportation-related barriers to attending training, and arranging transportation was difficult and costly for agencies. This was especially true for participants who live in rural areas outside of major centres where public transportation is not available. Financial issues are also an ongoing challenge for some participants, many of whom noted that a lack of financial resources makes it difficult for them to carry out many of the activities that could help them reach their education or employment goals (such as buying appropriate clothes and equipment).

3. Key takeaways

Summary of findings

Our evaluation highlighted a few key findings about In Motion & Momentum:

Program meets a need

Our evaluation demonstrated that In Motion & Momentum meets a current area of need in employment services: effective pre-employment programming for individuals with complex needs and/or who are very distant from the labour market. Both facilitators and participants felt that the program provides relevant, useful services that address the needs of individuals who may have things in their life that are holding them back from progressing towards their goals.

Preliminary evidence of positive results

In addition to filling a need, our evaluation also highlighted some positive impacts for participants. Survey results showed that many participants experienced gains in well-being, social supports, and employment readiness that were well-aligned with the program's objectives. In focus groups, participants shared the positive impacts that the program had on their confidence, outlook, and motivation to achieve their goals.

Program is one component of the client pathway

Our findings also highlighted that while In Motion & Momentum addresses an important need, participants may require additional supports and services to progress towards their goals. Although some participants found jobs or entered education after completing the program, the majority did not. This suggests that In Motion & Momentum is best conceptualized as the first step in a person's journey towards their employment and career goals.

Moving forward

Our evaluation of In Motion & Momentum also highlighted some opportunities for enhancing the program that should be considered for future deliveries.

Recruitment and marketing

In order for suitable participants to be connected to the program, adequate lead time is required for recruitment and marketing of the program with community partners. Given that the program is somewhat unique in its structure and objectives, time and resources are needed to educate participants, case managers, and other individuals who are part of the potential referral network about the program and its strengths.

Connections to additional services on client pathway

Future deliveries of In Motion & Momentum should also consider a more formal client exit strategy that can support participant success after program completion. Ideally, this program could be integrated into a broader employment services continuum as part of a systematic client pathway. In this hypothetical pathway, participants would have a range of programs/services available to them to facilitate their next step towards employment. In the short-term, warm handoffs to other appropriate services as needed after program completion could help ensure clients transition smoothly into their next steps.

Further monitoring and evaluation

Although our evaluation found promising indications of In Motion & Momentum's effectiveness, we have little evidence on long-term outcomes for participants. Longer term follow-ups with participants will increase our knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of this program. In addition, future deliveries of the program could use a comparison group design to more rigorously evaluate the program's impact.

The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada or the Government of Ontario.

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