

# Smart Practices for At-Risk, Homeless, and Formerly Homeless Youth Employment Programs in Metro Vancouver

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## ADMN 598: Final Report

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# Executive Summary

## Objectives

The purpose of this project was to research, summarize and report on smart practices for employment training programs, experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver. This research identifies key themes from the literature on homeless youth and surveys the perspectives of youth employment program administrators in Metro Vancouver.

This report has been prepared for Streetohome Foundation, which represents a partnership between Vancouver Foundation, the City of Vancouver, and the Province of British Columbia. Streetohome Foundation is a community organization dedicated to ensuring that all residents of Vancouver have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing (Streetohome Foundation, 2013a, para. 2). Streetohome Foundation will use this report as a resource to inform future plans to implement recommendations that support fast-tracking the employment of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth.

The project objectives were to map youth employment services in Metro Vancouver and assess, using criteria, the contribution of these services and the potential for scalability of successful programs. The research question this project will attempt to answer is: *What are smart practices for employment training programs, experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver?*

## Methodology and Methods

The methodology for this project involved two distinct phases: a scoping literature review and a strategic or “knowledge-generating” evaluation (Patton, 2002, p. 220). The literature review was conducted to identify the key concepts underpinning the research topic and the main sources and types of evidence available (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005, p. 21). The focus of the evaluation was to identify general principles of effective practice across different youth employment program types: employment readiness preparation, skills training development, and employment placement facilitation. The overall objective was to contribute to the existing knowledge by highlighting lessons learned and smart practices, rather than rendering judgement about the merit or value of specific employment programs in Metro Vancouver (Patton, 2002, p. 220).

Three methods were used to collect the data: a literature review, a document review, and key informant interviews. The literature review provides a broad overview of the research topic, highlights key themes and trends, and summarizes the available evidence. The document review was conducted to obtain background information on government policies and programs designed to assist homeless youth in British Columbia and to learn more about the organizations that were invited to participate in the interviews. Data was gathered from a variety of online sources including organization websites, strategic plans, and annual reports. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from organizations in Metro Vancouver that provide employment programs geared toward at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth. A total of

25 organizations were contacted for interviews. Some organizations offer multiple employment programs managed by different individuals. The total number of organizations that participated in the study was 13 and the total number of interview participants was 16.

## **Key Findings**

### *Literature Review*

Both grey literature and academic literature were consulted with the aim of presenting a broad overview of the research topic while identifying and summarizing key themes and trends. The literature review findings are organized into six recurring and interrelated themes: causes of youth homelessness, diversity of the homeless youth population, barriers to employment, benefits of employment, employment models and emerging practices, and youth perspectives on employment services. According to the literature, evaluation research on employment interventions for homeless youth is in the early stages, and the limited research that is available has generated mixed results (Ferguson & Xie, 2008, p. 5; Ferguson, 2013, p. 473; Ferguson, Xie, & Glynn, 2012a, p. 277; Robinson & Baron, 2007, p. 34). Despite the limited evaluation research, there is still considerable professional wisdom about the topic based on case study evidence. The key concepts that emerged from the literature review include the social exclusion of homeless youth; the need for greater integration of services; and the understanding that employment is one aspect of a broader, combined solution to youth homelessness that also encompasses housing and treatment (health care). The findings from the literature review helped to refine the topics and questions for the key informant interviews, establish the conceptual framework for the project, and develop the smart practices.

### *Document Review*

The document review served two main purposes. First, it provided an overview of the federal, provincial, and municipal policies and programs that target homelessness and unemployment. This section highlights a significant policy change that occurred in 2012 with the introduction of the *Employment Program of British Columbia*. Under this “one-stop-employment program”, a variety of services and programs that targeted specific populations were amalgamated into a single program delivery model designed to serve all job seekers regardless of their unique needs (Government of British Columbia, n.d., p. 4; Government of British Columbia, 2015b, p. 1). Second, the document review provided the opportunity to learn more about the Metro Vancouver organizations that were invited to participate in the interviews.

### *Interviews*

The semi-structured, qualitative interviews with representatives from various Metro Vancouver youth employment organizations provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the current state of employment programs currently offered within the region and helped to position the evidence from the literature review within a regional context. The group of key informants consisted of six program managers, five directors/executive officers, four service delivery staff, and one research team member. The diversity of employment programs and various experiences of the interview participants provided for a wide range of insights on the research topic, but also

consensus views on several key topic areas. The consensus views noted in the interviews were consistent with the research highlighted in the literature review. Five smart practices were identified based on these areas of general agreement: 1) Develop holistic programs with wrap-around supports; 2) Strengthen partnerships between service providers; 3) Adopt a flexible service delivery model tailored to individual needs; 4) Expand the criteria for program outcomes; and 5) Actively engage current and potential employers.

## **Conclusions**

The objectives of this research project were to map youth employment services in Metro Vancouver and identify smart practices for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth employment programs. The result is a report that provides the client with a significant body of literature on the topic, supplemented by the perspectives of youth employment service providers within the region. The results of the interviews suggest that many of these agencies are receptive to collaborating and sharing best practices to improve outcomes for the at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth population.

A major finding of this research is that social policy responses to the marginal position of street youth, including the provision of federally and provincially funded employment programs, have focused on addressing individual “inadequacies” rather than the complex structural factors that perpetuate homelessness including poverty, shortages of affordable housing, labour market conditions, and credentialism (Robinson & Baron, 2007, pp. 36, 37, 53). While the literature and this research suggest that employment training programs have the potential to improve youths’ self-esteem, increase their level of community attachment, expand their social capital, and assist them with obtaining sustainable employment, the overall effectiveness of these programs is largely unknown and is limited by the underlying structural issues that perpetuate the marginalization of homeless youth. Consequently, smart practices and recommendations for youth employment programs should be implemented with this information in mind.

## **Recommendations**

The following general recommendations stemming from the literature review and key informant interviews are presented to assist the client with next steps. The recommendations align with the client’s broad organizational goals and incorporate a combined focus on employment, housing, and treatment and are listed in order of priority.

### **Recommendation #1: Focus on the development of Foyer-model based housing initiatives**

A key finding in the literature review and key informant interviews was that there is a need for more holistic programs with wrap-around supports. Foyer housing offers youth the opportunity to develop life skills, finish their education, and pursue employment training and placements within a supportive setting. Thus, it is recommended that the client allot a percentage of private, foundation and corporate donations to funding current and future housing initiatives based on this model.

### **Recommendation #2: Form a working group to engage local employers**

Private sector engagement was identified as a key determinant of youth employment program success. Thus, it is recommended that the client take the lead in the formation of a working group with the goal of encouraging private sector participation in developing solutions to youth homelessness in the areas of skills training, employment opportunities, and the development of a supportive work environment. A key aim of this working group would be to convene a session with local employers to survey their perspectives on what factors are necessary for them to engage in a successful partnership with service providers. Through this working group, the client could also raise awareness of existing programs to increase the likelihood of employer participation when agencies search for youth employment opportunities.

**Recommendation #3: Collaborate with service providers and community foundations to provide employment readiness programs**

Employment readiness preparation programs were identified as the most relevant to the homeless population, and the demand for these programs exceeds the supply. It is recommended that the client partner with, and provide funding to, organizations that focus on employment readiness preparation to fill the gap in services for the most disadvantaged job seekers.

**Recommendation #4: Pursue further research on the evaluation of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youths' needs and employment programming**

There is a need for future evaluation-based research to identify evidence-based models of effective practice for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth employment programs. It is recommended that the client continue to pursue opportunities to strengthen relationships with the academic and research communities and collaborate in funding opportunities for further research with partners such as the Vancouver Foundation.

**Recommendation #5: Maintain communication with the BC Government to promote enhanced service delivery for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth once more evidence is gathered.**

The fifth recommendation is that the Client continue to gather additional evidence on the effectiveness of the Employment Program of British Columbia and the WorkBC service delivery model with the aim of proposing changes to better meet the employment needs of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth.

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# 1 Introduction

Homelessness in Vancouver began to emerge as a significant problem in the 1990s, in part due to the elimination of federal funding for new social housing development in 1993 (Streetohome Foundation, 2013f, p. 8). A Homeless Count is conducted across the Metro Vancouver region every three years, and within the city of Vancouver annually. Since the first Homeless Count in 2002, the number of homeless people in Vancouver has more than doubled (Ibid.). The most recent region-wide count in March 2014 reported 2,777 homeless, with 1803 (65%) located in Vancouver (Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH), 2014b, p. 42). The most recent City of Vancouver count on March 24, 2015 counted 1,746 homeless (Thomson, 2015, p. 15).

The Metro Vancouver Homeless Count and the City of Vancouver Homeless Count enumerate youth as a subgroup of the overall homeless population, where youth are defined as anyone under the age of 25 who was not accompanied by a parent during the count (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 13). In 2014, 322 homeless youth were counted across the Metro Vancouver region (Ibid., p. 45). In 2015, 154 homeless youth were counted in the city of Vancouver alone (Thomson, 2015, p. 21). It is important to note that it is generally understood by those in the field and who do research in this area that these numbers underestimate the true extent of youth homelessness in Vancouver (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 47). The Vancouver Foundation estimates that the real number of homeless youth across the Metro Vancouver region is closer to 700 (Vancouver Foundation, 2015, para. 7).

Youth homelessness is distinct from adult homelessness in terms of causes, conditions, and experiences (Gaetz, O'Grady, Buccieri, Karabanow, & Marsolais, 2013, p. 6). There are important differences between homeless youth and homeless adults, including physical, mental, social, and emotional development (Gaetz, 2014a, p. 7). Cultural, social, and economic shifts have lengthened the amount of time that young people remain dependent upon adult caregivers. Young people who become homeless, however, are forced to transition to adulthood at an accelerated rate, without the necessary support, resources, skills, and experience with independent living. A youth-based strategy and services that are distinct from the adult sector are therefore required to address the unique needs of homeless youth (Ibid., pp. 7-9).

Income, housing, and support are consistently found to be the solutions to homelessness (Streetohome Foundation, 2013f, p. 8). Central to the issue of income is employment. Employment training has been identified as one aspect of a comprehensive strategy to address homelessness that is most effective when integrated into a broader system of supports (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 261). There are a wide variety of youth support services in the Metro Vancouver region that provide employment programming in addition to a number of other essential services including emergency shelter, long-term shelter, clothing, laundry facilities, medical help and referrals, and mental health and addictions counselling (Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 2015a, p. 1). The employment programs provided by these organizations can be categorized into three subtypes according to their objectives: employment readiness preparation, skills training development, and employment placement facilitation. The

focus of this report is the identification of smart practices for employment programs geared toward at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver.

## 1.1 Defining the Problem

Homeless youth face a unique set of challenges in regard to obtaining and maintaining employment. Gaetz and O'Grady (2013) note that many communities struggle with how to enhance the employability of homeless youth, as traditional employment training programs and supports often fail to engage the most marginalized youth. Thus, few homeless youth successfully participate in such training (pp. 244, 251). Streethome Foundation has identified a need for evidence-based recommendations to guide their efforts to implement employment supports for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Vancouver. This research project was designed to provide insight into the employment needs of these youth and gather information on effective employment initiatives that could play a critical role in recovery and social integration for this vulnerable population. With the number of homeless youth in Metro Vancouver increasing, it is important to identify smart practices that can help break the cycle of youth homelessness and reduce the individual and societal costs of this problem.

## 1.2 Project Client

Streethome Foundation is a partnership between Vancouver Foundation, the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia. The organization was established in 2008 in response to the increasing homelessness crisis in Vancouver (Streethome Foundation, 2013d, p.1). The Board of Streethome Foundation is comprised of community leaders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors (Streethome Foundation, 2013g, para. 1). Streethome Foundation's mission is to work to ensure that all residents of Vancouver are able to attain safe, decent, and affordable housing (Streethome Foundation, 2013a, para. 2). The organization works with the community to increase the supply of permanent, supportive housing, raise awareness, and assemble valuable expertise and resources from various individuals and organizations to help prevent homelessness, improve quality of life, and create social change (Streethome Foundation, 2013c, p.1). Although Streethome Foundation is not a housing provider, the organization does provide funding to organizations that build and operate housing programs (Streethome Foundation, 2013b, para. 2; Streethome Foundation, 2013d, p. 1; Streethome Foundation, 2013e, para. 1).

In consultation with various community partners, Streethome Foundation developed an action plan in 2008 entitled *Community Action on Homelessness: Streethome's 10-Year Plan for Vancouver*. The plan:

- identifies and recommends policies and initiatives for the prevention of homelessness;
- provides data on the scope of homelessness in Vancouver, the supply of supportive housing, and gaps in housing and services;
- forecasts future need for housing units and services;
- assesses the need for resources and encourages community engagement; and
- establishes goals to monitor and measure progress (Streethome Foundation, 2013f, para. 2).

Since Streetohome Foundation was formed in 2008, the organization's focus has been primarily on housing-related initiatives. Recently, Streetohome Foundation has begun exploring possible avenues to collaborate with partners to facilitate employment-related initiatives. The Board, staff, and community partners have agreed that better integration between housing, treatment (healthcare), and employment is required to improve outcomes for the benefit of the at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless population (P. Rehncy, personal communication, June 11, 2015). Accordingly, Streetohome Foundation has established an *Employment Access Committee* comprised of Board members, staff, and community partners with the goal of promoting dialogue, innovative partnerships, and employment opportunities. The inaugural meeting of the *Employment Access Committee* took place on May 20, 2015 (Ibid.).

### **1.3 Research Question and Project Objectives**

The purpose of this project is to research, summarize and report on smart practices for employment training programs, experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver. Streetohome Foundation is interested in identifying strategic opportunities to leverage their resources to improve employment outcomes for this population. The research will identify key themes from the literature, survey the perspectives of youth employment program administrators, and inform Streetohome Foundation in their plans to implement recommendations that support fast-tracking employment of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth.

The project objectives are to map youth employment services in Metro Vancouver and assess, using criteria, the contribution of these services and the potential for scalability of successful programs. The research question this project will attempt to answer is: *What are smart practices for employment training programs, experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver?*

In support of these objectives, this report will provide four deliverables to Streetohome Foundation:

*Literature Review:* summary and analysis of the literature on the causes of youth homelessness, diversity of the homeless youth population, barriers to employment for homeless youth, benefits of employment, employment models designed to assist homeless youth, and youth perspectives on employment services.

*Document Review:* summary of publicly available, online information about youth employment programs in Metro Vancouver including websites, strategic plans, and annual reports.

*Key Informant Interviews:* summary and analysis of interviews with youth employment program providers in Metro Vancouver regarding the current state of employment services including capacity, outcomes, successes, setbacks, and program gaps.

*Recommendations:* recommendations on smart practices for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth employment initiatives based on the information gathered from the literature review, document review, and key informant interviews to assist Streethome Foundation with next steps.

## **1.4 Organization of the Report**

This report is structured as follows:

### Section 1: Introduction

This section summarized the problem of youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver and outlined the need for youth-focused employment initiatives as part of a comprehensive strategy to address the problem. This section also explained the rationale for the project, provided key information about the client, identified the research question and project objectives, and listed the project deliverables.

### Section 2: Background

This section establishes the context for the report and includes definitions of key terms, a profile of homeless youth employment in Metro Vancouver, and a discussion of homeless youth and employment program typologies.

### Section 3: Methodology and Methods

This section describes the research methodology and methods used to address the project objectives and answer the research question.

### Section 4: Literature Review

The literature review is organized into six main sections focused on the causes of youth homelessness, the diversity of the homeless youth population, barriers to employment, benefits of employment, employment models and emerging practices, and youth perspectives on employment services. This section also includes a conceptual framework that links the major themes identified in the literature review to the concepts explored in the research question and provides a graphical representation of the research approach.

### Section 5: Document Review

This section provides an overview of government policies and programs designed to assist homeless youth in British Columbia and background information on the organizations that were invited to participate in the interviews. Data was collected from various online sources including government and organization websites, strategic plans, and annual reports.

### Section 6: Key Informant Interviews

This section reports the results of the interviews with employment service providers in Metro Vancouver. Key themes that emerge from the data are described.

### Section 7: Discussion and Analysis

This section provides a strategic evaluation of employment programs for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver based on the results of the document review and interviews. Three main issue areas are assessed: relevance, success, and cost-effectiveness.

### Section 8: Recommendations

This section outlines recommendations for Streethome Foundation to consider when deciding how best to facilitate employment of Metro Vancouver's at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth population.

### Section 9: Conclusions

This section provides a concluding summary of the report.

## **1.5 Division of Labour**

This project was a collaborative effort that involved both authors at each stage of the research and writing.

## 2 Background

This section begins by defining key terms and concepts used in this report to provide clarity from the outset given that many of these terms do not have a standard definition. Subsequently, the current homeless youth employment profile in Metro Vancouver is presented, followed by a discussion of homeless youth and employment program typologies and their usefulness in classifying youth along an employment readiness continuum. Overall, this section provides the context for this research project.

### 2.1 Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

The purpose of this section is to establish an understanding of key terms and concepts that are used throughout this report. The key terms are: at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth; Metro Vancouver; social exclusion; affordable housing; Housing First; and aging out of care. The definition of each term establishes its meaning within the context of this report.

#### *At-Risk, Homeless, and Formerly Homeless Youth*

The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, with the support of researchers and communities across Canada, has established a typology that identifies varying degrees of homelessness and housing insecurity (Gaetz, O'Grady, Buccieri, Karabanow & Marsolais, 2013a, pp. 6-7). Within this typology, *at-risk of homelessness* refers to individuals who are currently living in housing that is intended for permanent human habitation but whose situations are dangerously lacking security or stability (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012, p. 4). Various risk factors make these youth vulnerable to homelessness including living in a household facing eviction or supported housing with supports that are about to be discontinued; conflict with a caregiver; mental illness, active addictions, substance abuse, and/or behavioural issues; neglect, physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; abuse or discrimination caused by racism, homophobia, or misogyny; and living in inadequate or unsuitable institutional care (Ibid.).

The term *homeless youth* refers to individuals who are living without stable, permanent, and appropriate housing (Ibid.). Homeless youth may be sheltered or unsheltered. Sheltered individuals may be emergency sheltered (staying temporarily in safe houses or transition houses) or provisionally accommodated (with no fixed address and staying temporarily in a hospital, jail, detox facility, or "couch-surfing," which is defined as staying temporarily with friends). Unsheltered individuals are living on the streets in places not suitable for human habitation such as alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter & Gulliver, 2013, p. 4; Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 2). Approximately two thirds of the youth identified in the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count were unsheltered (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, pp. 40-41).

Finally, the term *formerly homeless youth* is used to describe individuals who have transitioned from homelessness to being housed, but are still in need of a variety of supports to help them

fully achieve and maintain independence such as treatment services and education, employment and life-skills training.

### *Metro Vancouver*

Metro Vancouver is a regional district comprised of 21 municipalities, one treaty First Nation, and one electoral area, with a population of over 2.3 million (Metro Vancouver, 2015b, p.1). The Greater Vancouver RSCH conducted the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count in the following communities: Burnaby, Delta, Langley (City and Township), New Westminster, North Shore (City and District of North Vancouver and West Vancouver), Richmond, Ridge Meadows (Maple Ridge and Pit Meadows), Surrey, Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody), Vancouver (City and Pacific Spirit Regional Park), and White Rock. First Nations reserves were excluded from the Count (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 2). The term *Metro Vancouver* is used throughout this report to refer collectively to the communities identified in the 2014 Homeless Count. Of these communities, the two municipalities with the highest concentration of homelessness were the City of Vancouver and Surrey, with 62% and 13% of homeless youth and children, respectively (Ibid., p. 45).

### *Social Exclusion*

*Social exclusion (or marginalization)* is a term used to describe the circumstances and experiences of individuals or communities of people who are fully or partially shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural institutions of society (Gaetz & O’Grady, 2013, pp. 251-252). For example, a homeless young person’s participation and engagement in society is limited by his/her personal history combined with various structural factors that may include poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, racism, sexism, and homophobia. These factors narrow the choices available to young people, thereby impacting the choices they make (Ibid.). The concept of social exclusion suggests that opportunity and access to education, healthcare, safety, and justice are unevenly distributed throughout society (Ibid.). This concept is key to understanding the employment barriers faced by homeless youth.

### *Affordable Housing*

According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), “housing [in Canada] is considered affordable if shelter costs account for less than 30% of before-tax household income” (CMHC, 2015, para. 3). *Affordable housing* is a broad term that includes private, public, and not-for-profit housing and all forms of tenure (i.e. rental, ownership and cooperative ownership) (Ibid.). The term is used to refer to housing on any part of the housing continuum from temporary to permanent, including emergency shelters, transition housing, supportive housing, subsidized housing, market rental housing, or market homeownership (Ibid.).

### *Housing First*

*Housing First* is a strategy that focuses on rapidly moving chronically and episodically homeless people from the street or emergency shelters into permanent housing accompanied by varying supports according to client need (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014a, para.

1). A case management team and/or case manager provides these supports and acts as a main point of contact for the client from assessment to follow-up (Ibid.). The Housing First approach does not require clients to be “housing ready”. Clients must be given a choice of housing options and services, and acceptance of these services (including treatment or sobriety) is not a requirement to access or maintain housing, although regular visits from a case manager are required (Ibid.). Clients are provided with tenancy rights and responsibilities, including the expectation that a portion of their income is contributed toward rent (preferably 30%) with the remainder provided through housing subsidies (Ibid.). Ideally housing is integrated into the community as much as possible in order to respond to client choice, minimize stigma, and encourage client social integration; however, social and supportive housing in a congregate setting may also be offered (Ibid.). The focus of the Housing First approach is to strengthen the client’s skills and abilities, based on self-determined goals, which may include employment, education, social integration, or health improvements. The ultimate goal is to stabilize the client’s situation and promote self-sufficiency, ensuring that the client is ready to exit from the program and access regular supports within a reasonable timeframe (Ibid.).

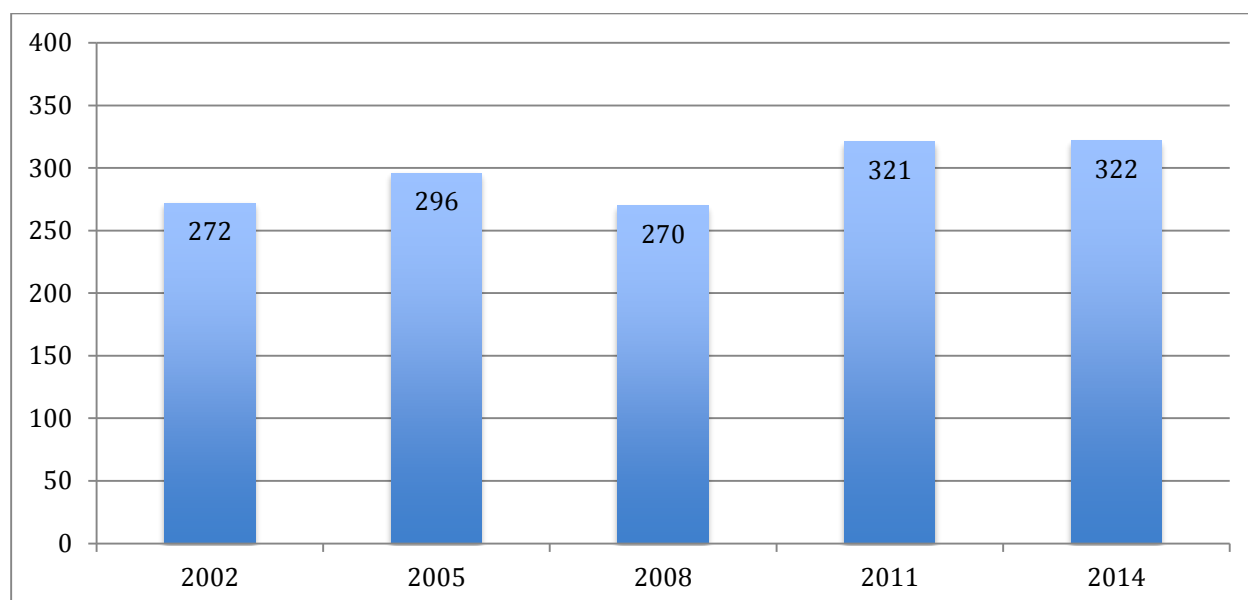
### *Aging Out of Care*

The term *aging out* is used to describe the process of youth transitioning from a formal system of care (e.g. foster home or group home) to independent living, often without the appropriate skills, provisions, or supports required to ensure they are in stable, secure, living circumstances (Chau & Gawliuk, 2009, p.308). The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is responsible for mandated child welfare services in the province of B.C. (Representative for Children and Youth, 2014, p. 10). Approximately 700 youth age out of care in British Columbia in an average year (Ibid., p. 3). These youth are considered adults once they reach the age of 19, and are no longer eligible for protection under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCS Act)*, meaning they lose access to the various supports that were available to them while they were in care (Ibid.). For many of these youth, the transition to adult services is extremely difficult, increasing the risk that they will become homeless.

## **2.2 Homeless Youth Employment Profile**

Over the past fifteen years, the problem of youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver has persisted. Figure 1 illustrates the recorded numbers of homeless youth for each regional Homeless Count since 2002.

**Figure 1: Number of Homeless Youth in the Metro Vancouver Region**



Source: Greater Vancouver Regional District, 2002, p. 73, 88; Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2008, p. 14; Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2012, p. 19; Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 17; Social Planning and Research Council of BC, 2005, p. 28.

During the counts, homeless youth were asked to report their sources of income, with more than one being possible. Data from the most recent regional count in 2014 is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sources of Income for Homeless Youth in Metro Vancouver (2014)**

Source of Income	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	Percentage
Income Assistance	23	64	87	28%
Disability Benefit	9	9	18	6%
Employment Insurance	1	0	1	0%
Youth Agreement	1	5	6	2%
Part-Time Employment	20	33	53	17%
Full-Time Employment	18	0	18	6%

Binning, Bottle Collecting	3	24	27	9%
Panhandling	2	67	69	22%
Friends/Family	18	40	58	19%
Other	10	28	38	12%
No Income	22	44	66	21%
Total Respondents	99	208	307	--

Source: Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, pp. 40-41.

Notes: Respondents could select multiple responses; therefore, numbers do not equal total respondents and percentages do not total 100%. The total number of respondents varies for different questions because not everyone responded to each question and the data was provided through cross-tabulations.

Of the 307 total respondents, 17% reported part-time employment and 6% reported full-time employment. Notably, none of the unsheltered respondents reported full-time employment. Moreover, the wages earned by these youth were generally inadequate to allow them to become self-supporting (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 22). As homeless youth face considerable barriers to obtaining traditional employment, many of those surveyed engaged in informal money-making strategies such as binning/bottle collecting (9%) and panhandling (22%). Other sources of income may include more risky illegal activities including the sex trade, and criminal activities such as drug dealing or theft (Unger et al., 1998, p. 340; Gaetz & O’Grady, 2013, p. 247). Since youth may be reluctant to self-report illegal activities, accurate estimations of the extent of these income-generating activities are difficult to make.

Income assistance was the main source of income reported by youth respondents (28%); however, the proportion of youth receiving income assistance was much lower than that of the total homeless population (43%). The proportion of youth who reported receiving no income was 21%; this figure was much higher compared to other sub-populations identified in the count and the total homeless population, where 9% reported receiving no income (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, pp. 37-38).

### 2.3 Homeless Youth Employment Typologies

Jahiel and Babor (2011) define a typology as “a classification system and a set of decision rules used to differentiate relatively homogenous groups called subtypes” (as cited in National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, 2013, p. 1). A subtype is defined as “an abstract category organized according to some conceptual, theoretical, and clinical principle” (Ibid.). Various typologies have been created for subsets of the homeless population, and homeless youth

specifically. The homeless population is sometimes inaccurately viewed as homogenous, when in reality it is very heterogeneous (Ibid.). Examples of typologies that have been used to categorize homeless youth include reason for leaving home, risk factors (such as history of abuse, involvement in criminal activity, involvement in prostitution, living circumstances, substance use, and suicidal ideation/attempt), and personal roles and traits (e.g. partiers, sex workers, vulnerables, etc.) (Ibid., p. 3). It is recognized within the literature that no single approach to categorizing homeless individuals is universally valid and all approaches have methodological limitations (Ibid.). Human beings are complex and cannot be accurately categorized along a single dimension. As researchers are responsible for selecting a particular methodology, the criteria for classification, and the research subjects, typologies are inherently subjective (Ibid.).

Recognizing these limitations, for practical purposes, this report utilizes two complementary typologies outlined by McEown and Streetohome Foundation and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). McEown and Streetohome Foundation (2015) have proposed an employment continuum to categorize youth according to the following levels of capacity: work ready, significant barriers to employment, and most disadvantaged job seekers (p. 11). The NAEH groups individuals as either temporarily disconnected (with less complex needs); unstably connected (with more complex needs); or chronically disconnected (with most complex needs) (Gaetz, 2014b, p. 16). These typologies provide insight into the types of employment initiatives and other interventions that are required to address youth homelessness (Figure 2).

There are numerous organizations within Metro Vancouver that provide employment programming to at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth (see Appendix A). The youth that utilize these programs are a diverse group at different stages of development, with different needs, preferences, and employment intentions. In accordance with the above-noted typologies, an employment program typology has been identified, which consists of three subtypes based on overall objectives and intended outcomes. Although some overlap between programs exists, the typical characteristics of these subtypes are as follows:

#### 1) Employment Readiness Preparation

- Life skills training including core skills (numeracy, literacy, technology); independent living skills (budgeting, grocery shopping, setting up a bank account, keeping appointments, etc.); and social skills (communication, anger management, dealing with interpersonal conflict, etc.) (The Homeless Hub, 2015c, p. 1).

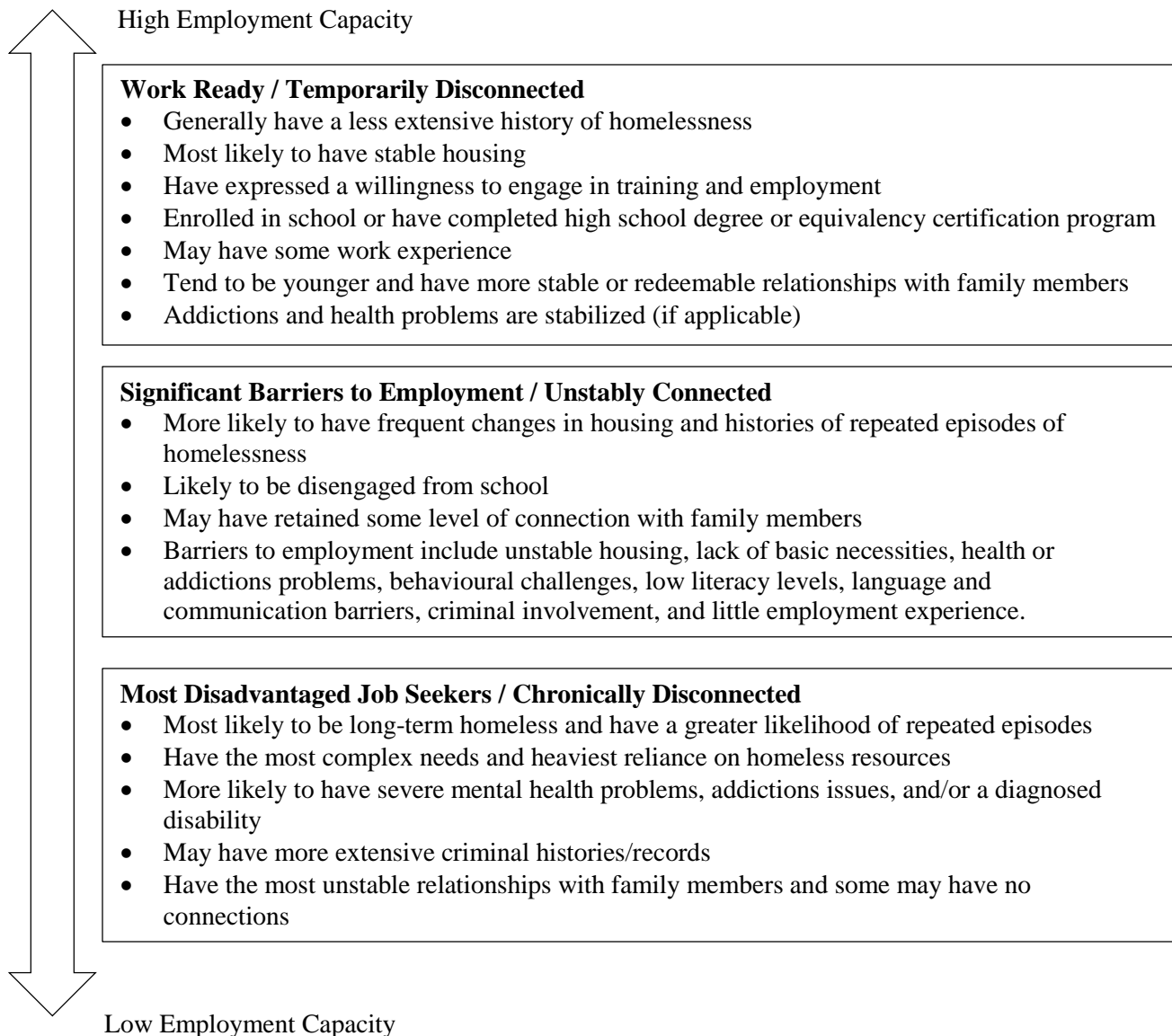
#### 2) Skills Training Development

- Employment skills training including resume, cover letter, and interview preparation, etc.
- Training for certifications such as WHMIS, Serving It Right, Occupational First Aid Level 1, Food Safe, etc.

#### 3) Employment Placement Facilitation

- Work experience placements with either employer partners or non-affiliated employers.

**Figure 2: Employment Readiness Continuum**



(Gaetz, 2014b, p. 16; McEown & Streetohome Foundation, pp. 13-20)

The employment readiness continuum and the employment program typology serve as tools to help identify programming that is appropriate and relevant for the needs of specific individuals. This contributes to a more effective use of organization resources and improves program outcomes through more targeted interventions (Toro, Lesperance, & Braciszewski, 2011, p. 6).

### **3 Methodology and Methods**

This project used a qualitative research methodology to answer the research question: *What are smart practices for employment training programs, experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver?* The University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board approved the research design (Certificate #15-246).

#### **3.1 Methodology**

The methodological framework for this study involved two distinct components: a scoping literature review and a strategic or “knowledge-generating” evaluation (Patton, 2002, p. 220). The objectives of the literature review were to identify the key concepts underpinning the research topic and the main sources and types of evidence available (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005, p. 21). A qualitative research design was used for the evaluation with the aim of identifying general principles of effective practice across different youth employment program subtypes: employment readiness preparation, skills training development, and employment placement facilitation. Rather than to render judgement about the merit or value of specific employment programs in Metro Vancouver, the overall objective of the strategic evaluation was to contribute to the existing knowledge by highlighting lessons learned and smart practices (Patton, 2002, p. 220).

#### **3.2 Methods**

The project used three methods to collect the data: a literature review; document review; and interviews with representatives from organizations in Metro Vancouver that provide employment programs geared toward at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth. Each method is discussed in turn in this section.

##### **3.2.1 Literature Review**

A literature review was conducted to provide a broad overview of the research topic, highlight major themes and trends, and summarize the available evidence. The findings from the literature review were used to help refine the topics and questions for the interviews with employment service providers.

##### **3.2.2 Document Review**

The purpose of the document review was to obtain background information on government policies and programs designed to assist homeless youth in British Columbia and to learn more about the organizations that were invited to participate in the interviews. Data was collected from a variety of online sources including government and organization websites, strategic plans, and annual reports. Additionally, information was referred to or provided by the Client. One of the benefits of conducting a document review is that it can help to supplement or enhance the

content of interviews (Boudah, 2011, p. 140). The focus of the document review was adapted as important information was found (Ibid.).

### 3.2.3 Key Informant Interviews

#### *Stakeholder Group*

Administrators/directors from Metro Vancouver organizations that provide employment programs geared toward at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth were identified as the key stakeholders for this project. As a group, they represent individuals who hold a leadership position within their respective organizations and have responsibility for program direction, implementation, and oversight. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to generate a list of potential interviewees. Internet research was conducted to identify participants and the Client provided a list of contacts. An invitation to participate was sent to all potential participants via email with a request for individuals to confirm their desire to participate and their preference for an interview date, time, and method (telephone or Skype) (see Appendix B). Subsequently, the researchers emailed confirmation of the date, time, and interview method as well as a copy of the consent form and interview questions to each participant (see Appendices). Signed consent forms were returned to the researchers via email prior to the interviews.

The group of key informants consisted of six program managers, five directors/executive officers, four service delivery staff, and one research team member. The interviews were conducted from August 24 to September 15, 2015. All interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted between 30-60 minutes. A total of 25 organizations were contacted for interviews and 13 participated in the study. As some organizations offer multiple employment programs managed by different individuals, the total number of interview participants was 16. The diversity of employment programs and various experiences of interview participants provided for a wide range of insights on the research topic.

#### *Interview Process*

Semi-structured, qualitative interviews were used to facilitate a focused, yet open discussion in which participants were freely able to share their experiences, opinions, and perspectives, while still meeting the objectives of the study. Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig (2007) note that this type of interview allows the interviewers to “explore the experiences of participants and the meanings they attribute to them” (p. 351). The interview questions were developed based on discussions with staff at Streethome Foundation and the findings from the literature review (see Appendix D). Topics included intake assessment, access to programs, reporting, outcomes, policy implications, successes, and challenges. The questions were designed to obtain specific information related to each participant’s organization and employment program, as well as to guide the discussion more generally regarding promising initiatives and smart practices. Data from the interviews was used to help better understand the current state of homeless youth employment in Metro Vancouver, what strategies are working, and where improvements are required. Typed notes were taken for each interview.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

After each interview was completed, a transcript was generated from the notes. A Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was conducted based on the 15-step process outlined by Anderson (2007, pp. 2-3). Repeated ideas, perspectives, and practices were identified and tagged with codes, which were grouped into categories. These categories represented the key themes that emerged during the analysis of the interview data. The narrative for the interview results was organized according to these themes; however, unique ideas, perspectives, and practices were also highlighted.

Based on the data collected from the document review and the interviews, employment programs were categorized into three subtypes: employment readiness preparation, skills training development, or employment placement facilitation. It should be noted that some programs meet the criteria for more than one subtype. The strategic evaluation addressed three main issue areas for each of the program subtypes:

- Relevance – Do these programs meet an actual need?
- Success – Are these programs effective in meeting their intended outcomes, and is progress being made toward the achievement of ultimate outcomes?
- Cost-effectiveness – Are these programs utilizing the most efficient means to achieve outcomes, relative to alternative models and delivery strategies?

Based on an analysis of the interview data, the document review, and the literature review, smart practices for employment programs were identified.

### **3.4 Project Limitations and Delimitations**

There are important limitations associated with this research study. First, the small, non-probability sample of convenience limits the generalizability and transferability of the interview results. There was a limit to the number of employment service providers that could be feasibly interviewed due to time constraints. The small sample sizes (i.e. the number of youth utilizing the services) made it challenging to accurately assess the impacts of programming, particularly in regard to isolating differences in outcomes for specific demographic sub-populations. Second, the findings from the document review and interviews were categorized according to employment program subtype. The results reported may not be indicative of all programs in each category, due to varying program delivery structures. Third, it was not possible to completely isolate program impacts from the influence of external factors. Fourth, the strength of the qualitative data obtained from the interviews was dependent on the quantity and quality of information participants were willing to share. Finally, the scope of employment programs required to meet the needs of homeless youth was difficult to estimate, as the number of homeless youth in Metro Vancouver is generally regarded to be an underestimate due to the transient nature of individuals.

As noted in section 3.2.1, the first delimitation of this study was that the scope of the literature review was limited to English language studies published from 1980 onward. Second, the focus of the research was limited to youth specifically. Third, the interview group was limited to

employment service providers. The feasibility of interviewing at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth was beyond the scope of this study and could comprise an area for future research.

## 4 Literature Review

### 4.1 Overview

The literature review for this study was conducted using the framework for a scoping literature review outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) which involved five stages: “identifying the research question, identifying relevant studies, study selection, charting the data, [and] collating, summarizing and reporting the results” (p. 22). The aim was to present a broad overview of the research topic while identifying and summarizing key themes and trends.

The research question for this study was: *What are smart practices for employment training programs, experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models for at-risk, homeless and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver?* A wide approach was maintained for the literature search in terms of what constituted employment models, programs, and strategies as well as what issues pertained to homeless youth employment, in order to be as comprehensive as possible in gathering relevant literature (Ibid., p. 23).

Literature was obtained via three main sources: electronic databases, reference lists, and *The Homeless Hub*, a Canadian web-based research library geared toward users within the fields of government, academia, and social services (The Homeless Hub, 2015a, p. 1). The research included was predominantly from Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States due to the cultural similarities to this study's target population. Due to time and budget constraints, only those studies published from 1980 onward were included. This start date was chosen because this time period covered major federal government policy changes in Canada that had a significant impact on homelessness, including decreased investment in affordable housing and economic liberalization. Foreign language material was excluded due to time and cost associated with translation. To limit the likelihood of excluding pertinent research, and as part of the scoping nature of the review, references within relevant articles were consulted and cross-referenced with other articles.

The majority of literature included in the review was scholarly, peer-reviewed literature accessed through the University of Victoria's *Academic Search Complete* database. The following keywords and key phrases were used as search terms to identify relevant studies: “homeless youth”; “homeless +employment barriers”; “causes of youth homelessness”; “benefits of employment”; “benefits of work”; “homelessness +occupational therapy”; “employment models for homelessness”; “youth employment models”; “IPS model +employment”; “SEI +employment”, and “social enterprise +homeless”. The database drew search results from a variety of social science fields including criminology and criminal justice; occupational therapy; preventative medicine; economics and economic policy; psychiatry; psychology; adolescent health; social work; social policy; and industry/employment relations. While numerous journals were referenced, examples of more frequently used sources include: *Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders*, *Harm Reduction Journal*, *Journal of Public Health*, *Journal of Youth Studies*, *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, *Journal of Poverty*, *Occupational Therapy in Health Care*, and *American Journal of Public Health*.

Grey literature consulted included various reports from government organizations and working groups. In particular, three major resources released in 2013-14 by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, a non-profit, non-partisan research institute, were included: *Youth Homelessness in Canada: Implications for Policy and Practice*, *Coming of Age: Reimagining our Response to Youth Homelessness*, and *A Safe and Decent Place to Live: Towards a Framework for Housing First for Youth*.

The search identified two leading scholars in the field of homelessness research: Dr. Kristin Ferguson-Colvin (City University of New York, New York) and Dr. Stephen Gaetz (York University, Toronto, Ontario). The focus of Dr. Ferguson-Colvin's research is interventions for homeless youth. This includes the "design, implementation and evaluation" of services that consist of both clinical and vocational interventions (Ferguson-Colvin, 2014, para 1.). Dr. Gaetz is the Director of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Director of *The Homeless Hub*, and President of *Raising the Roof*, a Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to breaking the cycle of homelessness. The research performed by Dr. Gaetz and colleagues focuses on "economic strategies, health, education, legal, and justice issues" and incorporates a specifically Canadian aspect to the response to homelessness (The Homeless Hub, 2015d, para. 1). Research from Dr. Ferguson-Colvin and Dr. Gaetz was recurrently consulted for this review.

Data from the literature review was charted in order to sort the material into relevant themes that emerged and the findings were collated, summarized, and reported. The review was organized into six main themes: causes of youth homelessness, diversity of the homeless youth population, barriers to employment, benefits of employment, employment models and emerging practices, and youth perspectives on employment services. The findings from the literature review and the main concepts identified in the research question were used to establish the conceptual framework for this project. This framework is presented at the conclusion of the literature review.

## **4.2 Findings**

Each major theme identified in the literature review is discussed in turn in this section.

### **4.2.1 Causes of Youth Homelessness**

Gaetz, O'Grady et al. (2013) have identified the key causes of youth homelessness, which are divided into three interrelated categories: individual/relational factors, structural factors, and institutional and systems failures (pp. 3-6).

#### *Individual/Relational Factors*

Research indicates that most youth homelessness stems from difficult and challenging family situations and relationships (Ibid., pp. 3-4). Extensive research in Canada and the United States demonstrates that between 60 and 70% of homeless youth leave home to escape their family situation due to interpersonal violence including physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse (Ibid., p. 4). Other factors include parental neglect or substance abuse, exposure to domestic violence between parents, and parental psychiatric disorders (Heinze, Hernandez Jozefowicz, Toro &

Blue, 2012, p. 88; Andres-Lemay, Jamieson & MacMillan, 2005, p. 687). For these youth, the problems they experience are a direct result of their environment, rather than a result of their own personal challenges (Gaetz, O'Grady et al., 2013a, p. 4). In some cases, however, interpersonal conflict within the family may result from the individual challenges youth are facing, including their own substance abuse, depression, sexual orientation, learning disabilities, etc. (Ibid.). These factors may combine with a challenging family environment to produce secondary factors that intensify conflict, including poor performance in school, involvement in crime, and choice of friends or romantic partners (Ibid.; Heinze et al., 2012, p. 88; Windsor, Bender, Thompson, Williams & Cook, 2010, p. 202).

While many homeless youth are *running from* or *thrown out* of their home situation, research also suggests that some youth are *running to* something; that is, they choose to leave home based on the desire for greater independence or adventure (Heinze et al., 2012, p. 88; Windsor et al., 2010, p. 194). A study of 50 homeless youth in California conducted by Hyde (2005) found that 22% of youth interviewed reported leaving home in order to travel and experience new opportunities (p. 175). Seeking out a place where one feels accepted has also been noted as reason for leaving home (Eberle Planning and Research, Kraus & Woodward, 2007, p. 10). Literature on the individual and relational causes of youth homelessness suggests that the causes are multifaceted and often difficult to distinguish, with no single factor alone that can entirely explain a young person's trajectory into homelessness (Gaetz, O'Grady et al., 2013, p. 4; Hyde, 2005, pp. 175-176).

### *Structural Factors*

A number of systemic, social and economic factors also lead to youth homelessness, including poverty, housing instability, and challenging labour market conditions. Many Canadian households do not have enough money to meet even the most basic needs. Food insecurity, inadequate social assistance, and parents' reliance on low wage, part-time work may lead young people to leave home by choice, or because they are forced to when their families can no longer support them (Gaetz, O'Grady et al., 2013a, p. 4; Gaetz, Donaldson et al., 2013, pp. 18-19).

The decline in the availability of affordable housing (and rental housing, specifically) is also a major contributing factor to homelessness in Canada (Gaetz, Gulliver & Richter, 2014, p. 3). In 1982, 20,450 social housing units were developed annually in Canada, with the combined funding of all levels of government. Subsequently, in order to decrease the national debt and operating deficit, the federal government began to reduce its investment in social housing units, culminating in the elimination of federal funding for this purpose in 1993 (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2015, p. 1; Gaetz et al., 2014, pp. 3-4, 24-25). Since that time, there have been significant new federal investments in affordable housing (\$1 billion in 2010; \$2 billion in 2009; and \$1.4 billion in 2006); however, these investments have been time-limited and despite a 30% increase in the Canadian population, the federal yearly social housing investment has fallen by over 46% since the late 1980s (Gaetz et al., 2014, p. 4).

Most recently, the Province of B.C. and the federal government made a combined investment of \$180 million toward affordable housing in B.C. from 2011-2014 under the Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) agreement. This agreement was extended to 2019, with the addition

of \$300 million in combined funding (CMHC, 2014c, paras. 5-6). Despite these latest initiatives, significant changes to government investment and taxation policy over the past several years have transformed the housing supply in Canada. Tax incentives to support private home ownership have led to a dramatic decrease in the supply of rental housing units, to the detriment of low and middle-income earners who are unable to purchase a home (Gaetz et al., 2014, p. 31).

For youth specifically, finding appropriate housing can be particularly challenging, as they may face age-based discrimination in a competitive housing market (Gaetz, O'Grady et al., 2013, p. 4). The 2014 CMHC fall survey of purpose-built rental housing vacancy rates reported a 1 percent vacancy rate in Vancouver (CMHC, 2014b, para. 3). This is due to growth in rental market demand outpacing the increase in supply (Ibid., 2014a, p. 2). Youth require stable housing to sleep, eat, wash etc. in order to ensure that they are ready and able to work (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002, p. 1042; Gaetz, 2014a, p. 11).

The current economic context poses significant challenges for homeless youth in their struggle to obtain both housing and employment. Karabanow, Hughes, Ticknor, Kidd and Patterson (2010) note that in recent decades neoliberalism has increased in acceptance in both political and economic philosophy (p. 40). This philosophy promotes the reduction of governmental economic interventions in favour of private enterprise and economic liberalization. During the 1990s, the entrenchment of neoliberalism within North America led to the development of labour market policies based on the concept that the general population should be self-reliant through employment wages and government should provide minimal support (Klodawsky, Aubry, & Farrell, 2006, p. 429). This change in philosophy yielded challenges for low-skilled workers that remain today, as shifts in industries occurred, the demand for services increased, and the knowledge-based economy produced a need for more educated, qualified workers (Karabanow et al., 2010, p. 42; Noble, 2012, p. 13). Canadian manufacturing industries decreased in number, replacing low skilled, uneducated workers with technological advancements such as robotics and computers (Côté & Bynner, 2008, p. 258; Karabanow et al., 2010, p. 42). In addition, free trade agreements caused a rise in outsourcing, contract work, and temporary labour, making it increasingly difficult for youth to acquire even entry-level employment (Côté & Bynner, 2008, p. 258).

### *Institutional and Systems Failures*

The failure of various systems of care and support, including child protection, health, mental health care, and corrections, is also a major contributing factor to youth homelessness (Gaetz, O'Grady et al., 2013a, p. 5). Gaetz et al. note that various Canadian studies have reported that between 40 and 50% of homeless youth have negative histories of foster care or group home involvement where they have been exploited, abused, or simply uncared-for (Ibid.). According to the Vancouver Foundation, former youth in care are over-represented among the Vancouver homeless population; it is estimated that approximately 40% of homeless youth have formerly been in government care (Vancouver Foundation, 2013, p. 2). Youth in British Columbia are cut off from the foster care system at the age of 19. For these youth, the experience of transitioning to independence is often very challenging, lonely, isolating, and frightening as they have little to no support or connections to the community (Ibid.). Similarly, discharge from correctional facilities without adequate planning and post-release support is another contributing factor to

youth homelessness (Gaetz, O'Grady et al., 2013, p. 5). Research has shown that more than half of homeless Canadian youth have been in jail, a youth detention centre, or prison (Ibid., Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006, p. 19). Finally, some youth are discharged from health care facilities without adequate supports or established living arrangements. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), an estimated 10-20% of youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder (2015, p. 1). The Vancouver Foundation reports that 65% of youth in government care in BC have been diagnosed with a mental health issue at least once in childhood (Vancouver Foundation, 2013, p. 3). Young people that have been discharged from foster care, corrections, or health facilities without the supports and knowledge they require to navigate systems and live independently are at extreme risk of becoming homeless.

#### 4.2.2 Diversity

A major theme in the literature is the diversity of the homeless youth population (Aviles & Helfrich, 2006, p. 102; Gaetz, 2014a, pp. 15, 16; Miller, Donahue, Este, & Hofer, 2004, p. 735; Morrell-Bellai, Goering, & Boydell, 2000, p. 598; Palepu, Hubley, Russell, Gadermann, & Chinni, 2012, p. 1; Robertson & Toro, 1998, p. 1; Thomas, Gray, & McGinty, 2011, p. 38). Youth demographic subpopulations that have been studied include ethnicity, gender identity, age, level of maturity, family connectedness, sexual orientation, and experience of abuse (Gaetz, O'Grady et al., 2013a, pp. 5-6). An understanding of the unique conditions and circumstances of homeless youth is key to the development of effective employment initiatives, as the homeless youth that utilize these programs are a diverse group at different stages of development, with different needs, preferences, and employment intentions.

##### *Disproportionate Representation of Minorities*

Various studies indicate that some ethno-racial populations – particularly Aboriginal youth (including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples) - tend to be overrepresented among the homeless youth population (Baskin, 2013, p. 410; Boesky, Toro, and Bukowski, 1997, p. 29; Miller et al., 2004, p. 735). During the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 40% of homeless youth identified themselves as Aboriginal (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 40). Several factors have been identified that contribute to Aboriginal homelessness. Extreme poverty, lack of opportunities, and inadequate housing on many reserves in Canada drives migration to cities. Within these cities, discrimination, racism, and systemic oppression affect Aboriginal access to services, programs, support, and opportunities for housing and employment (Gaetz, Donaldson et al., 2013, p. 26).

In many studies of homeless youth, young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning and 2-spirited (LGBTQ2) are also overrepresented. There is limited research available on the current numbers of LGBTQ2 youth in Canadian communities; however, a Canadian study conducted in 2000 reported that LGBTQ2 youth comprise between 25 to 40% of the homeless youth population as opposed to 5 to 10% of the housed youth population (Gaetz, 2014a, p. 7; The Homeless Hub, 2015b, p. 1). Research indicates that LGBTQ2 youth are at a higher risk of homelessness than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts due to homophobia and transphobia in the home (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler & Cauce, 2002, p. 774, The Homeless Hub, 2015b, p. 1). Moreover, homeless LGBTQ2 youth

often face discrimination within the shelter system on the basis of their sexual or gender orientation (The Homeless Hub, 2015b, p. 1). Homeless LGBTQ2 youth may be reluctant to self-identify as such due to concerns about their safety and fear of discrimination. In addition, shelter providers are often inadequately prepared to deal with homophobia and transphobia, and currently there are no specialized housing initiatives in Canada designed to meet the unique needs of LGBTQ2 youth (Ibid.). This issue is of particular concern given that research has indicated that LGBTQ2 youth exhibit higher rates of victimization (both physical and sexual), symptoms of depression, and substance abuse and addiction than their heterosexual and cisgender peers (Cochran et al., 2002, p. 774). Discrimination against LGBTQ2 youth means that these youth are more likely to be part of the hidden homeless population, making it more challenging for them to access support services and likewise obtain employment. Published data on LGBTQ2 youth is not available for the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count.

### *Demographic Differences in Experiences*

While it is recognized that there are unique aspects to every homeless young person's experience, some commonalities or trends have been identified in the literature. For example, gender has been noted as one characteristic that accounts for differences in the causes of homelessness and the experiences of homeless youth. In addition to the particular challenges for transgender youth noted above, research by Tessler, Rosenbeck and Gamache (2001) found that compared to females, males have a greater likelihood of becoming homeless on account of substance abuse (p. 245). This research also found that females are more likely to become homeless due to interpersonal factors (Ibid.). While males tend to experience higher rates of physical violence, females are more likely than males to experience sexual assault and victimization (Cauce et al., 2000, p. 238; Windsor et al., 2010, p. 204). Unplanned pregnancy is a significant risk for homeless females; homeless young women are nearly five times more likely to become pregnant than housed young women (Smid, Bourgois & Auerswald, 2010, p. 141). Homeless young women may participate in survival sex, have barriers to regular supplies of contraceptives and condoms, and/or be involved in sexually exploitative relationships where they have little power to protect themselves from unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections (Ibid.).

Boesky et al. (1997) also note that gender differences among homeless youth may be age related; studies have reported that homeless females are typically younger than males (p. 31). As many studies in various locations have found that the homeless adult population is predominantly male, it has been proposed that with increasing age, the risk of homelessness for males may increase, while decreasing for females (Ibid.). During the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 62% of youth respondents identified as male and 38% identified as female, compared to 73% and 27% respectively for the total homeless population (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p 40). Published data on the varying ages of these youth was not available.

Age has also been noted as a major factor in terms of the psychosocial circumstances of homeless youth (Boesky et. al., 1997, p. 31.). Early adolescents (younger than 15 years of age) have lower levels of physical and psychological maturity, which puts them at risk of victimization by older street youth and adults (Unger et al., 1998, p. 328). In addition, early adolescents may be reluctant to access shelters and other street-based services because they

perceive adult shelters as too dangerous, or they fear being reported to juvenile justice authorities, returned to their families, or placed in foster care (Ibid., p. 329). Finally, various studies have also found that older youth tend to report higher rates of sexual abuse and drug abuse/dependence than younger adolescents. It is theorized that older youth have more experience with sexual activity and increased opportunity for exposure to various illicit substances due to the length of time spent on the streets (Boesky et al., 1997, p. 31). While research on youth as a specific group within the overall homeless population is still emerging, it is generally agreed within the literature that homeless youth require gender and age appropriate supports designed to address their unique needs and varying stages of development.

### *Duration of Homelessness*

The homeless population has often been categorized temporally as follows: transitional (homeless for a month or less), episodic (fluxing between housed and homeless), and chronic (homeless for more than one year) (National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2013, p. 2). During the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, the proportion of youth that reported being homeless for less than one month was 25% compared to 19% of the total homeless population (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 37). Conversely, 23% of youth reported being homeless for one year or more compared to 41% of the total homeless population (Ibid.).

The duration of homelessness results in the development of different population characteristics, which in turn yield different service needs (Milburn et al., 2009, p. 136, Gaetz 2014b, p. 15). For example, youth who have been homeless for less than six months are more likely to maintain school attendance and less likely to use drugs, attempt suicide, or engage in unprotected sex (Ibid.). The longer youth remain homeless, the more likely they are to experience negative outcomes. Street adversity is associated with greater incidence of mental illness, substance abuse, and addictions due to repeated exposure to traumatic circumstances and chronic stress (Kidd, 2013, p. 220; Farrow, Deisher, Brown, Kulig & Kipke, 1992, p. 720). Longer-term homeless youth are also more likely to experience food deprivation and poor nutrition, become involved in crime, and be sexually exploited (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2013, p. 132; Ferguson, Bender, et al., 2012, p. 388; Saewyc, Drozda, Rivers, MacKay & Peled, 2013, p. 155).

Consequently, the need for a greater focus on prevention of homelessness for at-risk youth and the development of strategies to support rapid transitions out of homelessness is widely recognized in the literature. Gaetz (2013) notes that the current focus of most communities in Canada is to invest the majority of their energy and resources into emergency response (e.g. shelters, day programs, and law enforcement), which manages the problem rather than eliminates it (pp. 470-471). Preventive strategies include enhancing adolescent engagement with school, stopping the flow of youth from institutional care (child protection, mental health, corrections) into homelessness, and designing and implementing effective early intervention strategies for youth who are at imminent risk of homelessness or homeless short-term, so that they can return home or access new accommodation with the appropriate supports (Ibid.).

In summary, diversity of the homeless youth population is widely recognized within the literature as an important consideration when designing and implementing programs. Homeless youth have a wide range of needs and preferences that require unique responses rather than a “one-size-

fits-all” approach (Cauce et al., 2000, p. 238; Government of Alberta, 2015, p. 27). Ethnicity, gender identity, age, level of maturity, family connectedness, sexual orientation, and individual lived experience are some of the many factors that must be considered in order to develop and deliver culturally sensitive, appropriate programs to effectively serve the homeless youth population.

#### 4.2.3 Barriers to Employment

Research by Gaetz and O’Grady (2002) has indicated that the overwhelming majority of homeless youth (83.4% of males and 87.8% of females) are interested in finding regular, paid employment (p. 448). To fully understand the employment context for homeless young people, Gaetz and O’Grady (2013) note that it is necessary to consider the number of complex and combined ways that these youth experience social exclusion (p. 252). There is considerable literature that focuses on the challenges and barriers that homeless youth experience in obtaining and maintaining employment. These barriers include unstable housing and lack of necessities; educational disengagement; health and behavioural problems; substance abuse; criminal involvement; and weak social capital and lack of employment experience (Ibid. pp. 253-257; Cauce et al., 2000, p. 230; Ferguson, Bender, et al., 2013, p. 474). Each of these barriers is discussed in turn in this section.

##### *Unstable Living Arrangements and Lack of Necessities*

The primary obstacle to homeless youth being able to successfully obtain and maintain employment is their inability to obtain secure and stable housing. A lack of secure shelter limits homeless young people’s ability to adequately rest and recover to prepare for work or maintain their personal hygiene (Gaetz & O’Grady, 2013, p. 253). Without sufficient sleep and access to laundry and bathing facilities, homeless youth have a limited ability to present a nice, clean appearance for job interviews and to maintain interview clothes (Ibid.; Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002, pp. 1039-1040; Ferguson, Xie & Glynn, 2012, pp. 278-279). Inadequate personal hygiene can lead to employment discrimination based on appearance due to ailments such as sores, fleas, lice, burns, cuts, etc. (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002, p. 1042; Farrow et al., 1992, p. 720). Poor nutrition and food insecurity may also interfere with an individual’s physical capacity to work (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002, p. 1040). Finally, lacking secure and stable housing means that homeless youth do not have an address to provide on a resume or job application, making it extremely difficult for them to gain the confidence of potential employers (Gaetz & O’Grady, 2013, p. 253).

Insufficient income is also a major barrier to employment for homeless youth. If youth are able to obtain a job, insufficient funds to pay for necessities prior to their first pay cheque makes maintaining employment difficult (Ibid., p. 254). Money is also needed for transportation to and from work. In a 2014 study by the McCreary Centre Society on employment barriers for vulnerable youth in British Columbia, youth who were surveyed and/or participated in focus groups reported several barriers related specifically to transportation. Some youth noted that public transit was not available at the times they would need to access work (McCreary Centre Society, 2014a, p. 16). Several youth also indicated that they had been fined for riding public transit without paying and could not pay the fines, resulting in the decision to avoid public transit for fear of being caught (Ibid.). Youth also noted that available jobs in the labour industry

required them to have their own vehicle or driver's license (Ibid.). Thus, not having an income to pay for basic necessities, including transportation, contributes to the exclusion of homeless youth from the workforce (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 254).

Other employment barriers for homeless youth include a lack of reliable access to telephone and Internet services, which is essential for maintaining regular communication with employers, and the absence of personal identification (Shaheen & Rio, 2007, p. 4). Many youth may leave home prior to obtaining formal government-issued identification such as BC ID, a social insurance number, or driver's license (Cheng, 2013, p. 31). Youth may also lose their identification once they are living on the streets. Without official ID, homeless youth are unable to access various services and programs, obtain housing, or apply for employment.

### *Educational Disengagement*

High school dropout rates for homeless youth in Canada have been reported to range between 57 to 65% (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 254). Low levels of educational achievement have been attributed to a number of factors including familial stressors such as abuse or a family member with addictions, personal addictions issues, (often undiagnosed) psychopathology or learning disabilities, or trauma (Edidin, Ganim, Hunter & Karnik, 2012, p. 359; Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 254). Alternatively, the experience of homelessness leads some youth to drop out (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 254).

Gaetz and O'Grady (2013) note that the majority of emergency services and supports for independent living tend to focus on meeting basic needs and skills development, rather than education (p. 254-255). Vulnerable BC youth surveyed by the McCreary Centre Society (2014a) reported that they were often trapped in a situation where they were forced to choose between pursuing training and educational qualifications and gaining employment experience at "a low-paying menial job" in order to support themselves (p. 18).

At a time when youth unemployment rates in Canada are particularly high, the link between a good education and the ability to compete in the job market is widely recognized. The rise of "credentialism" has meant that over the past thirty years, the wage that Canadian youth can anticipate earning without post-secondary education has fallen steeply. Low rates of high school completion among the homeless youth population therefore places them at a significant disadvantage in the job market (Côté & Bynner, 2008, p. 260; Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 254).

### *Health and Behavioural Problems*

There is a considerable amount of research that confirms the prevalence of both physical and mental health problems among the homeless youth population. Homeless youth have a greater incidence of malnutrition, sexually transmitted and other infectious diseases, pregnancy, injury, gastrointestinal disorders, allergies, respiratory problems, and an increased future risk of diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and muscle and joint problems (Edidin et al., 2012, p. 360; Farrow et al., 1992, p. 720; Kulik, Gaetz, Levy, Crowe, & Ford-Jones, 2011, pp. 43-45; Boivin, Roy, Haley, & Galbaud du Fort, 2005; pp. 435-436). In addition, homeless youth experience a number of barriers to accessing appropriate and satisfactory health care, including a lack of health cards due

to theft or loss, a lack of contact address, and the perception that they face discrimination and judgmental attitudes by health care providers in traditional health care settings (Kulik et al., 2011, p. 45). During the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 17% of youth reported that they had a medical condition and 9% reported that they had a physical disability (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014a, p. 41). Compromised health can have a significant impact on a young person's ability to obtain and maintain employment.

Mental illness has been identified within the literature as both a cause and consequence of homelessness (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 254). Research by Edidin et al. (2012) found that over the course of a lifetime, the incidence of mental illness is nearly twice as high for homeless youth as it is for their housed counterparts (p. 362). Mental illness includes post-traumatic stress disorder, psychiatric disorders (such as schizophrenia), mood disorders (such as depression and bipolar), anxiety, paranoia, and other negative psychological effects of trauma, abuse and neglect (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 255; Cauce et al., 2000, p. 230; Edidin et al., 2012, p. 362; Government of Alberta, 2015, p. 27; Johnson, 2006, p. 64; Morrell-Bellai & Goering, 2000, p. 583). During the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 32% of youth reported having a mental illness (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 41).

Some homeless youth struggle with thoughts of suicide, and many describe feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, hopelessness, and, most strongly, a sense of being trapped or feeling helpless in their current situations (Windsor et al., 2010, p. 195). Such feelings inhibit a youth's ability to function normally, let alone find and maintain employment (Poremski, Whitley, & Latimer, 2014, p. 181). Mental health problems are compounded by the fact that few homeless youth regularly access appropriate treatment. For youth that do receive treatment, prescription medications may produce side effects that make sustaining employment difficult (Ibid.).

Gaetz and O'Grady (2013) note that the experience of homelessness interrupts the normal process of adolescent development that is essential for young people to make a healthy transition to adulthood (p. 258). For all young people, adolescence is a time during which mental and emotional changes contribute to episodes of conflict and stress (Aviles & Helfrich, 2004, p. 332; Greenblatt & Robertson, 1993, p. 1180). Research has found that homeless youth are more likely to exhibit behavioural problems such as anger, aggression, and irritability, and other maladaptive behaviours including learned dependence and using quitting as a method of solving problems (Edidin et al., 2012, p. 360; Poremski et al., 2014, p. 181). Finally, homeless youth may lack sufficient understanding of societal norms and behaviours required for employment. Childhood instability and trauma deprives some homeless youth of the opportunity to develop their social skills over time through normal childhood play experiences (Kannenberg & Boyer, 1997, p. 632).

### *Substance Abuse*

It is well established within the literature that homeless youth suffer from a higher incidence of substance abuse and addictions. Research by Ferguson (2013) found that homeless youth are seven times more likely to use crack cocaine, five times more likely to use hallucinogens, and four times more likely to use heroin, than housed youth (p. 474). Research also indicates the widespread usage of alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco among the homeless youth population (Johnson, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2005, pp. 806-808). During the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless

Count, 47% of youth reported having an addiction to at least one substance (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 41). For many youth, substance use is a response to the challenges they face living on the streets; these substances help youth experience emotional numbness and thereby cope with the hardships of street life, trauma and unresolved issues from their past, and/or emerging mental illness (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 256; Farrow et al., 1992, p. 720; McMorris, Tyler, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2002, p. 34). The health consequences of substance abuse and addictions are well documented, including exacerbated mental illness and increased transmission of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis A and C, and other diseases (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013, p. 256; Kulik et al., 2011, p. 45).

Substance use and abuse impairs one's ability to carry out daily tasks, including searching for, obtaining, and maintaining employment. Moreover, the rules and regulations of many shelters and housing options for youth ban substance use; therefore, youth with substance abuse problems are often ineligible for housing which impacts their ability to work (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014b, p. 22). Without employment, youth may turn to illegal activities in order to support their habits (Ferguson, Xie et al., 2012, 278; Ferguson, Bender Thompson, Maccio, & Pollio, 2012, p. 388).

### *Criminal Involvement*

Homeless youth may become involved in criminal activities such as theft, dealing drugs, pimping, or exchanging sexual acts for money, food, drugs etc. in order to survive on the streets (Ferguson, Bender et al., 2012, p. 388). Gaetz and O'Grady (2002) note that youth who are socially excluded from the formal economy instead engage in flexible economic strategies, in some cases criminal, as an adaptive response to an inherently unstable lifestyle (p. 437). Other factors that motivate youth to participate in criminal activity include involvement in street culture and the desire for approval from peers, psychosocial immaturity, and an overall lack of attachment to social institutions (Baron, 2013, p. 357; Little & Steinberg, 2006, p. 361). Research has indicated that the inability to obtain work results in anger and frustration among homeless youth, perceptions that their unemployment is unfair, and disillusionment, which increases the likelihood that they will become criminally involved (Baron, 2013, p. 359). If youth develop a criminal record, this can inhibit them from obtaining employment due to employer hiring policies, and they become trapped in a cycle that is difficult to break (Ferguson, Bender et al., 2012, p. 388; Ferguson, Xie et al., 2012, pp. 278-279).

### *Weak Social Capital and Lack of Employment Experience*

Gaetz and O'Grady (2013) note the limited nature of homeless youth's social capital; that is, the connections these youth have with extended family, school and communities of origin are weakened or non-existent (p. 257). Without a network of social supports, homeless youth rely on street friends to survive; however, these networks do not provide the connections homeless youth need to obtain employment, and, in some cases, the demands of street relationships may undermine their ability to maintain employment once it is obtained (Ibid.).

In addition to a lack of employment connections, homeless youth often lack the experience required to obtain a job in a competitive labour market. Vulnerable BC youth surveyed by the

McCreary Centre Society (2014a) reported that a lack of experience prevented them from being hired ahead of candidates with experience, even when they had the required skills and qualifications for the position (p. 17). Youth also noted that a negative experience at a previous job from which they had been fired posed an even greater barrier to obtaining a new position than having no experience at all (Ibid., p. 18).

In summary, homeless youth experience considerable barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment including unstable housing and lack of necessities; educational disengagement; health and behavioural problems; substance abuse; criminal involvement; and weak social capital and lack of experience. Gaetz and O'Grady (2013) note that an analysis of the various dimensions of social exclusion is key to understanding the impacts on labour market participation and designing appropriate employment training programs for the homeless youth population (p. 266).

#### 4.2.4 Benefits of Employment

According to Forstater (2015), the benefits of employment are widely recognized within the fields of economics, anthropology, social psychology, and sociology (p. 61). Employment results in tangible direct and indirect social and economic benefits for individuals, all members of the community, and the community as a whole (Ibid., p. 66). Benefits of employment include improved security for individuals, social and political stability, expanded output and income, and increased consumer spending (Ibid., pp. 62-63). Full employment reduces the dependency on income assistance and other benefits, lowers crime rates, and improves wages and job quality (Berstein & Baker, 2003, pp. 40-41; Deloitte Access Economics, 2011, p. 4; Forstater, 2015, pp. 62-63, 66; Hoven, Ford, Willmot, Hagan, & Siegrist, 2014, p. 2; Shepard & Reif, 2004, p. 2583).

At the individual level, employment provides both manifest and latent benefits. The opportunity to work provides individuals with a regular source of income, improved quality of life, and the chance to gain experience and skills that can be used to upgrade to future positions (Hoare & Machin, 2006, p. 20; Poremski et al., 2014, p. 181; Raaij & Antonides, 1991, pp. 672-673). For youth specifically, Mortimer (2010) notes that employment can help with the development of a sense of responsibility, social skills, and time and money management skills (p. 8). In this way, employment can help a young person to “feel more like an adult” (Ibid.). In addition, the psychosocial benefits of employment are numerous. In the theoretical model of human occupation, which stems from the field of occupational therapy, Aviles and Helfrich (2004) note that in interacting with their environment, humans seek habitual activities and schedules (p. 332). A routine helps to provide meaning in an individual's life and establish a greater sense of self (Ibid.; Stiglitz, 2002, p. 9). Employment enforces a daily time structure; provides social contact outside of the family; affords an individual the opportunity to work toward collective goals; shapes the identity and status of an individual; and enforces mental and physical activity (Jahoda, 1981, p. 188). Finally, in studies of individuals with substance abuse problems, Shepard and Reif (2004) found that activities related to work were helpful in motivating them toward recovery; individuals experienced increased self-esteem and self-confidence, improved social functioning, decreased involvement in criminal activities, and reduced substance use (p. 2583).

In contrast, it is well documented within the literature that unemployment is the source of many economic, social, and psychological problems (Hoare & Machin, 2006, p. 19; Stiglitz, 2002, p. 9; Creed & Machin 2002, p. 1208). The direct effects of unemployment on a community can include permanent losses in potential output of goods and services, economic stagnation, and increased poverty and crime (Forstater, 2015, p. 62). At the individual level, unemployment has been recognized as a contributing factor to illness, divorce, suicide, and substance abuse (Ibid.). Psychologically, Darity and Goldsmith (1996) note that unemployment can negatively impact an individual's "general outlook on life, their emotional frame of mind, their self-conception, their cognitive efficiency and their attitude toward work" (pp. 121-122).

#### 4.2.5 Employment Models and Emerging Practices

This section includes a review of the literature on employment models for vulnerable populations and emerging practices as well as youth perspectives on employment services. Research on targeted employment interventions for homeless youth is in the early stages and evaluation research examining the effectiveness of employment programs for this target population is limited with mixed findings. Gaetz (2014b) notes that within Canada in particular, little evaluation literature exists on homelessness interventions, specifically those targeting youth (p. 4). Therefore, few interventions can be considered "evidence-based," however there is a substantial amount of anecdotal evidence and professional wisdom that exists within the literature to inform promising practices.

##### *Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model*

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model is an evidence-based intervention for adults with psychiatric illnesses (Ferguson, Xie et al., p. 277). Recent research by Ferguson, Xie et al. (2012) has demonstrated how the IPS model can be adapted to assist homeless young adults with mental illness (Ibid.). Ferguson, Xie et al. (2012) note that many traditional employment programs for homeless youth focus on job skill development and do not have a mental health component; however, as noted in section 4.2.3. of this report, many homeless youth struggle with mental health issues (at least 32% of homeless youth in Metro Vancouver identified as having a mental illness) (p. 279; Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014a, p. 41). In their research, Ferguson, Xie et al. (2012) contend that in order to move homeless youth into competitive employment, individualized and long-term supports that combine employment and clinical services are required (p. 279). The IPS model thus provides a combination of employment and clinical services that are customized to the needs of the individual (Ibid., Ferguson, 2013, pp. 475-476).

The IPS model is comprised of seven core principles: (1) Zero exclusion means that there are no eligibility restrictions and all clients who want to participate are able to; (2) Employment and treatment services are integrated, employment and treatment staff share the same location, and there is frequent communication among team members; (3) Clients receive assistance obtaining jobs in the community at competitive wages; (4) Clients receive counselling and personalized planning in regard to benefits when considering employment options; (5) The job search process is rapid, beginning within one month of the client completing a vocational assessment with an employment specialist; (6) Clients receive individualized support for as long as it is required; and

(7) Client preferences impact the type of job sought and the type of support provided (Ferguson, Xie et al., 2012, p. 279; Trutko, Barnow, Beck, Min., & Isbell, 1998, p. ES-5).

A major aspect of the IPS model is job coaching. The role of the job coach is to provide both support and advice and to help with the logistics of job searching (Hoven et al., 2014, p. 2). Research has indicated that job coaching helps build resilience and self-confidence and is positively correlated with job retention (particularly among youth age 18 to 24) (Ibid., p. 5; Lenz-Rashid, 2006, p. 250). For individuals with mental health issues, the services of an occupational therapist are utilized. Youth may also require additional supports including substance abuse assessment and treatment counselling (Evenson & Barr, 2009, p. 26; Robertson & Toro, 1998, p. 18; Trutko et al., 1998, p. ES-5).

The IPS model is designed to help youth develop and strengthen social competencies including planning, decision-making, responsibility and restraint, by actively involving youth in the decisions related to their job search and mental health treatment (Ferguson, Xie et al., 2012, pp. 279-280). Young people work with an employment specialist, case worker, and clinicians to prioritize their areas of need and establish goals (Ibid.). Reported outcomes of the IPS model are empowerment, improved self-esteem, healthy relationships, increased hope and life satisfaction, increased motivation and sense of purpose, reduced high-risk behaviour, enhanced employability, and gains in work hours and income (Herzberg & Finlayson, 2001, p. 134; Ferguson, Xie et al., 2012, p. 278). Although further research on the IPS model to assist homeless youth with mental illness is required, findings by Ferguson, Xie et al. (2012) indicate that the model can be successfully adapted to work with this population and that it is associated with successful retention and employment outcomes (p. 292).

### *Social Enterprise*

A social enterprise can be defined as “a non-profit organization, socially minded commercial business, or revenue-generating venture established to create a positive social impact in the context of financial considerations” (Ferguson, 2013, p. 475). The underlying philosophy of a social enterprise is that social and commercial aims can successfully co-exist to create positive social outcomes and generate community-based economic growth (Ferguson, 2012, p. 492; Teasdale, 2012, p. 514). Social enterprises have been used with vulnerable populations to provide them with employment training and placement that is integrated with clinical and other social services within a supportive setting (Ferguson, 2012, p. 491; Ferguson, 2013, p. 475). Research on homelessness has identified social enterprise as a way to help homeless people obtain secure employment and escape social exclusion (Teasdale, 2012, p. 514). According to Teasdale (2012), homeless individuals may have a “lower commercial value” to an organization in comparison to labour sourced from the open market because their need for additional social support makes them “less economically productive” (p. 519). The premise of a social enterprise is that the financial burden of providing this social support is offset by the higher social return achieved from providing these individuals with employment (Ibid.).

Various social enterprise models are identified in the literature including those that offer transitional employment as a pathway to future work opportunities; those that create permanent, self-financing jobs; enterprises that create long term employment with permanent subsidies; and

enterprises that are designed to provide structure and engagement for employees rather than a mainstream work contract (McCreary Centre Society, 2014b, p. 24). All of these models are reported to have distinct advantages over traditional employment training programs.

First, social enterprises provide training in workplace skills and job skills that is inherently integrated into the workplace setting, which is an approach that has been demonstrated to be much more effective than offering training outside of a workplace context (Ibid., p. 28). The opportunity to directly apply new skills acquired from on-the-job training, the increased contact with employees through full-time work hours rather than limited program time, and the real world accountability required for job performance, all contribute to employment outcomes for vulnerable individuals employed by social enterprises (Ibid., p. 29).

Second, the social enterprise model integrates life skills training and additional wrap-around supports for individuals facing barriers to employment (Ibid., Ferguson, 2007, pp. 106-108). Often a social enterprise operates under the umbrella of a parent organization that is responsible for providing these wrap-around supports to clients. Examples of wrap-around supports include a 24/7 point of contact to address crisis situations; coaching and mentoring; help developing social networks; counselling services for family conflict and support for reunification; addictions and recovery supports; attending parole, court, doctor, banking, and social assistance appointments alongside youth; ongoing work assessments and performance reviews; housing support; financial literacy training; and assistance with acquiring identification (McCreary Centre Society, 2014b, pp. 29, 32). An added benefit of this model is that a portion of the revenue generated by social enterprises from the market-based goods or services they provide can be used to support the delivery of these wrap-around supports, making the parent organization less susceptible to having to withdraw these services should the organization lose a different source of funding (Ibid., p. 29, Ferguson, 2012, p. 499).

Third, social enterprises generally offer entry-level employment for youth that is combined with a focus on skill development and the identification of future opportunities (McCreary Centre Society, 2014b, p. 29). Thus, young people with barriers to employment are able to gain experience in the workplace, which helps to build trust with employers, many of whom may be wary of hiring vulnerable youth (Ibid.). Case study research conducted by the McCreary Centre Society (2014b) found that many social enterprises aim to provide youth with exposure to other opportunities within the broader sector they are working in by arranging workplace and educational tours, teaching broader transferable skills, and providing workplace mentoring (p. 33). The importance of these program elements is noted in the literature, as there is a need to outline a clear path from entry-level positions that offer work experience to opportunities for advancement that can afford a reasonable standard of living (Ibid., p. 41). Ferguson (2007) notes that effective strategies to employ homeless youth must “offer them an equally profitable substitute to their street survival behaviours” (p. 106).

Although there are few comprehensive or long-term studies that have evaluated the outcomes of the social enterprise model to determine its effectiveness, there is a growing body of anecdotal evidence and various program-level evaluations that suggest that social enterprises have been successful in producing positive employment outcomes for vulnerable youth (McCreary Centre Society, 2014b, p. 51; Ferguson, 2012, p. 495). The use of social enterprises with vulnerable populations is based on the concept that economic and personal well-being are interrelated

(Ferguson, 2012, p. 492). Employment provides individuals with time structure, social contact, social context, and social identity, which together have a positive impact on physical and mental health (Ibid.). Program-level evaluations have consistently suggested that the social enterprise employment model is successful in terms of improving employability outcomes; improving workplace and life skills (soft skills); improving self-confidence; and helping to stabilize employees' lives (McCreary Centre Society, 2014b, p. 27).

Research by the McCreary Centre Society (2014b) suggests that the comprehensive nature of the social enterprise model makes it an effective alternative to traditional employment and skills development programs that may be characterized by fragmentation of services, vulnerability of funding changes, poorly networked transitions for participants, lack of a direct work experience component and/or affordable access to work certifications, and time limited employment supports (p. 43). Key findings from four Canadian case studies of social enterprises indicated that further education, training and employment ranged from 50 to 85% of employees, in contrast with a 40% success rate for the Employment Program of British Columbia in 2014 (Ibid., p. 50). By incorporating workplace, life, and essential skills training into one integrated program delivery model, potential employees are more likely to have a shorter stabilization period and access to all required supports (Ibid., p. 48). Research on supported employment also indicates that integration of mental health and employment services produces better employment outcomes for clients than when these services are offered separately (Ferguson, 2012, p. 491).

Future research is required to compare the labour, social, health, and mental health outcomes among homeless youth involved in social enterprise programs with those involved in traditional employment training programs and those accessing the usual supports (Ferguson, 2007, p. 111). Further data is required on the outcomes for youth with mental health problems specifically, as there is limited evidence-based research to inform program design for this sub-population (Ferguson, 2012, p. 500). None of the social enterprises interviewed by the McCreary Centre Society (2014b) employed youth with emerging or significant mental illnesses, as these youth required support that was beyond the scope of a market-driven social enterprise model (p. 35). Further research is also required on how social enterprises can address specific challenges including managing tensions between social and commercial considerations, operating in industries with high labour costs, and building partnerships with private sector employers (Teasdale, 2012, p. 519; McCreary Centre Society, 2014b, pp. 5, 30).

### *Foyer Model*

The Foyer model is a transitional housing model for youth, where youth are housed on a long-term basis, are taught life skills, and are either enrolled in education or training, or are employed (Gaetz & Scott, 2012, p. 4). Unlike the Housing First model, which provides individuals with independent, permanent housing, the Foyer model is designed with the specific developmental needs of youth in mind and is based on the main goal of ensuring a successful transition to adulthood, rather than immediate independence (Ibid., pp. 13-14). The theory behind the Foyer model is that the inherently transitional experience of adolescence makes this form of housing more appropriate for many young people who require longer-term supports to transition to adulthood, while providing them with the opportunity to develop life skills, finish their education, and gain employment experience so that they can become economically self-sufficient and

socially connected to the community (Ibid., p. 14). Gaetz and Scott (2012) note that the Foyer is not simply a model of supported housing, rather it is an “integrated living model” that is a response to both homelessness and unemployment (pp. 4, 18).

The Foyer model was originally introduced by the British government during the 1990s in response to high youth unemployment. The success of the model led to its widespread application throughout the United Kingdom (Ibid., p. 17). Although the Foyer model is relatively new to Canada, the model has been successfully adapted and implemented in Europe, Australia, and the United States and has been utilized principally with younger youth, as well as those leaving formal systems of care or juvenile detention (Ibid., pp. 4, 9, 17). There are three basic components to the Foyer model: 1) it focuses on helping marginalized, dependent youth transition into adulthood and independence; 2) it integrates housing, employment training, job search assistance, and personal development; and 3) it utilizes a formal agreement between the individual and a case manager outlining how the individual will use the Foyer facilities and community resources to facilitate the transition to independence (Ibid., p. 17).

Gaetz and Scott (2012) propose a framework for developing and implementing the Foyer model in Canada that includes these three basic components and a number of additional elements of program effectiveness based on a review of program models and evaluations in other contexts. These elements include fostering an environment that allows youth to build competence and a feeling of achievement; a holistic approach to meeting the needs of youth at various stages of development; a supported transition without a time limit that allows youth to practice living independently; establishing a community of peers and caring adults with a focus on peer mentoring; and the provision of aftercare services that enable youth to successfully transition from the Foyer to adulthood and independent living (pp. 27-28).

Work, training, and the importance of education are key aspects of the model. Foyers are designed to facilitate opportunities for employment training by providing support in essential work skills, resume and interview preparation, and connections to employers (Gaetz & Scott, 2012, p. 32). Gaetz and Scott (2012) note that a key strength of the Foyer model is the central focus on enhancing educational opportunities in order to produce longer term, sustainable outcomes for vulnerable youth, thereby reducing the risk that they will return to homelessness (pp. 28-29). It is an expectation of residence within the Foyer that youth are involved in education, employment, and/or employment training (Ibid., p. 32). Finally, all Foyers also offer life skills development, which may include training on health, nutrition, cooking, repairs and maintenance, First Aid, and budgeting (Ibid., p. 30). Youth are charged a small fee to be part of the Foyer, which builds their capacity to live independently by teaching them to save and pay rent. Upon leaving the Foyer, this program fee is returned to the individual to contribute to a rent deposit (Ibid., p. 33). Overall, the Foyer model addresses the causes of the “no job, no home; no home, no job” cycle (Allen, 2001, p. 472).

#### 4.2.6 Youth Perspectives on Employment Services

Understanding the perspectives of marginalized youth on what they need to succeed in the workforce is key to informing the development of employment programs that will contribute to their success. To date, however, few studies have been published that incorporate the input of

marginalized youth on the challenges they face in terms of finding and maintaining employment (McCreary Centre Society, 2014a, p. 4). Of the limited research that is available, a 2014 study by the McCreary Centre Society provides important information on the experiences of young people facing significant barriers to employment. The study used focus group and survey research to canvass the perspectives of 150 marginalized youth in communities across BC to learn about the challenges they face entering the labour market and gather their views on employment supports (Ibid., p. 5). The following paragraphs outline a number of principles of suggested practice for employment program design and delivery that are identified in the McCreary Centre Society report and highlighted in other relevant studies.

### *Service Provider Characteristics*

Research suggests that many at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth have a baseline resistance to, and mistrust of, various institutions (Reid & Klee, 1999, p. 23; Shaheen & Rio, 2007, p. 345). It is therefore not surprising that youth have expressed the desire for service providers to be non-judgmental and have an experiential understanding of homelessness (Stewart, Reutter, Letourneau, Makwarimba, & Hungler, 2010, pp. 154, 158). It is important that service providers create a friendly environment where youth feel welcomed and are able to discuss supports freely (Herzberg & Finlayson, 2001, p. 133; McCreary Centre Society, 2014a, p. 51). Youth surveyed by the McCreary Centre Society (2014a) reported that they were particularly appreciative of employment programs that offered the services of a career counsellor who could relate to them, would listen to their questions, and would take the time to clearly explain the available job opportunities and their related requirements (p. 29).

Youth also indicated their desire to have an assigned case worker with whom they could build a trusting relationship (Ibid.). Youth expressed the need for service providers to offer emotional support in the form of caring affirmation, feedback on their progress, and time devoted to discovering their individual interests, skills, and goals (Ibid., pp. 32, 51). Given the diversity of the homeless youth population, employment service providers must be sensitive to different cultures and minorities and must especially provide emotional and social support to individuals who may experience stigma and victimization (Gaetz, 2014, p. 80; Lenz-Rashid, 2006, p. 254). In order to promote the development of trusting relationships, Stewart et al. (2010) suggest that youth be involved in choosing their case manager (p. 159). In addition, Shaheen and Rio (2007) suggest that service providers cross-train their staff in issues related to both mental health and employment (p. 346).

Gaetz (2014) notes that program effectiveness is based on service providers targeting the specific needs and circumstances of individual youth (p. 80). Youth surveyed by the McCreary Centre Society (2014a) commonly cited a lack of specialist help as a barrier to finding employment, noting that service providers who offered individualized, youth-centred supports were the most helpful (pp. 22, 28). Similarly, research by Stewart et al. (2010) found that youth stressed their need for more “individualized, age appropriate information” (p. 156). Likewise, Lenz-Rashid (2006) notes that some youth may require more training or support than others, such as individuals with mental health issues (p. 252). Thus, to effectively meet the needs of a diverse youth population, service providers must be both “flexible” and “forgiving” and allow youth to “try and fail and try again” which they would normally have the opportunity to do within a

familial setting (Cauce et al., 1994, p. 220; Chan, Garland, Ratansi, & Yeres, 2007, p. 15). Finally, Gaetz and Scott (2012) note that some youth are simply not ready to engage in education or employment but should not be penalized as a result (p. 32). These youth may still derive many benefits from accessing the programs offered by employment service providers, such as building confidence and enhancing life skills.

### *Employment Program Structure*

When asked to design their ideal employment training program, youth interviewed by the McCreary Centre Society offered various suggestions in regard to program duration, access, and related supports. Generally youth suggested that programs should be six months to one year in length, although some youth recommended that programs last up to five years, while others noted that they should last as long as youth needed them (McCreary Centre Society, 2014a, p. 50). Overall, the need for an individualized and flexible structure was highlighted, to accommodate youth who may not be able to commit to a program ranging from six to 12 months in length due to challenges with homelessness or mental health issues (Ibid., p. 52). Youth also expressed their desire to be able to take time off from an employment program if necessary, without having to give up their place in the program (Ibid., p. 51).

Youth surveyed agreed that youth employment services should be separate from adult employment services, and youth should be eligible to access specialized services up to their late twenties (Ibid.). The location of employment services was noted as important, with youth commenting that they were more motivated to attend programs that were located in buildings with other supports they were accessing (Ibid., p. 29). In addition, youth proposed that services should be available on a drop-in basis (Ibid., p. 50). Youth also suggested that programs should incorporate the provision of basic necessities including a training wage, food, transportation, health care, housing, and childcare or childcare subsidies (Ibid., p. 51). Moreover, youth expressed the need for assistance purchasing interview clothes or tools required for a job (Ibid., p. 31). In regard to program access and eligibility for additional supports, Stewart et al. (2010) note that service providers must be mindful of establishing rules or limitations that are too rigid and consequently exclude youth from participating in programs (p. 157).

### *Program Fundamentals*

Youth identified several basic components that should be included in employment training programs, ranging from a focus on pre-employment preparation to paid work placements. Many youth expressed frustration with services that only provided resume assistance and access to job postings (Ibid., p. 28). Instead, youth noted that programs should include help developing soft skills such as managing anger and anxiety, building professional relationships, and communication and conflict resolution skills (Ibid., pp. 29, 41). The McCreary Centre Society reports that within each youth focus group, at least one individual said that they feared they did not possess the appropriate coping/interpersonal skills to hold down a job and get along with customers and co-workers (Ibid., p. 18). Thus, Matsuba, Elder, Petrucci, and Marleau (2008) note that a requisite feature of an effective employment training program is that it addresses the individual's psychological issues in conjunction with skills training (p. 15). It is important that service providers aim to help youth transition into self-sufficient adults through life skills

training that encourages making mature decisions, developing healthy relationships, and living a meaningful life (Gaetz, 2010, p. 78). Therefore, important program components may include training on money and household management skills; daily life skills such as meal preparation; motivation skills such as goal setting; and leisure skills such as time management (Aviles & Helfrich, 2004, p. 333; Beck, Trutko, Isbell, Rothstein and Barnow, 1997, pp. 3-5; Thomas et al., 2011, pp. 47, 48).

In addition to life skills training, youth noted that specific job skills training should reflect the employment opportunities available in the community and there should be an increased focus on hands-on learning opportunities rather than classroom training, especially for individuals with disabilities or those who struggle in an academic setting (McCreary Centre Society, 2014a, pp. 31, 51). Youth also wanted to know how to apply their qualifications to the job market, by learning about the employment outlook in the local economy and the relevant skills and certifications required for a position in various industries (Ibid., pp. 29, 50). In order to increase their access to employment, youth suggested that programs should offer paid employment placements in different jobs and work environments; this would provide them with the opportunity to discover their skills, interests, and strengths (Ibid., p. 50). Finally, youth struggling with homelessness, mental health issues, and substance use problems emphasized the need for casual work programs that would allow them to work when they were able but did not pressure them to attend on days when they were not feeling up to it (Ibid., p. 29).

### *Communication*

After obtaining employment, youth expressed their desire for continued support and mentorship (Ibid., p. 50). To facilitate a young person's transition into the workplace, clear communication between all parties – the young person, the employment service provider, and the employer – is required (Ratcliff & Shillito, 1996, p. 86). When a young person begins an employment placement, the service provider must explicitly underscore the expectations of the employment training program and the relationship between the employee and the employer (Ibid.). This helps to ensure that youth are treated with dignity and not discriminated against due to their status. Shaheen and Rio (2007) recommend that service providers provide training for their staff members on communication protocols (p. 346). This is particularly important given that the case manager acts as a liaison between the young person and the employer, as well as other organizations that may provide services to the individual (Cauce et al., 1994, p. 221; Trutko et al., 1998, p. ES-5).

Furthermore, it is recommended in the literature that employers become more involved in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of youth employment programs (Ratcliff & Shillito, 1996, p. 86). A study by Ratcliff and Shillito (1996) found that employers who have employed at-risk, homeless, or formerly homeless youth were empathetic toward their employees and wanted to play a more active role in employment programming (p. 86). While the literature suggests that employers should actively cultivate supportive relationships with youth, it is noted that boundaries must also be established in order to prevent the development of inappropriate, co-dependent relationships (Ibid.).

### **4.3 Summary**

In summary, the causes of youth homelessness are varied and the experiences of homeless youth are unique as this population is extremely diverse. As a group, however, homeless youth face a number of key aspects of social exclusion that impact their employability including unstable living arrangements and lack of necessities; educational disengagement; compromised health; and weak social capital. Additional barriers to employment may include lack of employment experience, behavioural problems; substance abuse; and criminal involvement.

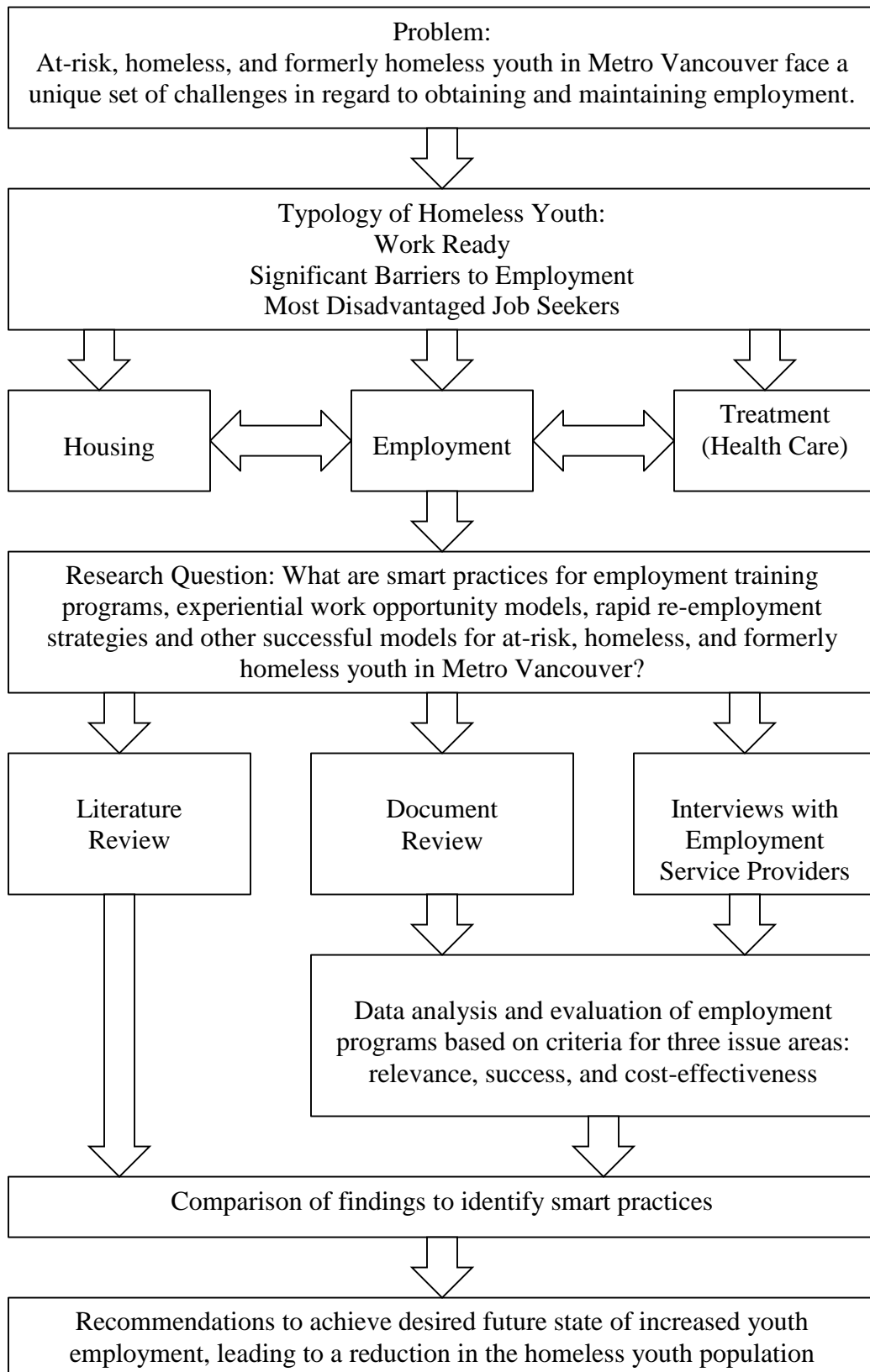
The tangible and intangible benefits of employment are firmly established in the literature and include a regular source of income; improved quality of life; the acquisition of skills and experience; social contact; and improved self-esteem and self-confidence, among others. While research evaluating the effectiveness of employment programs for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth is limited with mixed findings, some emerging models have shown promise based on case study research including the Individual Placement and Support model, the Social Enterprise model, and the Foyer model. Common to all of these models is that employment training and placement is integrated with other social services such as housing and/or health care within a supportive setting.

For any employment intervention to be successful, it is important to understand the perspectives of both service providers and the youth utilizing the services. A 2014 study by the McCreary Centre Society was highlighted as one of the few studies that incorporated the input of marginalized youth; the study reported the views of BC youth in terms of their experiences accessing employment supports within the province. By interviewing Metro Vancouver employment service providers, this report is designed to provide further information on the current state of employment services for marginalized youth in this region specifically, thereby enriching the available literature with service provider input.

### **4.4 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this project is as follows. There are many causal factors that contribute to youth homelessness; the main ones being individual/relational (such as family breakdown), structural (such as a decline in affordable housing), and institutional/systems failures (such as inadequate supports for mental illness). These major factors contribute to the formation of the problem statement that is that homeless youth face a unique set of challenges in regard to obtaining and maintaining employment. In turn, the problem statement places the employment continuum ranging from work ready to the most disadvantaged job seekers. The ability of youth to get off the streets and out of homelessness depends on the combination of three main factors: housing, employment, and availability of treatment (health care). Realizing this, the research question seeks to identify smart practices for employment training programs. Experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models are researched. The literature review, document review, and stakeholder interviews are the sources of this data. The strategic evaluation will assess employment program subtypes on three criteria: relevance, success, and cost-effectiveness. From this data, smart practices are identified and recommendations will be provided to the Client. These form the basis of the desired future state which is employment for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver.

**Figure 3: Conceptual Framework**



## **5 Document Review**

### **5.1 Overview**

The document review provides an overview of the current state of policies and programs designed to address homelessness and facilitate employment for vulnerable populations in Metro Vancouver. First, key federal, provincial, and municipal homelessness and employment policies are discussed. Second, a description of the individual programs and services offered by various employment organizations within the community is provided in Appendix A.

Information was primarily gathered from online sources including the Government of Canada, Government of British Columbia, and Metro Vancouver websites. Likewise, most information on the employment programs and services offered by various organizations in Metro Vancouver was obtained online. While a few organizations publish financial statements, strategic plans, and annual reports on their websites, the majority do not. Publicly available information is limited to program descriptions; mission, vision, and value statements; sources of funding; board members; and summaries of strategic direction.

### **5.2 Findings**

#### *Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)*

As part of the Government of Canada's Economic Action Plan 2013, the federal government launched the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), a community-based program designed to prevent and reduce homelessness through the provision of direct support and funding to 61 designated communities across Canada (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2015, paras. 2, 7). The HPS provides close to \$600 million in funding over five years (2014-2019) and is based on a Housing First Approach (Ibid.). Funding is provided through both grants and contributions. Eligible funding recipients include individuals; not-for-profit organizations; for-profit organizations; municipalities; Aboriginal organizations; public health and educational institutions; and provincial and territorial governments and their entities, including institutions, agencies, and Crown Corporations (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014b, p. 1). Maximum HPS funding per project or initiative is \$125M over five years for contributions, and \$250,000 per year for five years for grants (Ibid.).

Under the HPS, designated communities with a funding allocation greater than \$200,000 per year (including Vancouver) are required to develop a five-year comprehensive community plan, which describes their approach for addressing local homelessness, including Housing First and non-Housing First activities, priorities for funding, key performance indicators, targets, and expected outcomes (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014b, p. 1). Communities are required to match HPS funding through other sources including provincial and municipal governments, private donations, and charitable contributions (Ibid.). As one of ten large cities identified under the HPS, Vancouver is required to commit a minimum of 65% of HPS funding toward a Housing First approach (Greater Vancouver Regional District, n.d., p. 1).

The Greater Vancouver Regional District (Metro Vancouver) is the federally approved Community Entity that administers the HPS at the local level (Metro Vancouver, 2015a, p.1). Funding is dispersed through a Call for Proposals process that is managed by a partnership between the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH), and the Community Advisory Board (CAB) (Ibid.). Priorities identified in the *Vancouver 2014-2019 Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan* include the provision of individualized services to improve the self-sufficiency of at-risk and homeless individuals and families; preserving or increasing the capacity of facilities to address the needs of the at-risk and homeless populations; ensuring coordination of resources and leveraging; improving data collection and use; and the Housing First approach (Ibid.). In 2016, the next Call for Proposals will be posted, for a contract period of September 2016 to March 2019 (Ibid.).

#### *Homeless Prevention Program (HPP)*

The Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) is an initiative funded through the *Canada-BC Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) Agreement 2014-2019* that provides portable rent supplements to at-risk groups facing homelessness to assist them with accessing housing in the private rental market (BC Housing, 2015b, p. 1). At-risk groups include youth transitioning out of foster care; women who have experienced violence or are at risk of violence; individuals leaving correctional and hospital facilities; and individuals of Aboriginal descent (Ibid.). The program is implemented by the Province, through BC Housing, in partnership with non-profit providers who meet specific program criteria (Ibid.). The program is available in six communities across British Columbia, including Metro Vancouver, and has a combined federal-provincial investment of \$62.5M over five years (BC Housing, 2015a, p. 1).

#### *Municipal Homelessness Plans*

Both the City of Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver RSCH have prepared 10-year plans to end homelessness. The City of Vancouver's plan entitled *Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021* is primarily focused on increasing the availability of accessible, affordable, and suitable housing options for all Vancouver residents (Context Ltd., 2011, p. 5). The plan has three strategic directions: "increase the supply of affordable housing; encourage a housing mix across all neighbourhoods that enhances quality of life; [and] provide strong leadership and support partners to enhance housing stability" (Ibid., p. 6). The Greater Vancouver RSCH plan has a broader focus on three key areas: housing; prevention and support (including social, health, and employment support services); and capacity building (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014a, p. 14).

#### *Canada – British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and the Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC)*

Since 2009, the Province of BC has assumed responsibility for the design, delivery, and management of Employment Insurance-funded programs and services under the *Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA)* (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2013, p. 1). Following the transfer of approximately \$280.5M in annual

program funding from the federal government to the provincial government under the LMDA, the BC Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation launched the Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC) on April 2, 2012 (Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, n.d. a, p. 2). The EPBC integrated ten legacy programs and services delivered by the Ministry into one comprehensive employment program designed to provide services to all unemployed British Columbians, including those who are receiving EI benefits, those who are attempting to move from income assistance to paid employment, those who lack work experience or language skills, and those who face employment barriers (Ministry of Social Development and Innovation, n.d. b, pp. 2-3; BC Centre for Employment Excellence, 2013, p. 1). Contractors and community-based service providers deliver the program through 85 WorkBC Employment Service Centres in 73 geographic catchment areas across the province (Ibid., p. 3). Prior to the EPBC, employment services were delivered through a broad range of agencies that tailored services toward specific groups, such as people with disabilities, recent immigrants, and youth (BC Centre for Employment Excellence, 2013, p. 1). Under the EPBC model, job seekers, regardless of their unique needs, can access services delivered through WorkBC Employment Service Centres (Ibid.).

The EPBC classifies clients into three categories according to specific eligibility criteria: clients receiving EI, clients receiving BC Employment and Assistance (BCEA), and general clients (John Coward Consulting, 2013, p. 6). The majority of homeless youth belong to the latter category. General clients have more limited access to case managed services. To fill this service gap and address some of the needs of targeted populations, the provincial and federal governments have developed a range of “Alternative Employment Programs” (Ibid.). Youth and multi-barriered individuals are identified as targeted populations under the EPBC and contractors are required to provide services designed to meet the needs of these groups (Ibid., p. 21). Some contractors deliver specialized services through satellite locations, while others have designated case managers with specific training to work with these clients (Ibid.). Unfortunately, an *Environmental Scan of Employment Programs in BC* prepared in 2013 by John Howard Consulting found that staff in WorkBC Centres are often unaware of the full range of Alternative Employment Programs available, which limits their ability to refer clients with specialized needs to the services that they require (Ibid., p. 17).

#### *Alternative Employment Programming for Youth*

The federal and provincial governments have developed a number of programs designed to address the specific needs of unemployed youth (Ibid., p. 25). Youth employment programming is targeted at individuals age 16-30 who are not full-time students (Ibid.). Many of these programs, however, require youth to be “job-ready”. For example, the federally funded *Youth Employment Strategy (YES)* offers the *Skills Link* program which provides funding to employers and organizations that offer eligible activities to youth facing barriers to employment (Service Canada, 2014, p. 1). The program is not designed, however, for youth who are struggling with issues such as homelessness or substance abuse, who are in need of prolonged social support. These youth must first access other services to enhance their employment readiness before they can become eligible to participate in a *Skills Link* intervention (Service Canada, 2015, p. 1). Overall, the available literature on provincial and federal youth employment interventions

suggests that there is a shortage of programming targeted toward the most disadvantaged youth that integrates employment readiness preparation with low threshold work experience.

### **5.3 Summary**

This section has provided a brief overview of the policy framework that has guided the development of programs to assist vulnerable populations in Canada, British Columbia, and Metro Vancouver specifically. A review of the various policies and programs that impact vulnerable youth reveals that successful efforts to assist this population are reliant upon effective collaboration and communication between stakeholders at all levels, including the non-profit and private sectors, municipal, provincial, and federal governments. Interviews with Metro Vancouver employment service providers can reveal further information about the current state of programs for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth. The findings from these interviews are presented in the following section.

## 6 Key Informant Interviews

### 6.1 Overview

The interviews with key informants provided an opportunity to gain insight into the youth employment programs and services currently being offered in Metro Vancouver and situate the evidence from the literature review within the context of the region.

### 6.2 Findings

This section presents the interview findings, which are structured thematically. This approach was used to ensure the confidentiality of interview participants and to allow for the identification of key concepts and perspectives for each interview question. Each interview question focused on a different topic. The topics are as follows: program structure; intake and assessment; program access; intended outcomes; measurement, tracking and evaluation; outcome differences; policies; protocols; program changes; and systemic changes. At the conclusion of the interview each interviewee was given an opportunity to provide any additional insights or comments that may not have been covered in the interview questions.

*Question 1: Please describe the structure of your youth employment program:*

- a) *Type of employment model*
- b) *Target and age group (tailored to serve a specific sub-population of at-risk youth?)*
- c) *Capacity*
- d) *Funding (public, private or mixed)*
- e) *Cost per youth*
- f) *Program duration*

<b>Key Findings – Program Structure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most programs cannot be categorized as belonging exclusively to one subtype (employment readiness preparation, skills training development, or employment placement facilitation) as the programs have overlapping functions.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Youth” is defined differently between programs, with the target age ranging anywhere from 12 to 30 years old.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some programs cater to specific sub-populations of youth.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is considerable variation in program capacity and duration.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The majority of programs utilize a mixed funding model.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The majority of programs do not quantify cost per youth.</li></ul>

Some respondents elected to speak about the broader aspects of the services offered by their organizations, whereas others focused specifically on individual employment programs. Many programs are designed to offer a combination of elements from each employment program subtype through various stages involving workshops and one-on-one sessions with case managers. Other programs focus exclusively on employment readiness preparation (life skills)

or employment skills training. Six organizations use the WorkBC model, which is a fee-for-service model. Three organizations use a supported social enterprise model that generates business revenues but is still reliant on additional funding. Other respondents noted their programs' use of job shadowing and mentorship.

The age range for youth programs varies. Few programs serve youth under the age of 16. While some youth programs assist youth up to the age of 30, programs that utilize the WorkBC model serve clients age 16 to 24. One respondent noted that after completing the programming, youth could return to their organization for continued assistance regardless of age. In general, the majority of youth accessing programming are in their later teens or early twenties.

While most programs are designed to assist all youth with barriers to employment, some programs serve a specific sub-population of youth as part of their mandate. These sub-populations include youth aging out of care; youth with an active court order; youth with serious and persistent mental health issues (including addictions); youth who have dropped out or are on the verge of dropping out of school; Aboriginal youth; and young mothers. One organization has also established a reputation for serving the LGBTQ2 community.

The capacity for programs with set curriculums was generally a relatively small cohort of youth, ranging from approximately 4 to 30 per intake, with multiple intakes per year. For less structured programs, many respondents noted that all eligible youth that enter their doors are served. The majority of structured programs had a duration ranging from 2 to 12 weeks; however, a few respondents noted that programs ran anywhere from 5 to 16 months depending on the individual needs of the client. Some programs offered employment placements ranging from 10 to 16 weeks. One respondent noted that the amount of training is adjusted according to labour market conditions. If few jobs are available, the training program is shortened to place youth in employment more quickly; if jobs are scarce, more time is devoted to training. One organization has a fluid process of intake and discharge where clients are able to take time off from the program in order to complete detox etc. and return and pick up where they left off. For less structured programs, youth may return multiple times to utilize services before securing sustainable employment. The majority of respondents noted that program capacity fluctuates according to the number of youth willing to participate, the time of year, and labour market conditions. Funding was noted as a limitation to expanding program capacity.

The majority of respondents indicated that their programs are funded from a variety of sources. Most programs receive the bulk of their funding from the federal and provincial governments, with several smaller funders also contributing. Specific sources of funding noted include the Ministry of Children and Family Development; Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Social Development; BC Housing; City of Vancouver; Vancouver Coastal Health; Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society; United Way; Vancouver Foundation and various private and corporate donors. Some programs receive provincial and/or federal funding to provide youth with a stipend or honorarium for attending training, or to subsidize wages for work experience. Organizations that use a social enterprise model generate a portion of their funding from the services they provide.

One respondent noted that their organization’s use of a diversified funding model allows them to leverage responsibility across different funders, including government, making them less susceptible to funding losses and giving them more flexibility in terms of program delivery. The introduction of the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement and the decision to introduce a Request for Proposal process was described as a “big box solution” that was not effective for programs designed to assist vulnerable youth. It was noted that as a result of this policy change, many organizations that delivered youth-specific employment programming have disappeared over the last few years.

The majority of respondents noted that their organizations do not measure the program cost per youth because this figure is difficult to quantify, primarily due to variations in client needs. Of the four organizations that do measure this cost, the range is between \$3,500 and \$8,000 per youth.

*Question 2: How does your organization assess youth to ensure fit?*

<b>Key Findings – Intake and Assessment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many programs strive to maintain an “everyone is welcome” policy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The assessment process is often based on the Service Canada model of barriers to employment.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some programs utilize specific eligibility criteria.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation and self-determination of youth is often assessed as a criterion for program eligibility.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a focus on a multidimensional, holistic assessment of individuals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most organizations use an informal interview process and some require youth to complete intake paperwork.</li> </ul>

The majority of respondents noted that their programs strive to maintain an “everyone is welcome” policy; however, it was also noted by many respondents that their programs require youth to be “employment ready”. Youth with serious mental health conditions or substance abuse issues have needs that are beyond the scope of many programs. Often these youth are referred to other services before they are able to access life skills or employment training. A few respondents noted that youth who are actively using substances cannot be given an employment placement due to safety concerns regarding the nature of the work. One respondent noted that their program specifically targeted youth between 16 to 24 years of age who are in recovery for a mental health or substance abuse issue. Some programs are also require youth to be stably housed before they can participate.

Many respondents, including all respondents whose programs utilize the WorkBC model, noted that their program assessment process is based on the Service Canada model of barriers to employment. Examples of barriers include high school non-completion, disability, Aboriginal origin, visible or ethnic minority, single parent, or recent immigrant (Government of Canada, 2015, p. 1). To be assigned to a WorkBC case manager under the Employment Program of British Columbia, youth must be between 16 and 24 years of age, cannot be a full-time student, cannot work more than 20 hours per week, and must be eligible to work in British Columbia.

Almost all respondents noted that their program intake process involves assessing a young person’s level of motivation. One respondent noted that their organization requires youth to drop in and sign up and their motivation is assessed based on whether they follow up on their status. Generally a brief program orientation session is held followed by an interview with a coordinator to discuss the individual’s background, goals, and to determine “fit”. One respondent also noted that for programs offered in a classroom setting, clients are required to complete an activity to assess their teamwork skills in order to ensure that they can work effectively with others and will not disrupt the learning of other participants.

Most respondents indicated that their assessment process is based on a combination of the coordinator’s “gut feeling” and the information gathered from intake paperwork. Many programs require youth to complete an employment readiness questionnaire. The WorkBC model classifies youth into four tiers based on their employment readiness; tier 1 are mostly self-serve, job-ready clients and tier 4 are those with multiple barriers to employment. One respondent noted that the intake process is a significant barrier for tier 4 youth, as they are required to fill out 8-10 pages of paperwork in order to be assigned to a case manager. While staff members do their best to assist youth with paperwork as much as possible, this presents an ongoing challenge. For clients accessing self-serve resources, there is a much shorter intake form followed by a tour of the facilities by a resource advisor.

Some respondents also noted that an important part of the intake and assessment process was allowing youth to connect with the outreach worker or case manager that they feel most comfortable with in order to form a trusting relationship. There is a focus on maintaining a diverse staff that is representative of various ages, ethnicities, genders, and backgrounds. Some organizations employ Aboriginal staff members who are able to form a special connection with Aboriginal youth and foster a greater link to their culture. It was noted that some youth bond more strongly with a parental figure, while others are more likely to connect with someone closer to their age. Some organizations also employ former youth in care or individuals who have experienced homelessness, which enables them to relate to their clients and develop stronger connections.

*Question 3: How do youth initially access your program?*

<b>Key Findings – Program Access</b>
• Referrals
• Outreach Services
• Marketing
• Word-of-mouth
• Walk-ins

Almost all respondents noted that referrals are a primary source of clients for their programs. Referrals are from peers, probation officers, drug and alcohol counsellors, health care services, food banks, provincial ministries, and other non-profit agencies. Several respondents highlighted their organizations’ efforts to establish connections with other service providers to develop a stronger network of services to assist youth more effectively.

Two respondents noted their use of outreach services to promote their organizations and programs. Outreach workers typically approach youth on the streets of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

Some respondents noted that their organizations actively market their programs through a variety of media including posting information on websites such as WorkBC, job forums, Craigslist, Facebook or Vancouveryouth.ca. Organizations also post flyers and posters in areas that are frequented by youth.

Several respondents also reported that their organizations have developed a reputation among the youth population through word-of-mouth. One respondent noted that their organization is known within the youth community for serving the LGBTQ2 population and therefore often receives peer referrals on this basis.

Finally, the majority of respondents also noted that many youth access their programs by walking in to a drop-in centre.

*Question 4: What are the intended outcomes of your program?*

<b>Key Findings – Intended Outcomes</b>
• Program completion
• Sustainable employment
• Work experience
• School attendance and academic achievement
• Wellness, stability and improved quality of life
• Strengthened networks

The majority of respondents emphasized that the intended outcomes of their programs are very broad and based on a complete range of social determinants; however, employment placement, improved attachment to the labour market, and school attendance were noted as the primary program objectives. Some programs have specific employment placement targets outlined in their funding contracts. Under the Employment Program of British Columbia, WorkBC service centres have the ultimate goal of connecting individuals to sustainable employment for a minimum of 24 weeks. While it is the mandate of some organizations to secure a targeted number of employment placements, one respondent noted that in practice, improving youths' employment readiness is also a desired outcome.

Other noted outcomes include improved attachment to and knowledge of the employment continuum; work or volunteer experience; improved academic performance; decreased dependency on government forms of financial support; development of tangible skills including resume writing, interview skills and leadership abilities; decreased substance abuse; increased self-advocacy and self-esteem; increased awareness of and attachment to primary health care; food security; reduced number of interactions with the criminal justice system; acquisition of stable housing; mental health recovery; and overall improved stability, health and well-being.

Three respondents noted that intended program outcomes are youth-driven and based entirely on the goals of the individual. In many cases this may involve obtaining paid employment; however, in other cases goals may include addressing health issues, building self-confidence and self-esteem, receiving a reference for more intensive training programs, and moving toward greater independence and self-sufficiency. The focus of these programs is to empower youth to establish personal goals and the provision of an individualized action plan to assist them. One respondent also noted that establishing mentoring relationships and strengthening youths' networks are important program outcomes.

*Question 5: How is program success measured, tracked and evaluated? Why did you decide to measure it this way? What are the resulting pros and cons?*

<b>Key Findings – Measurement, Tracking and Evaluation</b>
• Performance indicators are generally based on metrics established by major funders.
• Measures are both quantitative and qualitative.
• Organizations collect feedback from youth and employers during and after the program.
• Emphasis is placed on the importance of follow-up.

Several respondents noted that performance measurement is largely driven by the requirements established by major funders, in most cases the provincial and federal governments. Reporting requirements tend to be heavily focused on various quantitative measures including the number of youth accessing services, the number of youth completing programs, the number of youth accepted into case management, the number of employment placements, the duration of employment, and the number of youth returning to school. For organizations utilizing the WorkBC model, performance measures mandated by the Province of BC are tracked and recorded within an integrated case management system. One respondent also noted that their organization focuses on a number of quantitative health-based measures such as the number of youth accessing emergency medical or treatment services. Intake and exit forms are often used to gather baseline information on participants and track their status after program completion. Statistics on these quantitative measures are compiled and recorded in quarterly and/or annual reports. It was noted by many respondents that the amount of reporting required is a challenge that reduces the time and resources available to assist youth.

At the organizational level, there is an emphasis on qualitative measurement of outcomes for several programs. Many respondents highlighted their organizations' efforts to capture youth perspectives through evaluation forms. One respondent noted that youth were invited to participate in exit interviews to learn about their opinions on the most relevant and challenging aspects of the programming and their likes and dislikes. While program evaluation forms were viewed as a way to obtain direct, current feedback from youth, one respondent noted that even though these forms are generally anonymous, some youth might not feel comfortable enough to share their honest opinions.

For programs involving a work experience or employment placement component, many organizations seek feedback from employers on youth performance and program design. Several respondents stressed the importance of ongoing communication between service providers and employers to maintain positive relationships and address any challenges that may arise.

Generally, youth are also evaluated on their individual progress over the duration of the program by their trainer, mentor, or coach.

A few organizations publish individual youth success stories. One respondent mentioned that a challenge in this regard is providing sufficient context and narrative to demonstrate program success while also being mindful of client privacy. One respondent also noted that in general there is not enough emphasis on qualitative measurement. While on paper an individual may not appear to be a success, the person may have changed considerably in ways that cannot be measured quantitatively. It was emphasized that a mixed-methods approach needs to be used to sell the impacts of programming.

The majority of respondents noted their organizations' efforts to follow-up on the status of youth that participate in their programs. Clients that are case managed under the WorkBC model are contacted at 4 weeks, 12 weeks, and 24 weeks. If they are sustainably employed at 24 weeks, their files are closed. A few respondents noted that their organizations strive to remain in contact with youth for six months to a year after employment placement. Many respondents noted that their organizations have a less formal follow-up process, where youth check back intermittently if they are in need of additional assistance. Almost all respondents noted that they often experience difficulties following up with youth because they may lack phone access and live a very transient lifestyle.

*Question 6: Are there differences in program outcomes for different homeless youth sub-populations (e.g. gender, Aboriginal)? If so, are there identifiable reasons for these differences?*

<b>Key Findings – Outcome Differences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The majority of organizations do not assess outcome differences for specific demographic sub-populations of youth.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some organizations observed outcome differences for specific demographics.</li></ul>

The majority of organizations do not formally track differences in program outcomes between sub-populations of youth participants. The primary reason noted for not stratifying outcomes demographically was the small sample size for most programs. Several respondents offered various anecdotal observations regarding program enrolment and outcome differences. For example, programs offering employment placements in non-traditional occupations for women had much lower female participation. Observed outcomes specific to particular demographics include increased connection to Aboriginal culture and increased self-confidence for young parents. One respondent highlighted a marked increase in the self-esteem of female participants as a result of program participation, which was partially attributed to their use of physical fitness facilities. Transgendered youth were observed to have greater difficulty than their peers in obtaining employment, which was attributed to the social stigma attached to this sub-population. One respondent also observed a lower program completion rate for youth who lived further away from the service provider due to transportation issues that interfered with program attendance. Finally, the majority of interview respondents observed that youth without stable housing all struggled with completing programs and obtaining and maintaining employment when compared to their stably housed peers.

*Question 7: Please identify policies (municipal, federal, provincial, organizational, other non-profit service provider(s) etc.) that limit the success of your programming. What are the policies that contribute to your success?*

<b>Key Findings – Policies</b>
<p>Policies which limit success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singular focus on employment as a performance indicator of program success</li> <li>• Bureaucratic, complex policies related to service delivery for the Employment Program of British Columbia</li> <li>• Challenges of fee-for-service model</li> <li>• Onerous paperwork</li> <li>• Lack of integration of services</li> <li>• Funding shortages</li> </ul>
<p>Policies which contribute to success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open-door policy that allows youth to access services without scheduling an appointment</li> <li>• Programs targeted specifically toward youth</li> <li>• Flexibility to tailor programming to individual needs</li> <li>• Partnerships between service providers, community agencies and employers</li> <li>• Vancouver Foundation Youth Homelessness Initiative</li> <li>• Wage subsidies for employers that hire youth with employment barriers</li> </ul>

Several respondents noted that the performance indicators established by the provincial and federal governments to measure program success are too singularly focused on employment placement. It was suggested that there should be more emphasis placed on measuring individual development holistically, as there are many youth who benefit from programming for whom immediate employment is not a realistic outcome. All respondents agreed that youth employment programs should not only be evaluated on program completion and job placement rates, but also on the hard and soft skills gained by participating youth, which makes them more employable.

Some respondents indicated that there are specific limitations to the WorkBC model and the Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC) that make it more difficult for youth with employment barriers to access and effectively utilize these services. It was noted that the model works well for tier one clients who are considered employment ready, but it does not work well for tier three or four clients who require extensive supports. The fee-for-service billing structure of the program was viewed as problematic because the fee structure does not allow service providers to bill for the full amount of time and resources devoted to assisting clients with significant employment barriers. In addition, one respondent noted that the policies surrounding the EPBC are continually changing and are difficult to keep up with. The program was viewed as administratively burdensome, and it was noted that the considerable amount of paperwork required takes valuable time away from client service. In general, the “one-stop” approach to employment services was viewed as problematic, as it was noted that many youth have difficulty making appointments with service providers and feel intimidated accessing employment centres frequented by adults. Respondents noted that strategies have been employed to overcome the barriers of the model, including outsourcing administrative duties, maintaining two youth satellite centres, and allowing youth to drop-in during designated hours.

Almost all respondents indicated that the success of their programming is limited by the insufficient integration of employment services with other programs for housing and health care / treatment. Overall, there is a strong desire for a more holistic approach to service delivery. In addition, funding shortages were noted as a barrier to offering more comprehensive services with wrap-around supports such as hot meals, transit tickets, and training subsidies. The time limit for some programs was viewed as too short due to funding cuts. Youth begin to develop positive relationships with a mentor, but must quickly move on when the program ends. One respondent also noted that the current limitation on income for youth in receipt of income assistance is a disincentive for youth to work full time to get ahead. Finally, it was noted that the shortage of stable housing for youth limits their ability to successfully participate in programs and that a greater emphasis on the harm reduction model for housing is required.

All respondents agreed that tailoring services specifically toward the youth population was a necessary requirement for program success. Versatility and a flexible curriculum to suit a variety of needs were also viewed as important. Many respondents also noted that youth had improved success in the programs where organizations were able to provide hands-on learning experiences in addition to, or as a substitute for, classroom-based training.

It was noted that one of the greatest factors contributing to program success is the development of partnerships among service providers, community agencies, and employers. For example, one respondent specifically highlighted the work of the Vancouver Foundation on their Youth Homelessness Initiative. Grants from community agencies to fund youth programs are viewed as an important source of funding. In addition, wage subsidies for employers that hire youth with employment barriers were noted as key to encouraging employers to provide employment placements.

*Question 8: Do you have training and placement protocols and/or evaluations that you can share?*

The majority of respondents highlighted the availability of program information on their organizations' websites. A few respondents provided copies of youth and employer evaluation forms and one provided a research report that included a program evaluation.

*Question 9: What changes have you made since the inception of your program(s) and why?*

<b>Key Findings – Program Changes</b>
• Learning organizations that make frequent, small changes
• Introduction of new software, systems and databases
• Introduction of some additional wrap-around supports where funding was available.
• In many cases, funding changes have restricted program offerings and impacted eligibility requirements.

Many respondents emphasized the importance of continuously transforming their programs through small adjustments to make improvements where necessary. For example, one respondent noted their organization's need to re-evaluate relationships with employer partners when it was discovered that some were not supportive enough of their youth hires. Another

respondent noted making adjustments to hours of operation based on observed patterns of when youth access services. In general, respondents indicated a preference for fine-tuning programs over time, rather than making broader changes en masse. It was noted that organizations with a diversified funding model were less susceptible to sweeping changes or program overhauls caused by provincial and/or federal policy and funding shifts.

Other positive changes to programs that were highlighted by the respondents include incorporating more hands-on learning experiences outside of a classroom setting; bringing in Aboriginal role models or guest speakers to encourage the development of stronger connections to culture; including a focus on mental health and mindfulness; adding team-building activities to program workshops; and increasing the number of employment placement hours. One respondent also highlighted their organization’s plans to introduce employer training sessions that will focus on how to work effectively with youth in the program and guidance on program logistics such as how wage subsidies work etc.

Federal and provincial policy, funding availability, and youth and employer feedback were identified as the key drivers of change. Some respondents noted the challenges associated with adapting their service delivery model to align with the requirements of the Employment Program of British Columbia, introduced in 2012. A few respondents suggested that the introduction of the EPBC had negatively impacted service delivery because time was required to adjust to the introduction of integrated case management software and the program involves heavy administrative requirements that have taken time away from client care. One respondent noted that their organization had been able to streamline staff roles by outsourcing their administrative work. This change helped with quality assurance and allowed the organization’s staff to devote more time to interacting with clients.

Several respondents indicated that funding cuts had caused them to re-evaluate the types of additional supports that they were able to provide as part of their programming. For example, one respondent noted that their organization had been forced to eliminate the provision of hot meals to participants. Youth and employer feedback were viewed as key to ensuring that funding is appropriately allocated to various program components. For example, one respondent noted that feedback from youth exit surveys allowed them to identify that access to transportation was a barrier for youth to attend their program. Consequently, transit tickets were made available to participants in the subsequent intake.

*Question 10: What three changes (in order of importance) should be made to the current system in order to build an integrated system response to help improve employment outcomes for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth?*

<b>Key Findings – Systemic Changes</b>
• More holistic approach to support and service delivery
• More corporate involvement and greater incentives for employers to hire youth with employment barriers
• Changes to minimum wage, income assistance, foster care age, and student loan policies
• Improved communication system to inform youth about programs available to assist them
• More programming dedicated specifically toward youth

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|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More flexible, client-led, individualized approach to service delivery</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Longer term funding commitments and additional subsidies</li></ul>               |

All respondents agreed that a more holistic approach to support and service delivery would benefit youth. There is a strong desire for better coordination between housing, treatment / health care and employment services. One respondent suggested that a working group should be formed with the aim of determining how funding can be integrated to support youth in each of these key areas. There was a specific emphasis placed on strengthening the link between mental health services and employment, while identifying more employers that would be willing to hire youth recovering from mental health issues.

Several respondents emphasized the need for an increased level of corporate involvement to help youth overcome the barriers to employment. It was noted that the government has a responsibility to develop policies that encourage employers to hire at-risk and formerly homeless youth. One respondent noted that reintroducing British Columbia's training wage is one option to incentivize employers to hire employees that they otherwise would not take a risk on. Leveraging corporate-community partnerships was viewed as key to eliminating the stigma associated with at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth and solving youth homelessness.

Many respondents expressed the need for various government policy changes. A few respondents noted that minimum wage and the earnings exemption for income assistance should be increased. Others suggested that the foster care age should be extended, and that there should be a tiered system for youth exiting foster care. It was noted that youth require greater supports for housing until they are 30 years of age. Finally, one respondent noted the need for a change to student loan eligibility requirements or grants to include short-term upgrading, to allow at-risk and formerly homeless youth to focus on their education.

A few respondents indicated that there seems to be a lack of awareness among youth about the programs available to assist them. It was noted that there is a need for a more coordinated effort to inform youth about existing services. In general, however, respondents felt that there was a shortage of programs specifically designed to assist youth. One respondent noted that the WorkBC model does not work well for youth because there are not enough youth-specific employment service centres and many youth are too intimidated to access centres frequented by adults. Almost all respondents agreed that there is significant services gap for clients who are pre-employment and who require life skills and essential skills training. One respondent noted that many of the interventions that youth are referred to do not accept them into the programs because they do not represent a good chance of being counted as a successful employment statistic.

All respondents agreed that a more flexible, client-led, individualized response to service delivery would enhance youths' chances of employment success. Many respondents suggested that outcomes should be broadened to include a greater focus on individual growth, community attachment, and volunteerism, in addition to the number of successful employment placements. A few respondents noted that the fee-for-service model should be eliminated because it does not work well for clients with significant employment barriers and it encourages rapid turnover of clients.

Respondents also expressed the need for longer term funding commitments to ensure continuity of service delivery and further subsidies to provide additional wrap-around supports. It was noted that there should be a greater investment in the provision of basic necessities such as phones and interview clothing. Many respondents suggested that there should be increased funding for certificate programs such as Foodsafe, First Aid, and WHMIS, as well as rent subsidies for youth involved in training or academic upgrading so that youth are not forced to sacrifice their education in order to be employed to pay for basic necessities.

*Question 11: What questions have we missed? Is there anything you would like to add?*

Several respondents provided some concluding thoughts to this discussion. In general, it was agreed that more programs and services are required for youth who are homeless because they cannot successfully participate in many programs when their basic needs are not being met. Some respondents commented that the eligibility criteria for various employment readiness programs should be expanded to serve a wider range of individuals, as currently there are some excellent programs that are restricted to specific sub-populations of youth, such as former youth in care. One respondent also emphasized the importance of identifying and generating more suitable employment placements for youth in recovery from substance abuse. It was noted that working in the restaurant industry, for example, is often a challenge for these youth because they are placed in an environment where alcohol consumption is the norm among their peers. Finally, many respondents emphasized that more work needs to be done to eliminate the stigma associated with at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth. It was noted that many youth are ready and able to work, but employers are not ready to hire them.

### **6.3 Summary**

The interviews with employment service providers were successful in helping to ascertain the current state of employment services for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver. Important insights were shared on program capacity, outcomes, successes, setbacks, and challenges. The interview results provided a diversity of perspectives and consensus views on many issues. Key themes that emerged from the interviews were used to inform the development of smart practices for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth employment programs, which are discussed in the following section of this report.

## **7 Discussion and Analysis**

### **7.1 Overview**

The discussion and analysis compares the findings from the document review and key informant interviews with the literature review to establish the inconsistencies (gaps) between the current state of homeless youth employment services in Metro Vancouver and the promising practices and theories identified in the literature review. This section is comprised of two main parts: the knowledge-generating evaluation of employment program subtypes in Metro Vancouver and the identification of smart practices for homeless youth employment programs.

First, based on the data collected from the document review and key informant interviews, Metro Vancouver youth employment programs are categorized into three subtypes: employment readiness preparation, skills training development, and employment placement facilitation. The findings from the document review and key informant interviews confirm that many programs belong to more than one subtype as they offer multiple components. A breakdown of employment programs by subtype is provided in Appendix A. The relevance, success, and cost-effectiveness of these program subtypes are assessed in this section.

Second, the findings from the key informant interviews are compared with the major themes identified in the literature review to identify five smart practices for homeless youth employment programs. While there is not enough generalizable, evaluation-based evidence to call these practices “best practices”, they do hold promise and are worthy of attention based on case studies with encouraging results (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2013, pp. 7-8).

### **7.2 Evaluation of Employment Program Subtypes**

The first issue area for the evaluation of employment program subtypes is relevance. Relevance is assessed based on the following criteria: 1) the extent to which the objectives and design of the programs are consistent with the needs and priorities of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth; and 2) the degree of overlap between services and competition between agencies for limited resources.

It is evident from the interview findings that there is greater demand for programs than there is capacity, particularly for programs focusing on employment readiness preparation, which is an area that is highly needed by at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth. A general theme noted in the interviews was the shift that has occurred in recent years toward the wider availability of employment services for job-ready youth, and the decline in the availability of programming for the most disadvantaged job seekers. The majority of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth require more intensive pre-employment training before they are able to access conventional skills training programs and employment services.

The document review and interview findings suggest that there are several small-scale employment readiness preparation programs within Metro Vancouver that are making a positive

difference in the lives of vulnerable young people. Limited funding was identified as a barrier to expanding capacity and the number of intakes for these programs. One issue is that numerous complementary services are provided by various agencies and the level and type of collaboration between agencies varies. Overall, the document review and interview findings suggest that there is considerable room for greater collaboration and cooperation between agencies to reduce the fragmentation of services, coordinate funding, and improve outcomes.

Both the literature and the interview findings highlight the fact that youth who are not stably housed are rarely able to successfully participate in skills development or employment placement programs. Thus, without the appropriate wrap-around supports, these programs lose their relevance for homeless youth who are simply unable to take advantage of them. It was noted by several interview respondents that the insufficient integration of employment services with other programs for housing and health care limited the extent to which the design of their employment programs could accommodate homeless youth.

The most relevant employment programs identified in this research offer a combination of employment readiness preparation, skills training development, and employment placement facilitation, with the provision of additional supports. The design of these programs is supported by promising practices identified in the literature as these programs address a broader range of needs (life skills development, in-demand employment certifications, and paid experience) and provide continuity of services to program participants. Notably, some of the trades or manual labour-based programs that follow this model may be less relevant to vulnerable females, as evidenced by the much lower female participation rates for these programs. The interview findings suggest that females may be less interested in pursuing employment in non-traditional, male-dominated fields; therefore this suggests a need for the development of more programs that utilize this model in employment areas of interest to the marginalized female youth population.

The second issue area for the evaluation of employment program subtypes is success. Success is defined as the extent to which programs are effective in meeting their intended outcomes, and the amount of progress being made toward the achievement of ultimate outcomes. As very limited quantitative data is publicly available on program outcomes, it is impossible to determine the true extent of the success of various programs. Descriptive, qualitative evidence gathered from the interviews, however, provided information on areas where some programs are excelling and areas where others are encountering challenges.

For example, the interview findings suggest that many of the employment readiness preparation and skills training programs are successful in terms of enhancing participants' self-esteem and self-confidence; improving their emotional intelligence; helping them develop soft skills such as effective communication and conflict resolution; and improving mental and physical well-being. Thus, these programs are currently serving an important purpose in the lives of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth, even if steady employment is not always the subsequent outcome. The interview findings suggest that these programs have made youth more employable, if not employed. A key issue identified in the interviews was that pressure from funders to achieve outcomes that they deem to indicate success, such as the number of employment placements, can have the unintended consequence of encouraging the selection of program participants with fewer barriers to increase their likelihood of successfully completing programs and meeting

established targets. Thus, a few respondents noted that in some cases, youth in desperate need of employment assistance are being turned away from programs because they are unlikely to represent a successful employment statistic.

Effective evaluations of program success are dependent on the development of the right key performance indicators. Some interview respondents reported their efforts to qualitatively measure outcomes by assessing youth at program intake and subsequently evaluating their progress upon program completion. The challenge associated with qualitative measurement of this nature is that it is very subjective; anecdotal statements may be made but it is difficult to report hard facts. In addition, there are privacy issues associated with reporting individual “stories” of youth progress.

Overall, if the ultimate intended outcome of these employment programs is to meet the needs of all at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth, then there is still considerable progress to be made in terms of their success. As few programs are highly integrated with other supports (i.e. housing and health care), many of them are only capable of meeting the needs of job-ready individuals. Thus, the interview findings suggest that there is a significant service gap when it comes to meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged job seekers.

The third and final issue area for the evaluation of employment program subtypes is cost-effectiveness. Cost-effectiveness refers to the extent to which programs are utilizing the most efficient means to achieve outcomes, relative to alternative models and delivery strategies. The interview results revealed that the majority of organizations do not report the cost-per-youth or break down publicly available financial statements by program/service type. Thus, it was not feasible to conduct a full cost-effectiveness analysis comparing individual programs to various alternatives. There were, however, general observations reported by some interviewees in regard to the Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC) funding model that pertain to the cost-effectiveness of WorkBC services. Several respondents also suggested that funding could be used more efficiently by further integrating employment, housing, and health care services.

A few interview respondents noted that the use of fee-for-service billing under the EPBC has been problematic because it does not allow agencies to adapt their services to their clients’ needs. While the model was reported to work well for tier 1 and 2 clients with low employment barriers, it was said to not work well for tier 3 and 4 clients who require more extensive, time-consuming supports. A criticism of the model was that it encourages a high turnover of clients and acts as a disincentive for service providers to perform services for which they cannot bill, if other billable options exist. Thus, organizations may be more likely to “pass off” the most disadvantaged job seekers to other agencies. Conversely, decisions are sometimes made within an organization to provide services for which they cannot bill, which results in a significant strain on resources. These disadvantages of the fee-for-service model combined with the associated administrative burden suggest that it may not be the most cost-effective model to meet the needs of a broad range of clients. Finally, several interview respondents suggested that a more integrated, holistic service delivery model could potentially be more cost-effective by allocating resources more efficiently.

### **7.3 Smart Practices for Employment Programs**

This section presents five smart practices for homeless youth employment programs based on findings from the literature review and key informant interviews.

#### **1. Develop holistic programs with wrap-around supports**

Both the literature review and key informant interview findings indicate that employment training is most effective when integrated into a broader system of supports that includes shelter, income, and access to appropriate health care and social supports. Stable housing was noted as the fundamental prerequisite for successful participation in an employment training program. In addition, youth require financial support to obtain the necessary clothing and equipment required for work, to maintain their personal hygiene, to meet their nutritional needs, and to pay for transportation (Gaetz & O’Grady, 2013, p. 262). In general, the interview respondents agreed that housing, mental health, and substance abuse could be addressed more effectively alongside employment. Furthermore, a more integrated service delivery model can promote economies of scale, reduce overlap in services, and utilize available funding more effectively.

The literature and interview findings support the idea that the most effective youth employment programs incorporate all three subtypes of programming: employment readiness preparation, skills training development, and employment placement facilitation, delivered in a staged process. Participants begin this type of program by learning basic life skills, followed by a focus on the development of real, marketable employment skills (ideally in areas of high labour market demand with growth potential such as skilled trades), and finally take part in a paid employment placement that provides them with the opportunity to develop real-world work experience. Throughout this process, a mentor or job coach supports the participants, helps them deal with emerging challenges, and facilitates communication with the employer to ensure their ongoing success. An important advantage of this model is its continuity; this allows youth to develop strong relationships with the service provider and allows the service provider to gain the confidence of employer partners to promote access to job placements. Finally, the ideal employment program model also incorporates a focus on educational advancement so that youth can improve their access to opportunities as they gain more experience.

#### **2. Strengthen partnerships between service providers**

It is acknowledged that in some cases, youth may have needs that are simply beyond the scope of what an employment service delivery model can offer, even if wrap-around supports are provided. For example, youth struggling with severe mental illness may require the services of an outside clinical specialist before they can be expected to participate in life skills and employment training programs, particularly if their behaviour may disrupt the learning of their peers. This necessitates the development of strategic partnerships between service providers to put in place the adequate supports to meet the needs of these youth. In addition, strategic partnerships will involve services such as education, addictions counselling, and industry partners. These partnerships are key to ensuring ongoing program effectiveness and early interventions to prevent at-risk youth from becoming homeless.

### **3. Adopt a flexible service delivery model tailored to individual needs**

At-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth are a diverse population in terms of their backgrounds, needs, preferences, and employment intentions; Shier et al. (2012) note that “cookie cutter” programs “miss this point” (p. 44). Thus, employment programs should be client-driven and include a focus on developing an individualized plan that aligns with the needs and goals of each program participant. Key to providing individualized services is the idea that a highly trained staff that is representative of various ages, ethnicities, genders, and backgrounds can be helpful in terms of providing youth with the opportunity to connect and form a relationship with someone to whom they can relate. Finally, the ability to offer a versatile and flexible program curriculum is important to accommodate youths’ individual needs. For example, offering hands-on experience and one-on-one training alongside classroom, group-based learning is one means of tailoring programming to suit a variety of learning styles.

### **4. Expand the criteria for program outcomes**

Several interview respondents highlighted the need to expand the definition of successful program outcomes beyond quantitative criteria such as the number of program completions and employment placements. Limiting evaluation criteria to these purely quantitative measures fails to account for the variety of external structural and socioeconomic factors that influence youths’ employment success such as the state of the housing market or labour market conditions. Furthermore, this approach to program evaluation fails to take into account several important indirect benefits of youth participation in employment programs (Robinson & Baron, 2007, p. 34). Indirect benefits emphasized by the interview respondents include building increased self-esteem and self-confidence; the opportunity to develop social capital by expanding one’s network; and improvements to physical and mental health, all of which increase participants’ employability. Thus, further emphasis must be placed on developing qualitative measures with consideration given to the individual circumstances of program participants. Overall, the literature and interview findings suggest that a mixed-methods approach to program evaluation provides a more holistic and accurate indication of program success.

### **5. Actively engage current and potential employers**

Finding employers that are willing to hire at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth is a key challenge associated with delivering successful employment programs. A few interview respondents highlighted the positive steps they had taken to develop relationships with employers and seek their feedback on programs. Understanding the concerns and needs of employers is important to inform program design and delivery and ensure that they have the capacity to provide the necessary support to youth and the commitment to work with service providers for the long term (Noble, 2012, p. 51). To encourage employer participation, service providers should focus on relationship building, ensuring constant, ongoing communication with existing employers and highlighting the benefits of participation with potential employers; establish clear expectations of all parties involved; and simplify the hiring process and requirements for employers as much as possible.

## **7.4 Summary**

Based on the smart practices identified in this section, the following section proposes four recommendations for the client to consider when deciding how best to facilitate employment of Metro Vancouver's at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth population.

## 8 Recommendations

The following general recommendations stemming from the literature review and key informant interviews are presented to assist the client with next steps. The recommendations are designed to align with the Client's three broad organizational goals: 1) Provide permanent stable housing with appropriate support services; 2) Prevent people who are most vulnerable from becoming homeless; and 3) Build broad public support and commitment for permanent solutions to homelessness. The recommendations are listed in order of priority. An incremental approach is proposed for their implementation.

### **Recommendation #1: Focus on the development of Foyer-model based housing initiatives**

The first recommendation is that the Client allot a percentage of its private, foundations, and corporate donations to funding current and future housing initiatives based on the Foyer model.

This recommendation is firstly based on the smart practice of better integration of services. An important part of the Foyer model is that it provides a holistic environment with wraparound supports. The philosophy of the model is that youth need housing and longer-term supports to help them to transition into adulthood. These supports may include the opportunity to develop life skills, finish their education, and gain employment experience so that they can become economically self-sufficient and socially connected to their community. Thus, this recommendation secondly incorporates the smart practice of adopting a flexible service delivery model tailored to the individual.

Thirdly, this recommendation incorporates the smart practice of expanding the criteria of program outcomes. It takes into account that although youth may not be employment ready, they are developing skills that will help them become more prepared for employment as well as independent living.

This recommendation can be implemented by the Client through an initial assessment of current and future housing initiatives in the region. Funding decisions can then be based on whether the initiative is based on the philosophy behind the Foyer model. In this way, the Client would leverage its role and experience with a Housing First Approach to focus more specifically on youth and their unique needs. In addition, this recommendation addresses the Client goal of providing permanent stable housing with appropriate supports.

### **Recommendation #2: Form a working group to engage local employers**

The second recommendation is to form an employment program working group. It is established on the smart practice of the active engagement of current and potential employers. This incorporates the Client providing leadership and facilitating the development of a working group involving organizations, current employers of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth as well as businesses that could potentially employ this population. The mandate of this group can be threefold: 1) to raise awareness for organizations currently providing employment programs

for youth; 2) to break down the negative stereotypes associated with homeless youth; and 3) to work to create systemic change. This coordinates with the Client goal of building broad public support and commitment for permanent solutions to homelessness.

The implementation of this group can be as follows. The Client would firstly work to draw in community leaders from the private, public and non-profit sectors such as corporate leaders, philanthropists, foundation leaders, etc. This group could work to host forums and open houses to attract potential employers.

### **Recommendation #3: Collaborate with service providers and community foundations to provide employment readiness programs**

The third recommendation includes partnering with organizations to provide employment readiness programs. This incorporates the smart practice of strengthening partnerships between service providers. Though not strictly a service provider, the Client can partner with and provide funding for organizations that provide supports for youth who have significant barriers to employment and are the most disadvantaged job seekers. As mentioned, employment readiness programs are the most relevant to the target population and are in short supply. The youth who access these services have the least amount of supports and would benefit the most from employment readiness preparation. This fulfils the Client goal of helping to prevent people who are most vulnerable from becoming homeless.

Implementing this recommendation includes an initial assessment of organizations that provide employment readiness preparation. Next, it involves communicating and connecting with the identified organizations.

### **Recommendation #4: Pursue further research on the evaluation of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youths' needs and employment programming**

The fourth recommendation is that the Client continue to pursue opportunities for further research on various employment interventions for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth. The literature and the key informant interviews revealed that there is limited evaluation research available on program effectiveness. Recommended areas for future research include an evaluation of WorkBC Employment Service Centres specifically, and an enhanced focus on the diversity of the homeless youth population, including a needs assessment for various groups (LGBTQ2, Aboriginal etc.).

The Client can implement this recommendation by strengthening relationships with the academic and research communities and collaborating with partners such as the Vancouver Foundation to provide joint funding for further studies.

### **Recommendation #5: Maintain communication with the BC Government to promote enhanced service delivery for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth once more evidence is gathered.**

The fifth recommendation is that the Client continue to gather additional evidence on the effectiveness of the Employment Program of British Columbia and the WorkBC service delivery model with the aim of proposing changes to better meet the employment needs of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth.

Maintaining open channels of communication with the Province of BC on various Streethome initiatives will be key to encouraging government receptiveness to proposed changes.

## 9 Conclusion

The objectives of this research project were to map Metro Vancouver employment services for the at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth population and identify smart practices for these programs. A broad literature search was conducted to identify key themes, employment models, and emerging practices. In addition, key informant interviews provided the opportunity for input from Metro Vancouver employment service providers. The result is a report that provides the client with a significant body of literature on the topic, supplemented by the perspectives of youth employment service providers within the region. Overall, the report serves as a valuable resource to inform future plans to implement recommendations that support fast-tracking employment of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver.

The literature review provided an overview of the causes of youth homelessness, the diversity of the homeless youth population, the barriers to employment, benefits of employment, employment models and emerging practices, and youth perspectives on employment services. The literature was particularly useful in providing insight into the social exclusion faced by homeless youth and how this establishes their position along the employment continuum.

The interviews with employment service providers were successful in helping to establish the current state of employment services for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver. The interviews provided rich information about program capacity, outcomes, successes, setbacks, and challenges.

Overall, the key informant interviews were a positive experience. Participants were engaged in the process and many expressed an interest in receiving a copy of the study. The process revealed that organizations are willing to share information and are open to collaboration to improve outcomes for youth. This is an especially positive finding that adds significant value to this project by identifying opportunities for future partnerships.

A key finding of this research is that many employment programs tend to focus on addressing the individual “inadequacies” of youth participants rather than the more complex, structural factors that perpetuate youth homelessness such as poverty, shortages of affordable housing, labour market conditions, and credentialism (Gaetz & O’Grady, 2002, p. 436; Robinson & Baron, 2007, pp. 36, 37, 53; Shier et al., 2012, p. 42). While the literature and this research suggest that employment training programs have the potential to improve youths’ self-esteem, increase their level of community attachment, expand their social capital, and assist them with obtaining sustainable employment, the overall effectiveness of these programs is largely unknown and is limited by the underlying structural issues that perpetuate the marginalization of homeless youth. Thus, it was evident from the literature and the interview responses that there is a need for, and desire to see, further integration of services and funding as well as a greater emphasis on qualitative performance indicators to assess program success within the context of these structural issues.

The smart practices and recommendations highlighted in this report are proposed based on the finding that in order to be successful, employment programs must be delivered within a broader framework of integrated, wrap-around supports. In this way, these programs can begin to

address the social exclusionary factors that prevent marginalized youth from accessing the labour market.

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## **11 Appendices**

## Appendix A: Employment Program Subtypes

Employment Readiness Preparation	Skills Training Development	Employment Placement Facilitation
	ACCESS: Employment Assistance	
ACCESS: Essential Skills		
	ACCESS: Trades	
ACCESS: BladeRunners		
ACCESS: BladeRunners Baristas Training Program		
Agora Employment Essentials: Kaleidoscope		
Aunt Leah's Place: The Link		
Aunt Leah's Place: Essential Skills Program		
	Aunt Leah's Place: Job Training	
Aunt Leah's Place: Cooking Club		
Directions Youth Services: Street Youth Job Action		Directions Youth Services: Street Youth Job Action
Directions Youth Services: Transitions to Independence		
Directions Youth Services: Youth Transitions Program		
Keener's Car Wash		
	Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House: Drive Youth Employment Services (D-YES)	
Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House: Frames Film Program		
Gastown Vocational Services: Youth and Young Adult Program		
Groundswell: Uprising		
	Intersections Media Opportunities for Youth Society	
Kiwassa Neighbourhood House: Youth Leadership		
	Labour Unlimited	
Milieu Family Services South Vancouver Youth Centre: Transition to Adulthood		
newSTART Bridging		
Pacific Community Resources: Broadway Youth Resource Centre		
Pacific Community Resources: Transition to Adulthood Program		
Pacific Community Resources: Independent Living Skills / Next Steps		
Pacific Community Resources: Surrey Youth Resource Centres		
Pacific Community Resources: Youth Volunteer Program		
PLEA Community Services: Youth Development Program		
PLEA Community Services: Goal Orientated Alternative Learning (GOAL)		PLEA Community Services: Goal Orientated Alternative Learning (GOAL)
PLEA Community Services: Genesis		PLEA Community Services: Genesis
PLEA Community Services: Q-Creative Urban Employment		PLEA Community Services: Q-Creative Urban Employment

Providence Health Care: Inner City Youth Mental Health Program		
	Sources BC: Work BC Employment Service Centres	
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.: Youth Employment Program		
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.: Youth Employment Connect (YEC)		
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.: A Chance to Choose		
Take a Hike Youth at Risk Foundation		
Tradeworks		
		United We Can: Recycling Services
		United We Can: Commercial Collections
		United We Can: Lanes and Crossroads
Urban Native Youth Association: Aries Program		
Urban Native Youth Association: Cedar Walk Program		
Urban Native Youth Association: Kinnections Program		
Urban Native Youth Association: Native Youth Learning Centre		
Watari Counselling & Support Services Society: Transitioning to Independence Program (TIP)		
Youth Unlimited: Work Life Program		
Youth Unlimited: Stepping Stones/Thrive Program		
	YMCA of Greater Vancouver: Youth Skills at Work	
	YWCA Metro Vancouver: Work BC Employment Service Centres	
YWCA Metro Vancouver: Focus at Work		
YWCA Metro Vancouver: Futures in Focus		
YWCA Metro Vancouver: Strive		

## Appendix B: Map of Metro Vancouver Youth Employment Organizations

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
<p><b>ACCESS: Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://www.accessfutures.com">http://www.accessfutures.com</a></p>	<p>Established in 1999 under the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), ACCESS is a co-operative venture between Native Education College, Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, and United Native Nations (ACCESS, 2015b, para. 1). ACCESS receives funding through Service Canada and the Province of British Columbia to increase Aboriginal participation in the labour market (ACCESS, 2015a, p. 1; ACCESS 2015c, para. 8).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment Assistance: four centres provide job search resources, job coaching and planning, recruitment and referrals, funding for skills training and work gear.</li> <li>• Essential Skills: Provides life skills and employment skills training.</li> <li>• ACCESS Trades: Provides trades training and apprenticeship programs</li> <li>• BladeRunners: A comprehensive training and support program for youth between the ages of 15-30 that focuses on preparing youth for jobs in the construction industry. BladeRunners provides participants with life skills training, safety and equipment skills, and employment placements, all within an extensive and comprehensive support structure.</li> <li>• BladeRunners Baristas Training Program: A four-phase program that provides youth with work experience in Starbucks Canada outlets for four weeks, along with life skills training and employment skills/certifications such as WHMIS and Serving It Right (Pacific Community Resources, 2010a, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agora Employment Essentials</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://agoraemployment.ca">http://agoraemployment.ca</a></p>	<p>The agency began as the Employment &amp; Community Development department of the Mennonite Central Committee BC (MCC BC in 1990). In 2012, the agency transitioned to Agora, a company owned by MCC BC (Agora Employment Essentials, 2015a, p. 1).</p> <p>Agora focuses on helping individuals find the right career “fit” and providing employment skills development.</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaleidoscope is a Youth Skills Link Program with funding from the Government of Canada. Based in Richmond, the program is for youth between the ages of 16-30 who are not attending school, unemployed or underemployed, not on Employment Insurance and eligible to work in Canada, and have intermediate English skills (Agora Employment Essentials, 2015b, p. 1). Youth are paid minimum wage to attend 30 hours per week for 13 weeks to learn a combination of life skills, job search skills, and digital skills training (Ibid.).</li> <li>• Agora also offers youth employment programs outside of Metro Vancouver in Abbotsford (Youth Keep Working) and Chilliwack (Catch 22 Solutions) (Ibid.).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Aunt Leah's Place</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://auntleahs.org">http://auntleahs.org</a></p>	<p>Aunt Leah's provides support to a diverse population of marginalized and vulnerable young people including teen moms, youth in foster care, and former youth in foster care (Aunt Leah's Place, 2012g, p. 1). Support services include housing, life skills training, employment skills training, and recreational opportunities (Ibid.). Aunt Leah's uses social enterprises (thrift stores, Christmas tree lots) to raise funds and provide employment training and volunteer/work experience for vulnerable youth (Aunt Leah's Place, 2012e, p. 1; Aunt Leah's Place 2012f, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Link:</b> Eligible youth are age 19 and over and are former Aunt Leah's program participants or residents, and/or a former child in care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (Aunt Leah's Place, 2012b, p. 1). This program provides a transition worker who works with each young person to develop an Individual Service Plan based on their strengths and abilities; access to a pre-employment training program; resume and job search assistance; information on employment programs; emergency food and clothing; and essential skills workshops (Ibid.).</li> <li>• <b>Essential Skills Program:</b> Designed for youth under age 19; current and past program participants over age 19 are also welcome to attend. Provides workshops on a variety of topics including budgeting and banking; personal health and well-being; time management; career choices; education options; job search, resume, and interview skills, etc. (Aunt Leah's Place, 2012a, p. 1).</li> <li>• <b>Job Training:</b> Training programs specific to various sectors including food services, retail, and landscape maintenance, which also offer hands-on, practical experience (Aunt Leah's Place, 2012c, p. 1).</li> <li>• <b>Cooking Club:</b> A 12-week program that provides young mothers with employment and life skills training in food preparation (Aunt Leah's Place, 2012d, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Family Services of Greater Vancouver</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Directions Youth Services</b></li> <li>• <b>Keeners Car Wash</b></li> </ul> <p>Websites:  <a href="http://www.fsgv.ca">http://www.fsgv.ca</a>  <a href="http://directionsyouthservices.ca">http://directionsyouthservices.ca</a>  <a href="http://www.keenerscarwash.ca">http://www.keenerscarwash.ca</a></p>	<p>Directions Youth Services is a division of Family Services of Greater Vancouver that works with at-risk and homeless youth between the ages of 13-24. Directions provides a number of services including daily hot meals (at 85 cents per serving), shower and laundry facilities, and a drop-in centre accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year (Family Services of Greater Vancouver, 2015a, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Street Youth Job Action:</b> A social enterprise initiative that prepares at-risk and homeless youth to enter the workforce by providing life skills training, mentorship, development opportunities, and work experience. Teams of two youth (a team leader and a list worker) spend five hour shifts doing street beautification, needle sweeps/condom pick-up and safe disposal; and event clean up and other community enhancement services (Family Services of Greater Vancouver 2015b, p. 1).</li> <li>• <b>Transitions to Independence:</b> Eligible youth are 18 years and under and are referred by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The program provides coaching and life skills training, connects youth to services, and assists with school attendance and employment preparation (Ibid.).</li> <li>• <b>Youth Transitions Program:</b> A 2-year pilot project funded by the</li> </ul>

	<p>Vancouver Foundation, designed for youth 18.5-19 years old who require supports transitioning to independent living. Youth are assigned a case worker who helps them develop an individualized plan, connects them to relevant services, and provides coaching and skills training (Ibid.).</p> <p>Keeners Car Wash is a social enterprise owned by Family Services of Greater Vancouver that provides vulnerable youth with hands-on training and employment opportunities as car wash associates. Keeners Car Wash dedicates 100% of net profits to Directions Youth Services Centre.</p>
<p><b>Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House</b></p> <p>Websites:  <a href="http://www.froghollow.bc.ca">http://www.froghollow.bc.ca</a>  <a href="http://www.framesfilmproject.com">http://www.framesfilmproject.com</a></p>	<p>Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House is community-service organization that is largely volunteer-driven with the goals of enhancing individuals' lives, strengthening the local community, and offering programs and services that meet the needs of a diverse population (Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, 2011a, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive Youth Employment Services (D-YES): Operates as a satellite of Vancouver Northeast Employment Services Centre led by MOSAIC. The program is part of WorkBC and is funded through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement. D-YES provides youth age 16-30 with access to a resource room and case management services (Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, 2011b, p. 1).</li> <li>• Frames Film Program: The program operates out of East Vancouver's sole youth employment centre. Each program cycle is 12 weeks and includes 30 sessions that provide life and employment skills, technical film skills, and film industry knowledge. Participants gain hands-on work experience by conceptualizing, filming, and editing a film for a non-profit client. The program is designed for youth with significant barriers to employment. Participation is by referral only, by a professional adult mentor such as counsellor, facilitator or teacher (The Frames Film Program, 2015, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gastown Vocational Services</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://www.gvsonline.ca">http://www.gvsonline.ca</a></p>	<p>Gastown Vocational Services provides employment and educational services tailored toward youth and adults with mental health disabilities (Gastown Vocational Services, n.d. a, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth and Young Adult Program: In partnership with the Employment Program of British Columbia, GVS provides one-on-one job coaching and supported employment services to youth age 16-29. Services include vocational assessment, individual and group pre-employment readiness sessions, one-on-one job coaching, career counselling, assistance with resume and interview preparation, job shadow and work experience placements, assistance with securing and maintaining volunteer or community attachment placements, computer skills training, and assistance entering/re-entering school or skills training programs (Gastown Vocational Services, n.d. b, p. 1).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Groundswell Grassroots Economic Alternatives</b></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://groundswellcommunity.ca">http://groundswellcommunity.ca</a></p>	<p>Groundswell is a training network that offers skills training programs for individuals to work individually and together to design and build community minded enterprises and projects (Groundswell, n.d. a, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uprising: A pilot program that began in 2015 that works with youth in, or with a history of, foster care to help them create their own ethical employment opportunities. Youth work within a professional environment and mentorship circle to design and develop a small social enterprise business. The program is based on three interrelated concepts: personal development, project development, and professional development (Groundswell, n.d. b, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intersections Media Opportunities for Youth Society</b></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.intersectionsmedia.com">http://www.intersectionsmedia.com</a></p>	<p>Intersections Media Opportunities for Youth Society is a non-profit charitable organization that offers both life skills training and work experience to youth who face barriers to employment (Intersections Media Opportunities for Youth Society, 2015a, p. 1; Intersections Media Opportunities for Youth Society, 2015b, p. 1). In association with Service Canada and BladeRunners, this organization receives funding through the Canada-British Columbia Job Fund and Canada’s Youth Employment Strategy – Skills Link Program (Intersections Media Opportunities for Youth Society, 2015b, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides workshops for youth age 19-28 to learn film and video production skills. Workshops are 11 weeks in length, including four weeks of workshop training and seven weeks (210 hours) of employment experience. Participants must have never participated in a Service Canada Skills Link program, must face barriers to employment and/or education, must not currently be on Employment Insurance or involved in EI-based programs, and must be referred to the program by a case manager at a local employment resource centre (Ibid.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kiwassa Neighbourhood House</b></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.kiwassa.ca">http://www.kiwassa.ca</a></p>	<p>Kiwassa Neighbourhood House is a volunteer-led non-profit organization that provides a broad range of accessible, free, and affordable programs for children, youth, adults, seniors, and families, and volunteer and leadership opportunities in northeast Vancouver (Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, n.d. a, p. 1). Funding is provided by the municipal, provincial, and federal governments, the United Way, and a variety of foundations/agencies (Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, n.d. b, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Leadership: Offers employment readiness preparation including training and skills development in the areas of communication, self awareness, job search, leadership, and teamwork, and volunteer placements in Kiwassa programs (Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, n.d. c, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Labour Unlimited</b></p> <p>Website:</p>	<p>Labour Unlimited is a private business that subcontracts temporary labour services to the construction industry and also offers skills, safety and equipment training (Labour Unlimited, 2000a, p. 1).</p>

<p><a href="http://www.labourunlimited.com">http://www.labourunlimited.com</a></p>	<p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing agency for construction, warehouse, and light industrial workers (Labour Unlimited, 2000b, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Milieu Family Services South Vancouver Youth Centre</b></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://milieu.ca/svycwelcome">http://milieu.ca/svycwelcome</a></p>	<p>The South Vancouver Youth Centre (SVYC) provides support services to at-risk youth including personalized education and planning, vocational preparation, parenting skills, foster care counselling, life transitions, housing support, and recreation (Milieu Family Services, 2011a, p. 1). SVYC is funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development and services are provided on a drop-in basis or through MCFD referral (Ibid.).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition to Adulthood program: Provides youth age 12-18 with personalized life skills training to help them transition to independent living. Goals are established through an Individual Support Plan (Milieu Family Services 2011b, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>newSTART Bridging a VEEES community service</b></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://newstartbridging.ca/about.htm">http://newstartbridging.ca/about.htm</a></p>	<p>newSTART is part of the Employment Program of British Columbia and is a partnership between the Vancouver Northeast Employment Services Centre and the Burnaby WorkBC Employment Services Centre (newSTART, n.d. b, p. 1). newSTART assists women dealing with violence and abuse issues who are in need of specialized services to help them return to work (Ibid.).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one and group sessions focused on employment readiness including increasing self-awareness, managing stress and anger, developing communication skills, goal setting, and developing a positive attitude (newSTART, n.d. a, p. 1).</li> <li>• Workshops on time management, job retention, workplace communication, job interview skills, networking etc. (Ibid.).</li> <li>• Individual assistance with resume and interview preparation and locating an unpaid work experience placement (Ibid.).</li> <li>• Support and planning for educational upgrading, ESL upgrading, and computer skills for accessing online job search, employment, Service Canada and MSDSI applications (Ibid).</li> <li>• Financial support for employment related certificates such as WorkSafe BC First Aid and CPR, FoodSafe Level 1, Serving It Right, WHMIS, etc. (Ibid).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pacific Community Resources</b></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.pcrs.ca">http://www.pcrs.ca</a></p>	<p>Pacific Community Resources is a non-profit agency that provides a number of services for children, youth, adults, and families including alternate education, employment, addiction counselling and prevention services, housing support, and cultural enrichment (Pacific Community Resources, 2010d, p. 1). Youth services are provided through the Broadway Youth Resource Centre and the Surrey Youth Resource Centre (Ibid.).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadway Youth Resource Centre: Provides social, health, education, employment, and life skills services to homeless and at-risk youth age 12-24 (Pacific Community Resources, 2010b, p. 1).</li> <li>• Transition to Adulthood Program: Life skills development program designed for youth referred by MCFD (Pacific Community Resources,</li> </ul>

	<p>2010c, p. 1).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Volunteer Program: Assists youth age 13-24 in becoming connected to the community through volunteer service (Pacific Community Resources, 2010f, p. 1).</li> <li>• Surrey Youth Resource Centres: Provides access to a broad range of life skills development programs (Pacific Community Resources, 2010e, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>PLEA Community Services</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://www.plea.ca">http://www.plea.ca</a></p>	<p>PLEA Community Services delivers a variety of community-based programs for children, youth, adults, and families who are experiencing significant difficulties in their lives, have multiple needs, and require specialized assistance (PLEA Community Services, 2010b, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Development Program: Youth Development workers help youth reconnect to educational programs and graduate and provide assistance with accessing employment programs and obtaining jobs (PLEA Community Services, 2010d, p. 1).</li> <li>• GOAL (Goal Orientated Alternative Learning): This program is a partnership between School District #43 and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Program elements include academic curriculum, life skills development, recreational activities, and work experience (PLEA Community Services, 2010c, p. 1).</li> <li>• Genesis: Provides youth age 16-18 with academic assistance, job readiness training, recreational programming, and work experience through the Yardworks initiative whereby students provide customers with a variety of services including junk removal, lawn care, and garden maintenance (Ibid.; PLEA Community Services, 2010a, p.1).</li> <li>• Q-Creative Urban Employment: This program is designed for youth who are not enrolled in school and have little or no employment experience. The program combines employment readiness preparation, skills training, and work experience (PLEA Community Services, 2010c, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Providence Health Care</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inner City Youth Mental Health Program</b></li> </ul> <p>Website:  <a href="http://innercityyouth.ca">http://innercityyouth.ca</a></p>	<p>Providence Health Care’s Inner City Youth Mental Health Program provides outreach based treatment to youth age 16-24 with mental illness (Providence Health Care, 2013, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A team of seven psychiatrists, two social workers, one occupational therapist, and psychiatric nurse provide individualized support to help youth transition to independence. The ICY Program includes housing and peer support, mindfulness therapy, and life skills training (Ibid.; Inner City Youth Program, 2015, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sources BC</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://www.sourcesbc.ca">http://www.sourcesbc.ca</a></p>	<p>Sources BC is a non-profit, community-based agency that assists children, youth, adults, seniors, and families through a variety of services provided in the following Metro Vancouver locations: White Rock, Surrey, Langley, and Delta (Sources BC, 2009a, p. 1). Sources BC is funded by the federal and provincial governments under the Employment Program of British Columbia (Ibid.).</p>

	<p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WorkBC Employment Services Centres that provide a self-service resource room, employment counselling, career planning, job search workshops, skills training, etc. (Sources, 2009b, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>S.U.C.C.E.S.S.</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://www.successbc.ca/eng/services/employment-services">http://www.successbc.ca/eng/services/employment-services</a></p>	<p>S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is a non-profit charitable organization that originally began as a new immigrant settlement service and has since evolved into a multi-service, multicultural agency (S.U.C.C.E.S.S., 2014a, p. 1). The mandate of the organization has expanded to include assisting the unemployed in job and career development and delivering education and employment training, among other services (Ibid.).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Employment Program: The program is designed for youth age 15-30 who are not receiving Employment Insurance; are out of school, unemployed or underemployed; are Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or refugees; and are legally allowed to work in Canada (S.U.C.C.E.S.S., 2014c, p. 1). The program offers 2 weeks of classroom sessions, a 10-week monitored work placement, and life skills and employment skills workshops including certifications training such as First Aid Level 1, FoodSafe Level 1, Serving It Right, and WHMIS (Ibid.). Participants can earn up to \$3,690 plus a \$200 bonus upon program completion (Ibid.).</li> <li>• Youth Employment Connect (YEC): Provides youth age 15-29 with 4 weeks of group based training and Short Term Certificate Training. The program includes career planning; job search skills such as resume, cover letter, and interview preparation; life skills training including goal setting, effective communication, teamwork, and financial management; and certifications including First Aid Level 1, FoodSafe Level 1, Serving It Right, and WHMIS (S.U.C.C.E.S.S., 2014b, p. 1).</li> <li>• A Chance to Choose: Provides youth age 15-30 with six weeks of life skills and employment skills workshops followed by 10 weeks of work experience with an employer. Participants are paid minimum wage for 30 hours a week for the full duration of the program (S.U.C.C.E.S.S., 2014d, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Take a Hike Youth at Risk Foundation</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://www.takeahikefoundation.org/en/index.htm">http://www.takeahikefoundation.org/en/index.htm</a></p>	<p>Take a Hike is an alternative education program designed for at-risk youth who are struggling in the conventional secondary school system. The program incorporates adventure-based learning, academics, therapy, and community involvement (Take a Hike Youth at Risk Foundation, 2015a, p. 1).</p> <p>Program components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-paced learning;</li> <li>• Outdoor activities including rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, snowshoeing, and first aid training that provide opportunities for youth to develop skills and build confidence;</li> <li>• Individual, group, and family counselling provided by full-time clinical therapists;</li> <li>• Weekly service to the community (Take a Hike Youth at Risk Foundation, 2015b, p. 1).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Tradeworks</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://tradeworks.bc.ca">http://tradeworks.bc.ca</a></p>	<p>Tradeworks provides women and other community members with multiple barriers to employment with training in life and employment skills and hands-on work experience in carpentry (Tradeworks, 2014a, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women in the Trades Program: This 12-week program is a pre-apprenticeship trades training program that provides women with hands-on instruction using hand tools, power tools, and other equipment used in the woodworking and construction industry (Tradeworks, 2014b, p. 1). Complete training is provided in the following areas: First Aid Level 1, WHMIS, forklift operation, fall protection on the job site, and proper load basic rigging for the workplace (Ibid.). Participants also receive assistance with resume preparation and attend interview preparation workshops (Ibid.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>United We Can</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://www.unitedwecan.ca">http://www.unitedwecan.ca</a></p>	<p>United We Can is a charitable organization that uses the social enterprise model to create jobs for people with multiple barriers to traditional employment who are living in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver (United We Can, 2015a, p. 1). The organization’s mission is to “support environmental, social, and economic improvement in the inner city of Vancouver” (Ibid.).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycling Services: Employs individuals to collect returnable containers from local businesses, apartment complexes, and special events (United We Can, 2015b, p. 1)</li> <li>• Commercial Collection: Employs individuals to collect greater volumes of recyclables from commercial enterprises (Ibid.).</li> <li>• Lanes and Crossroads: Employs individuals to collect refuse in local areas (Ibid.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Urban Native Youth Association</b></p> <p>Website:  <a href="http://www.unya.bc.ca">http://www.unya.bc.ca</a></p>	<p>Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) is a charitable organization that was established in 1988 in order to help Aboriginal youth who left reserves to live in urban settings (n.d. a, p. 1). UNYA offers over 20 programs and its Native Youth Learning Centre in East Vancouver is the hub for supports and services (UNYA, n.d. e, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aries Program: An alternative education day program for Native youth age 13-15 that provides life skills training (UNYA, n.d. b, p. 1).</li> <li>• Cedar Walk Program: Provides Native youth age 16-18 with individualized support for educational and/or vocational endeavours (UNYA, n.d., c, p. 1).</li> <li>• Kinnections Program: Connects Native youth age 16-19 with community volunteer mentors who provide life skills training (UNYA, n.d., d, p. 1).</li> <li>• Native Youth Learning Centre: Provides resources in four key areas: life management skills, assisted computer applications, job search skills, and career development (UNYA, n.d. e, p. 1).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Watari Counselling &amp; Support Services Society</b></p> <p>Website: http://www.watari.ca</p>	<p>Watari Counselling &amp; Support Services Society is a charitable organization that assists street involved youth and families, with a specific focus on helping populations affected by substance misuse or mental health issues (Watari, 2015a, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitioning to Independence Program (TIP): Provides youth age 16-24 with life skills training to help them achieve independent living. TIP Level 1 is for individuals and TIP Level 2 is for young parents and their children (Watari, 2015b, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Youth Unlimited</b></p> <p>Website: https://www.youthunlimited.com</p>	<p>Youth Unlimited is a Christian, non-profit organization that works primarily with youth age 10-24 and seeks to provide “developmental opportunities for [their] whole person (mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual” (Youth Unlimited Canada, 2014a, p. 1; Youth Unlimited Canada 2014b, p. 1). The organization has eight locations: Abbotsford, East Vancouver, Langley, Maple Ridge, Mission, North Shore, Richmond, and Surrey.</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Life Program (located in East Vancouver): Provides youth age 16-24 with six months of employment readiness preparation including job coaching, skills development, and one-on-one mentorship. Upon graduation, youth receive support in finding employment. (Youth Unlimited Canada, 2014c p. 1).</li> <li>• Stepping Stones/Thrive (located in Surrey): Provides pregnant and young mothers with various supports including a 10-week full-time life skills program that incorporates employment training and resume building workshops; professional child care throughout the program; and working with a supportive mentor to develop a comprehensive Life Plan where participants set education goals and work towards sustainable employment (Youth Unlimited Canada, 2014d, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>YMCA of Greater Vancouver</b></p> <p>Website: http://www.vanymca.org</p>	<p>The YMCA of Greater Vancouver includes the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, and the Sunshine Coast, with programs in 185 locations (YMCA of Greater Vancouver, 2015a, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Skills at Work Program: This program is for youth age 15-30 who are in need of assistance to overcome employment barriers. The program is 16 weeks in length, comprised of four weeks of employment skills development workshops and 12 weeks in a work experience placement. Wages are partially subsidized by the federal government (YMCA of Greater Vancouver, 2015b, p. 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>YWCA Metro Vancouver</b></p> <p>Website: http://ywcavan.org</p>	<p>YWCA Metro Vancouver is a non-profit organization that provides a number of integrated programs and services designed to help lift women and families out of poverty and provide opportunities for education, employment, and leadership (YWCA Metro Vancouver, 2015a, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment services for youth age 16-30 are offered through two WorkBC Employment Service Centres that serve Vancouver South and the Westside (Career Zone) and the North Shore (North Shore Youth Centre) (YWCA</p>

	<p>Metro Vancouver, 2015b, p. 1).</p> <p>Employment Related Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drop-in centre for employment counselling, job search resources, resume, cover letter, and interview preparation (Ibid.).</li><li>• Focus at Work: A 12 week program for women comprised of 3 weeks of employment skills development workshops and 9 weeks of full-time job search support (YWCA Metro Vancouver, 2015c, p. 1)</li><li>• Futures in Focus: This program provides single mothers with up to 20 months of variable week-to-week support including employment and life skills training and job coaching (YWCA Metro Vancouver, 2015d, p. 1).</li><li>• Strive: This 12-week program provides youth age 17-24 who are transitioning out of foster care with life skills training, employment skills training, and paid job placements (YWCA Metro Vancouver, 2015e, p. 1).</li></ul>
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## Appendix C: Interview Invitation to Participate

To: <Employment Program Administrator>

Subject: Homeless Youth Employment Study - Invitation to Participate

Dear Sir/Madam,

We, Laura Muller and Erin Fletcher, graduate students at the University of Victoria, invite you to participate in a research study entitled *Smart Practices for At-Risk, Homeless, and Formerly Homeless Youth Employment Programs in Metro Vancouver*. We are required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Master of Public Administration (MPA).

We are partnered with Streethome Foundation, whose mandate is to find solutions for homelessness by helping to create safe, decent, affordable housing for those on the streets and those at risk in Vancouver.

The purpose of this research project is to determine smart practices for employment training programs, experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models for at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver. Streethome Foundation is interested in identifying strategic opportunities to leverage their resources to improve employment outcomes for this population. The project objectives are to map youth employment services in Metro Vancouver and assess, using criteria, the contribution of these services and the potential for scalability of successful programs.

An important part of this research is to interview employment service providers in Metro Vancouver to understand their perspectives. You have been identified as a key stakeholder from which to learn more about the current state of Vancouver employment services including capacity, outcomes, successes, setbacks, and challenges.

To this end, we would appreciate your participation in either a telephone or Skype interview that we will be conducting for this project. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and can be scheduled at your convenience. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time by contacting either of the principal investigators.

If you would be willing to participate, please reply to this email to schedule a date and time and your preferred interview method (telephone or Skype). The estimated time frame for interviews is **August 17 to September 11, 2015**.

This study is considered “minimal risk”, as defined by the Tri-Council Policy, in that potential participants should not reasonably expect to experience any harms greater than those encountered in their everyday life as it relates to this research. It is understood that some participants may be partners or colleagues of Streethome Foundation or have worked with the organization in the past on other projects. Streethome Foundation provides funding support to organizations that build and operate housing programs that may also be involved in the delivery of employment programs to at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless youth. As a result, there may be a perceived power relationship.

The following steps will be taken to ensure voluntariness and minimize undue influence, coercion or potential harm:

- The interview questions are open-ended in nature to give participants total discretion in how they formulate their answers.
- Participants will have the opportunity to review the questions prior to the interview date.
- Participants may decline to answer any question during the interview.

Participants will be required to sign/scan and return (via email) a consent form prior to the interview date. Further information on withdrawal procedures is contained in the consent form. **The consent form and a copy of the interview questions will be provided to all participants in a confirmation email.**

The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants will be protected to the fullest extent possible. Individual participant names will not be identified in the study. Only the researchers and Streetohome Foundation will be able to associate interview responses with individual participants. The name of your organization will be replaced with a pseudonym in the dissemination of the study results. A list of participating organizations will be included in the appendices of the report.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by using password-protected files kept on a password-protected computer that can only be accessed by the principal investigators during all stages of the research. A code will be assigned to each participant and a coding sheet that links the code to your identifying information (i.e. organization/program name) will be stored separately in a secure location. All interview data will be disposed of at the end of the project (no later than December 31, 2015). Paper files will be shredded and electronic data will be erased. Despite these measures, it should be noted that your confidentiality cannot be completely guaranteed due to the limited sample size of the survey.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared during the researchers' defence of the final report. Individuals attending the defence will include the client, academic supervisor, two other faculty members (to be named) and any individuals from the community who wish to attend and observe. A copy of the report will be shared with Streetohome Foundation's partners and the interview participants upon request. In addition, a copy of the report will be published on the "UVicSpace" website, available for public access.

We would be very grateful if you would be willing to refer us to other contacts you have that provide employment services to at-risk, homeless, and/or formerly homeless youth in Metro Vancouver who could also participate in this study.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (250-472-4545, [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

If you have any questions regarding the research study, please feel free to contact us (see below for contact information).

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Laura Muller and Erin Fletcher

lmuller@uvic.ca (250-888-2808) or esfletch@uvic.ca (250-580-5818)

For more information about Streethome Foundation, please visit <http://streethome.org/>

## **Appendix D: List of Participating Organizations**

We would like to sincerely thank the following organizations for their participation in this research project.

- 1. *BladeRunners***
- 2. *YWCA Metro Vancouver***
- 3. *Watari Youth Outreach***
- 4. *Inner City Youth Mental Health Program***
- 5. *SourcesBC***
- 6. *PLEA Community Services***
- 7. *Groundswell***
- 8. *YMCA of Greater Vancouver***
- 9. *Aunt Leah's Place***
- 10. *Take a Hike Foundation***
- 11. *Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House***
- 12. *Directions Youth Services***

## **Appendix E: Participant Consent Form**

### *Smart practices for homeless youth employment programs in Metro Vancouver*

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Smart practices for homeless youth employment programs in Metro Vancouver* that is being conducted by Laura Muller and Erin Fletcher.

Laura Muller and Erin Fletcher are graduate students with the department of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria and you may contact them if you have further questions by email at [lmuller@uvic.ca](mailto:lmuller@uvic.ca) or [esfletch@uvic.ca](mailto:esfletch@uvic.ca).

We are required to conduct research as a part of the requirements for a degree in Master of Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kimberly Speers. You may contact her at 250-721-8057 or [kspeers@uvic.ca](mailto:kspeers@uvic.ca).

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to determine smart practices for employment training programs, experiential work opportunity models, rapid re-employment strategies and other successful models for homeless, sheltered and at-risk youth in Vancouver.

Specifically, this project aims to:

- Provide an overview of the literature on diversity of the homeless youth population, barriers to employment for homeless youth, individual and societal benefits derived from employing homeless youth, and employment programs designed to assist homeless youth.
- Map homeless youth employment services in Vancouver.
- Obtain data from key informant interviews on the current state of these employment services including capacity, outcomes, successes, setbacks and program gaps.
- Assess, using criteria, the contribution of these services and the potential for scalability of successful programs.
- Provide recommendations to Streetohome Foundation on smart practices for homeless youth employment programs.

### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because it will be used to help inform Streetohome Foundation, an organization that helps to house homeless individuals in Vancouver, to create the greatest leverage and have the most impact facilitating employment of this population.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you possess valuable knowledge and experience within the field.

### **What is Involved**

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a telephone interview estimated at approximately 30 minutes. Interview questions will be provided via email prior to the interview to allow you to prepare as necessary.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause inconvenience in the form of time spent in the interview during your workday.

### **Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include:

- Purposeful reflection on program goals and outcomes, which provides the opportunity for self-acknowledgement, contributes to a sense of purpose, and increases awareness.
- The opportunity to make a further contribution to the shared goal of helping homeless, sheltered and at-risk youth obtain and maintain employment by contributing to the overall state of knowledge that can be used to make improvements to program design and delivery.
- The opportunity to connect with Streethome Foundation and strengthen your network.
- The opportunity to identify the potential for synergies among non-profit organizations.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used.

### **Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity, the name of your organization will be replaced with a pseudonym in the dissemination of the study results. The name of your employment program will be omitted from the interview data sheet.

### **Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by using password-protected files kept on a password-protected computer that can only be accessed by the principal investigators. A code will be assigned to each participant and a coding sheet that links the code to your identifying information (i.e. organization/program name) will be stored separately in a secure location.

## Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways:

- Dissertation/Report shared with Streetohome Foundation’s partners and service providers
- Internet (posted on “UVicSpace” and can be accessed by the public)

## Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include researchers Laura Muller or Erin Fletcher, or supervisor Kimberly Speers (please see contact information above).

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

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Name of Participant	Signature	Date
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***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***