

Canadian CED Network
Place Based Poverty Reduction Initiative

Our four Community Partners :

Measure Their Impacts On Poverty

The Canadian CED Network's Place-Based Poverty Reduction Initiative (PBPR), was a national project, to identify, document, analyze and promote innovative community-driven collaborative approaches to poverty reduction and the methodologies they use to evaluate their impacts on the lives of individuals in their communities. Recognizing that the sector has historically done a more effective job of describing qualitative impacts, this initiative focused considerable attention on quantitative methods of describing the impacts of our work.

The Network worked with four CED partner organizations from across the country who represent a range of approaches in integrated action on poverty reduction in diverse communities with complex demographics:

- [Trail Community Skills Centre \(Trail, BC\)](#)
- [PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise \(Thunder Bay, ONT\)](#)
- [Learning Enrichment Foundation \(Toronto, ONT\)](#)
- [CED Corporation of Trois-Rivières \(ÉCOF-CDEC\) \(Trois-Rivières, QUE\)](#)

The partners developed detailed profiles of their communities, the impacts of poverty and the collaborative community action they use to address poverty. They describe range of interventions and methodologies they use to combat poverty and the personal and policy barriers to poverty reduction they share in common. Their documentation also included comprehensive organizational logic models.

At the core of this initiative is the documentation of the interventions and methodologies they use to evaluate the qualitative and particularly quantitative impacts of their poverty reduction work, and the challenges and barriers this entails.

The following descriptions of how these CED organizations measured their impacts on poverty are also included as part of the final project report, ***How Community Economic Development is reducing poverty in Canada and how it could be doing more.***

MEASURING THE IMPACTS ON POVERTY

2007 data on impacts on poverty for a cohort of individual participants

More and more we are being asked for results that are quantifiable. Other than providing statistics on numbers of people employed or self-employed, the sector has not had effective ways of specifying the impacts of CED in concrete numeric terms. One of the objectives of this Place-based Poverty Reduction initiative is to demonstrate methods of evaluating quantifiable impacts of our CED approaches on reducing poverty.

To demonstrate results in quantitative terms, each partner used one of a variety of approaches to measure impacts on a selected group of constituents in their programs. These approaches included :

- Social Return on Investment tools and metrics such as estimates of saved costs in government assistance, health services, and incarceration.
- the Sustainable Livelihoods Model
- measures of Value Added, which monetize the contribution of such goods and services as volunteer labour, donations and skill development

These approaches produce clear numeric impact statements that demonstrate the effects of their work in reducing poverty.

Trail Community Skills Centre

The Program

In response to youth employment challenges and eligibility limitations for training and support, the Skills Centre initiated a youth social enterprise. The Right Stuff hires youth with barriers to collate advertisement flyers into the local newspaper.

Participant profile

Since its inception, in October 2002, the Right Stuff has employed 39 individuals. All were unemployed, the majority were between the ages of 20-25. The original eight employees were all receiving Income Assistance for which, with the change in provincial government, they would no longer be eligible.

There are a number of common characteristics of the youth that are hired at the Right Stuff. Very few have completed their high school education, although some now attend the alternate high school program, which allows them to complete high school at their own pace in a less structured environment. Some have children of their own and some have criminal records or were “getting by” based on their illegal activities. For their housing needs, the majority of them were “couch surfing” -moving from one friend’s home to the next. At best their housing situations are tenuous, usually involving frequent changes of addresses. In addition, they have a very limited employment history and do not have employment ready skills, including a resume, nor do they have an understanding of employment standards. They typically have piercings and tattoos, which do not make them the first choice for entry-level customer service type of work.

The types of challenges encountered working with this client group include mental illnesses such as depression, Attention Deficit Disorder, and various personality disorders. There have also been those with developmental challenges such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and learning disabilities. In all cases, these challenges have not been professionally diagnosed but are based on the Centre’s assessment as a result of working with them. There are also other barriers to

employment such as socialization issues, drug and alcohol problems, anger management and communication difficulties.

The weekly hours of employment is dependant on the volume of work but typically it is 15 hours which can increase up to 25-30 as they gain seniority and demonstrate their reliability. The flexible scheduling means that a second job is a typical first step in moving to more full-time less supported employment.

In addition to gaining fundamental employment skills, counselling support is provided for the youth to increase their personal management skills and teamwork abilities. Financing for certified training such as Occupational First Aid, Workplace Safety, forklift operation, and computer training is also offered. Employees are also paid to attend regular monthly workshops focussed on Essential Skills: teamwork, communication skills, problem solving, personal budgets, nutrition and conducting a job search. The goal of this project is for the youth to develop work experience and the personal skills to secure employment on their own.

Tracking the Impacts

The systems for tracking the socio-economic impact of the Right Stuff are fairly simple and rely heavily on effective communication with the participants. During the hiring and orientation process the employee, interview panel, and frontline supervisor all complete detailed checklists. The counsellor also works with employees on-site to develop and monitor a Personal Growth Plan. When an employee leaves an exit interview is conducted and s/he is contacted by staff at 3-month intervals for up to a year.

The Right Stuff used Social Return on Investment metrics to quantify impacts in six ways. They are also in the process of fine tuning and implementing the Sustainable Livelihoods model (see PARO sections), to increase the ability to measure the changes that take place in their lives but also to help these youth to recognize the benefits of their choices.

The Impacts

To date the Right Stuff has achieved about a 64% success rate. Success in this case is classified as the individual remaining employed, moving on to other employment, enrolled in formal education or re-locating to another community. Re-locating to another community is considered a success because it typically requires improved self-esteem and confidence to move away from the surroundings with which they are familiar. Twelve per cent have quit their jobs at the Right Stuff and 23% have had to be dismissed.

Numeric Measurements

1. Annual Income & Cost Savings to Income Assistance Budget

Wages earned by all 8 RS workers 2002-2003	Total Income Assistance these RS workers would have rec'd over a similar period	Aggregate increase in income
\$59,936	\$49,920	\$10,016

Table 5

2. Annual Benefit of Additional Consumer Spending

Research on the Economic Multiplier or Local Multiplier Effect demonstrates the economic value to a community of locally owned businesses and local purchasing¹. The local Chamber of Commerce in the Right Stuff's region uses a multiplier of three, estimating that each dollar paid to local merchants for rent, utilities, new clothes, electronic equipment and discretionary items (e.g., video games, take-out) helps supply buying power for two more local purchases. In

¹ <http://everything2.com/node/1282828>

other words, if spent in town, the wages of Right Stuff participants could have an impact on Trail's economy that is triple their face value².

Total annual wages by RS workers in 2006	Estimated impact on the community economy in one year	Estimated impact on the community economy in three years
\$50,037	\$150,111	3 years = \$450,333

Table 6

3. Cost of incarceration

A number of hired youth-at-risk have histories of being involved in criminal activity, in various degrees of seriousness. Once these individuals start working their criminal activity, such as illegal substance abuse, decreases substantially while other activities, such as theft, completely stop. For example, because of a job at the Right Stuff, one program participant was allowed to be in the community weekdays, rather than in jail.

Cost of supporting 1 individual in a federal prison for one year = \$85,000	X 4 individuals = (10% of total participants)	\$340,000
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Table 9

4. Cost of a Single Parent & Child on Income Assistance

Cost of supporting 8 single parents on income assistance with one child under the age of 3 for one year = \$90,816	X 3 years =	\$272,448
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Table 7

5. Cost to Health System

Forty-one per cent of hired youth-at-risk have undiagnosed mental illness. Work helps to stabilize their lives, intermittent stays in the psychiatric ward would cost:

Cost of supporting 4 individuals in a hospital facility for one day = \$4,000	X 10 days = (average hospitalization time)	\$40,000
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Table 8

6. Value of volunteer work

As a result of being involved in the Right Stuff several youth have volunteered for community events. Most significantly, one program participant chose to volunteer for the local ski patrol and worked 11 8-hour days over the ski-season. Since three seasons is the average length of time that volunteers dedicate to such commitments, this activity adds significant value to the community.

Value of one ski patrols volunteer work per season (with 14% employer costs) = \$1,003	X 3 seasons =	\$3,009
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Table 10

² http://www.worldproutassembly.org/archives/2005/05/why_the_local_m_1.html

PARO

The Program

PARO provides a wide range of entrepreneurial development supports for individuals and collective enterprises. Participants can be involved in self-employment training programs, and access supports such as lending circles, member networks, a business incubation centre and a retail outlet. Once they have launched and established their micro-enterprise they then have the opportunity to participate in the Business Accelerator program to enhance the growth of their businesses, and to help them achieve a sustainable livelihood. The Accelerator program facilitates business mentoring; provides access to 'Experts' and provides advanced workshops and counselling on topics such as: IT planning & web development, marketing, PR, risk management, financial statements & financial software.

The Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) model, described below as the method of evaluating impacts, inevitably affects the program delivery. PARO provides resources and supports to help women build assets and achieve their goals in all five asset areas - *financial, social, personal, human, and physical*. For example, in building social assets, PARO offers participants a women-friendly environment where they can network with other women and receive mentorship from members of the PARO team; through the peer lending program, women can access small loans, which impacts their financial asset area; and the rent of space in the incubator at PARO Centre offers women an office area at a low cost, as well as access to the equipment required to run a business, which increases physical assets.

Participant profile

Long-term, detailed research conducted from 2005-2007 tracked ten Business Accelerator participants who were representative of the group demographics.

PARO's 10 Portrait Research Participants	
Economically marginalized	10
Employment Status	
Unemployed at entry to PARO	8
Low-paid, part-time jobs at entry to PARO	2
Out of the job market for at least a year	5
Re-entering the job market after years of caring for younger children	3
Receiving government support - employment or disability supports	7
Marital Status	
Single	5
Married/common-law	5
Divorced	5
Lone parent	3
Dependent school aged children	5
Location	
Thunder Bay	5
Towns and villages in the broad, remote geographic regions of North-western ON	5
Housing	
Lived in family owned homes *	7
Low quality housing rent-g geared-to-income housing	3
Paying over 50% of their income on housing (25% is recommended)	10
Cultural backgrounds	
Aboriginal	1
Born in Canada	8

- **Physical Assets** saw an increase of 11%, confirming that their access to housing, food, child/elder care information and transportation has improved.

To summarize; all participants attribute their increases to the program’s ability to make them aware of all their assets and provide them with the knowledge of how to define success in their own terms. One *Accelerator* participant cites ‘*I use the SLM model for everything in my life*’

To further evaluate and quantify its holistic approach to CED (volunteer contributions and social outputs, for example), PARO has also used an Expanded Value Added Statement to quantify some of the impacts of PARO on the community. The resultant report states, “In comparing the \$386,999 of combined social value added in this 11-month period to the \$254,364 of value added based on the audited financial statements, we can see that PARO created at least \$132,635 in additional social value. This additional social value would not normally be recognized in financial statements, but it is a more accurate reflection of the value PARO creates with the resources available to it. It is estimated that the organization generated \$2.09 for every dollar spent on goods and services. The social value added component of this was \$0.72, indicating a large contribution of social value added for every dollar received by PARO from grants and other sources.”

Table: Expanded Value Added Statement (Partial) for PARO for the Year Ended Mar 31, 2006

Value Added Created		Financial	Social	Combined
Outputs	Primary	\$435,892.00	\$93,860.00	\$529,752.00
	Secondary	\$3,601.00	\$3,575.00	\$7,176.00
	Tertiary		\$35,200.00	\$35,200.00
	Total	\$439,493.00	\$132,635.00	\$572,128.00
Purchases of external goods and services		\$185,129.00		\$185,129.00
Value Added Created		\$254,364.00	\$132,635.00	\$386,999.00
Ratio of value added to purchases		1.37	0.72	2.09

Table 12

The research reflected in this report was conducted between January and April 2007 under the direction of Dr. Ted Jackson, Chair of the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation. CCCI’s recently published tools on Social Return on Investment and Expanded Value Added Statements provide a useful synopsis of these two approaches to measuring impact.

(<http://www.carleton.ca/cedtap/stories/sroi.pdf>

<http://www.carleton.ca/cedtap/stories/evas.>)

LEF

The Program

The Learning Enrichment Foundation assists individuals in making the transition from unemployment to sustained participation in the labour market through an integrated model of service delivery. These services include: continuous intake and assessment of clients, employment counselling, job development, and business development services for employers; as well as literacy and ESL language instruction, and skill training in six areas (cooks training, industrial skills, construction, Early Childhood Assistant, project management, and Community Access Program). Childcare and education loans are provided for those who need it.

Participant profile

LEF's 211 Portrait Research Participants			
Receiving Social Assistance	100%		
Sex			
Male	68%		
Female	32%		
Age			
16-24 years	15%		
25-30 years	22%		
31-44 years	42%		
45-54 years	17%		
55+ years	4%		
Marital Status			
Single	75%		
Married/common-law	14%		
Separated	6%		
Widowed	1%		
Dependent school aged children	29%		
Social Assistance level			
Single, no dependents - \$536 / month	64%		
Couple, no dependents - \$969 / month	8%		
Single, one dependent - \$987/ month	13%		
Single, two or more dependents - \$1198/ month	11%		
Couple, two or more dependents - \$1289/ month	4%		
Below 2005 Before-Tax Low-Income Cut Offs (LICOs)	100%		
Below 50% of LICO	100%		
Below 34% of LICO	65%		
Last Reported Employment Income			
Within last 12 months	45%		
Within last 2 - 5 years	51%		
Within last 6 - 12 years	4%		
Average years without employment	2.1		
Location			
Within 5 kilometres of LEF*	23%		
Education	In Canada	Outside Canada	
Did not complete high school	35%	20%	32%
Complete high school	53%	30%	42%
Completed post-secondary education.	13%	50%	26%

Table 13

This data table shows that LEF's Ontario Works (OW - Ontario social assistance) clients:

- Are primarily unmarried males, mostly between the ages of 31 and 44 years of age
- Have a high school education or less, with most post secondary education occurring outside of Canada
- Have weak attachment to the labour force, with an average unemployment span of over two years

- Are experiencing persistent and deep poverty, comparing reported earnings and income related to LICO levels³

Tracking the Impacts

Over a 12 month period, LEF successfully assisted hundreds of individuals in making the transition from unemployment to sustained participation in the labour market through an integrated model of service delivery. Of these clients, 211 were social assistance recipients. While they represented only a portion of training graduates and successfully employed participants, this group had unique data sets that were crucial to calculating quantitative impacts. When compared to Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs), measuring benefit levels based on marital status, number of dependents and the last year of reported earned income enabled the establishment of pre-intervention baselines in terms of income and depth of poverty.

The data in Table 13 was derived from client registration forms (which clients complete upon their first visit to LEF), Toronto Social Services-Ontario Works social assistance data, Statistics Canada data and LEF client files. Rough calculations can be completed with this data to provide insight into how participants' financial situations change before and after accessing LEF services.

The Impacts

All 211 participants had received assistance through multiple interventions within LEF and moved into employment between January 2005 and December 2006. As was noted earlier, on average, this was the first employment income reported by these participants in over two years.

Starting Wages	
Starting Wage: \$7.75 / hour - \$24.00 / hour	Median starting Wage: \$11.28
Full-time positions: 91%	Part-time positions: 9%
# with increased income from transition to employment: 99%	
Increase in income: 24% - 616%	Median increase in income: 199%.

Table 14

The Participant Profile above shows that all participants (100%) were living on less than 50% of the 2005 Before-Tax Low-Income Cut Off (LICO) amount while 65% were living on less than 34% of the LICO amount. These figures reflect deep levels of poverty. The impact after employment is dramatic since almost all participants are now at the 50% LICO level or higher, with 63% actually earning above LICO.

Starting Wages compared with corresponding before tax LICO	
Assuming starting wages for all 192 full-time employed was sustained:	
Before interventions	After interventions
65% earnings below 34% of the corresponding LICO	
100% earnings below 50% of the corresponding LICO	97% earnings above 50% of the corresponding LICO:
	85% earnings above 80% of the corresponding LICO
	63% earnings above 100% the corresponding LICO

Table 15

³ For further explanation regarding definitions and calculations involved in these terms, see "The Other face of Working Poverty", Policy Research Initiative Working Paper Series 006

While securing employment is an essential start to moving out of poverty, sustaining employment is equally important. Toronto Social Services (TSS) monitors employment income and reduced social assistance benefits for OW clients for six months following an employment start date, and this data can provide insight into job retention for this group. However, the TSS data is available only for those clients who achieved outcomes within OW mandated timelines. While the ongoing support structure through the LEF model tracks similar outcomes for the entire group, only TSS results are used here in the interest of consistency. This data is available for 100 members of the group, and shows 56% of these clients retained their original employment past the 6 month follow-up. Of these clients, 66% reported a starting income that would move them above the corresponding LICO. We can also calculate the impact on the "depth" of poverty for the remaining members of the group. Even though the starting wages of these individuals would not move them above their corresponding LICO, the data show 79% of individuals in this group moved within 25% of their corresponding LICO.

The data regarding the 211 social assistance recipients that LEF assisted in securing and retaining employment in 2005 - 2006 demonstrates the potential of these approaches in poverty alleviation. This client group was characterized by, multiple barriers to employment and income well below established "poverty" levels.

Through a combination of services and supports based on community needs as well as individual assets, goals and circumstances, these clients were all successful in securing employment, for the first time on average, in over two years. Data from TSS show that many of these clients maintained employment past six months and earned a starting wage that could move them out of low income. The data also shows that even those who did not report a starting wage significant enough to lift them past the low-income threshold, significantly increased their earnings, and increased their labour market experience and attachment, important first steps in the path out of poverty.

These outcomes represent significant progress in the lives of these individuals, and within the community. Reduction in benefit payments for the six months retention period alone can be calculated at **\$242,910**, however, as the individual testimonials show, the impacts cannot be measured solely in financial terms.

ÉCOF

The Program

ÉCOF's Employment Assistant Service provides a range of supports and potential interventions in both individual and group settings. Participants have access to practical resources such as computers, fax and telephones and they can learn a variety of job search techniques as well as interviewing and resume skills. Social involvement is also encouraged through opportunities for volunteer activities in the community. Group training at ÉCOF includes self-esteem, communication, conflict resolution and teamwork. Many of these skills are built and enhanced as staff support trainees working together on practical projects where they need to learn how to work as a team, communicate effectively and resolve conflicts.

Participant profile

There is a high level of unemployment, particularly with youth, and low education and literacy levels.

- 20%-50% receive social assistance
- most families are large but there are also many isolated people living alone
- most do not have grade 12 education (employers are less open to recruiting people without grade 12. Employers need to be aware that most people have many skills and competencies

even though they don't have Grade 12. Grade 12 certification would open doors to employment)

- years of absence from the workforce (experience but not education)
- receiving social assistance for more than 4 years
- difficulty accessing programs because they are ineligible for EI
- lack of confidence
- older workers
- 60% - 80% of homes are rented by tenants and many of these are in need of repair

Other factors limiting employment include access to day care and lack of transportation.

ÉCOF once assumed that the social enterprises would hire these disadvantaged people, but staff are noticing that these social enterprises more frequently have higher requirements because they must meet output goals. Consequently, even they restrict access to the high needs unemployed.

Tracking the Impacts

ÉCOF has solid individual participant data, based on the interviews and data collection that are part of their regular intake, support, and monitoring process (and are required for government funding). Data on the duration of unemployment, receipt of government assistance, education levels, and parental status are collected, as well as the results of the support provided - training, further education or employment acquired and earned income. Like LEF, data analysis under the PBPR focused on participants who transitioned from government assistance to full-time employment over a 3-year period.

Impacts

Government income, while receiving social assistance prior to employment, varied based on marital status and the number of dependents. For these 63 individuals who transitioned from government assistance to full-time employment in this period, the average monthly amount was \$802. The monthly total in government supports for this entire group was \$50,509 (63 participants x \$802) .

The federal government requires that post intervention employment statistics be collected for a 6 month retention period. Using calculations based on this relatively short 6-month retention period alone, estimated savings in social assistance payments for this group totalled **\$303,054** (6months x \$50,509). Based on staff anecdotal information from their ongoing connections with many of these individuals, it would be safe to multiply most of these savings over several years.

Government Savings over 6 months = **\$303,054**

Once employed, starting wages for this group varied from the provincial minimum wage of \$8.00/ hour to a high of \$26.00 / hour. The average starting wage for these employees was \$12/hour. Monthly wages therefore totalled approximately \$114,660 (63 x 114,660). For this same retention period this amounts to **\$687,960** (6 months x \$114,660).

Gaining employment added an average of \$1,018 to the monthly income of each participant (\$1,820 employment income - \$802 social assistance) . Most of this is money added to the local economy. Over the same 6 month retention period this totals **\$384,906** (\$1,018 x 63 employed participants x 6 months).

6 month Financial Impacts Summary

Savings in government assistance	\$303,054
Employment income	\$687,960
Addition to the local economy	\$384,906

Table 16

ÉCOF had hoped to be able to show impacts on poverty by creating a picture of change in the community with comparison data between the 1996 and 2001 Statistics Canada censuses. In November 2000, ÉCOF and their community partners began working together and created a socioeconomic picture of several high needs neighbourhoods using 1996 data. They have used 2001 census data to update this information under the general themes of housing, family, education and employment and these were used in the community profile above, but lack of resources prevented them from doing the same postal code by postal code analysis of the former study. This is the level of detail that would have been needed to show changes in poverty levels at a community wide level.

Impacts Summary

Our partners have demonstrated some of the quantitative impacts of their work with selected groups of participants using a variety of approaches. Social Return on Investment tools; estimates of saved costs in government assistance, health services, and incarceration; the Sustainable Livelihoods Model; and measures of Value Added, have all been effective as ways of providing quantifiable impact statements. These kinds of evaluation are not an exact science but each method provides a means of providing credible hard numbers that effectively demonstrate the results of our work.

The Toolbox includes summary information and links for two additional social enterprises using both Sustainable Livelihoods and Social Return on Investments methodologies to describe their impacts. These CED enterprises are Atira Property Management Inc. in Vancouver and Inner City Development Inc in Winnipeg.

THE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

Challenges in Quantitative Data Collection

Whichever approach is used, measuring quantitative impacts is obviously not without challenges. Michele Cherot at Trail CSC describes the years it has taken to develop a system that measures the personal successes of the youth that work at the Right Stuff. “We have tried numerous renditions of a Personal Growth Plan,” she explains, “which ultimately measured and highlighted their failures rather than their successes, a system that doesn’t benefit anyone.” Then there are the “un-measurable successes.” Three program participants took part in a day-long walk-a-thon fundraiser for cancer research last spring, for example. This was the first time any of them had been involved in a community event. The impact on them was significant,” Michele recalls, but adds, “The challenge for us is how do we measure that kind of success?”

There is also the fact that development patterns involve both progress and regression in a participant’s life. “It is very difficult to pull out the positives when the setbacks tend to dominate the perception of what is happening in their lives,” she observes.

With the Sustainable Livelihoods Model, by contrast, data collection becomes integral to the work of staff and participants. It becomes part of the program. The Right Stuff has started to use the Model, and involves their young participants in the very design of the process. “We asked the youth to identify their success indicators in each of the five asset categories,” says Michele. “In this first round of self-assessment we found they were very receptive to the process.”

PARO reports that it has “incorporated Sustainable Livelihoods at every level of the organization, from strategic planning sessions, to program curriculum. All participants attribute their asset increases to the program’s ability to make them aware of their full range of assets

and to provide them with the knowledge of how to define success in their own terms. One Accelerator participant declared 'I use the model for everything in my life'."

As the latter remark reveals, the ability to measure program results is important not just for funding partners. The participants themselves want a quantifiable way to assess how their lives are changing. In Michele's words, "When they can see measurable results it gives them the confidence to continue with their new choices and lifestyles."

Our PBPR partners and our broader learning network have had many debates in the last two years about the relative merits of these methods of quantitative measurement: the accuracy, challenges, and shortcomings of each and of other methods, individually-based or community-wide; the need for better access to community-wide data; and the pros and the cons of the whole endeavour.

LEF's Joe Valvasori describes some of the issues. "We have embedded data collection procedures that make quantitative measurement ongoing and relatively painless. The data is based on individual program targets, as defined by the funder, and focuses primarily on post-intervention outcomes. However, the pre-intervention indicators required to establish appropriate baselines are absent. For LEF, the PBPR project has highlighted the need to create and implement quantitative indicators and data collection methods focussed on poverty reduction. Accordingly, it is establishing a 'poverty lens' that will be applied across the organization to measure impacts and guide its work."

The lack of resources that prevented ÉCOF from doing the level of analysis needed to properly compare Statistics Canada census data from different years is clearly another barrier. However, Caroline Lachance, ÉCOF's Executive Co-ordinator, acknowledges that these statistics can only ever provide a partial picture. "It would have been good to derive more meaningful comparative material," she said, "but as good as Stats Can data is, it can't really show the impact of what's happening on the ground in a community - a school closing or a number of individuals finding employment. Positive or negative, we have to document those results case by case."

The research initiative also highlighted how the single-issue focus of many funded programs not only fails to adequately address the complex and interrelated issues of poverty, but also acts as a disincentive to service providers to focus efforts on the problem. For example, when the number of people gaining employment is the single measure of a program's value, organizations can feel pressured both to "cream" intake for the most readily employable clients and to encourage them to take low paying, shorter term employment. A broader focus that accommodated the real complexity of poverty would make it clear that the goal is to attain sustainable employment income, and that steps accomplished towards that goal need acknowledgment.

PBPR also demonstrated how important it is for communities to create, modify, and adapt strategies to reduce local poverty, filling the gap left by government policies and programs with community-based approaches.

To summarize, how do the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative measurement balance out?

On the **negative side** of the balance there is:

- The time and cost of collecting and analyzing the data take away from the resources available for direct CED work.
- The intrusion into participants' lives when additional information is requested. This is especially the case for social assistance recipients who fear their benefits may be affected by the supplementary self-employment or part-time income they earn.

- The temptation to invest more effort in things that are more easily quantified or monetized, to the detriment of programs that generate important qualitative results. Even among programs that do offer quantifiable results, the ones with the “most spectacular numbers” may become favoured for resources on that basis alone.

On the **positive side** of the balance:

- Quantitative assessment enables us to “make our case” more concretely to policy-makers, funders, and other investors.
- We can speak with increased confidence of the effectiveness of the CED approach to poverty reduction.
- Depending on the methodology, program participants can track their own progress more easily and assume more responsibility in the development process.

Our partners are clear about the benefits and challenges associated with each approach. They also acknowledge that the process of evaluation can have a substantial effect on the way programs and services are delivered.

We have been able to demonstrate quantitatively that CED has an impact on reducing poverty. There are many challenges to the process of quantifying the impacts of our work. It can profoundly change the way we work. But is it worth the work? So long as the quantitative measures are used in conjunction with qualitative ones to convey a more complete appreciation of the outcomes that have occurred, our partners in this project believe it is.